



We have in hand workable ways for lifting the straightjackets of irrational behavior from all humans, even if we have a long way to go in terms of communicating them well enough and widely enough.

Harvey Jackins

Along with excellent articles by Tim Jackins and many others, this *Present Time* is alive with news and thinking from around the world—Togo, Benin, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Colombia, Argentina, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, the Netherlands, Australia—much of it translated into Spanish or French. Many thanks to the translators!

We'd love to hear from you. For the January issue, please send us articles and poems by Monday, November 21, and changes to the back-pages lists by Monday, November 28.

Lisa Kauffman, editor

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Finishing an Unfinished Battle

*A talk by Tim Jackins¹ at the New York City (New York, USA)
Teachers' and Leaders' Workshop, June 2011*



Each of us has distresses that have confused us, but when we get together and someone listens to us, things start to move. We get the idea that our minds can shift, that this is under our command, that we don't have to stay stuck and confused. We remember that the discharge process actually lets us change our minds.

WHAT HAPPENS IN SOCIETY

Then if we stick around² long enough, we get our heads out of our own individual distresses and we see what happens in society. We see how all the oppressions fall down on us—classism, racism, sexism, nationalism, colonialism—and come to occupy and structure our societies so that all of us get hurt in certain ways, reliably. We are all targeted by certain sets of distresses. Long ago before people lived in societies, they were off on their own. The collection of distresses must have been more varied. Now they end up being similar. It isn't that the individual things that happen to us are the same—we have each been hurt in particular, individual ways—but the accumulated distresses end up looking similar. We have similar difficulties, and we can trace some of them back to the oppressions. We get to look at all of that, work on it, and get smarter about it.

WE HAVE TO USE OUR MINDS

We have to set directions, for ourselves individually and within the Community. We have to use our minds in the places where the distresses have distracted and confused us. Even though we know we can discharge distress, with some of our distresses we

can't remember to do that. They have had too big a hold on our minds. We sometimes can't even remember they are there—they're just the way life is, the way life has always been for us.

Alone we can't stay aware of these distresses, so we get to figure them out collectively. It is much easier to figure them out looking at a group of people than looking at one. Although we see the variety, the little differences, we can also pick out the common patterns. Once we do that, we can set directions for ourselves and our Communities. This is using our minds in spite of the ways we were hurt. It is an important part of RC—probably as important as the discharge process.

STILL A FIGHT TO DISCHARGE

With the discharge process so thoroughly interrupted and suppressed, it is still a fight for us to discharge. We often have a wonderful, attentive, warm counselor and yet don't know what to

do in the session. We can't find anything to work on. We know we should be working on something, but we can't figure out quite how to do it.

The suppression of the discharge process has been so complete that we have to use our minds against our patterns. This is different from how it was when we started out. Discharge is innate. As young ones we discharged spontaneously. We didn't understand discharge; we just used it, or tried to use it. Then it was taken from us—quickly and meanly, or slowly and gently with all sorts of apparently pleasant bribes. We were made to be orderly and quiet and to put away our distresses. Nobody could listen to us, and so we lost the discharge process.

OUR MINDS ARE STILL GOOD

Yet with all the distresses we have accumulated, our minds are still good. That is clear. Distress does not permanently damage our minds. Our minds are good even though there are many things we have not yet discharged. We are capable of being sharp and intelligent, taking in information and making decisions. We just don't manage to do that as often as we would without distress. But there are those little flashes—and they startle us, and other people. We come back to life, even under current conditions.

This means that we don't get to give up on anybody. We don't get to give up on anybody, ever. That mind is still there, the discharge process still works, and that mind can come back more and more fully, more and more often. We don't get to give up on anybody. In particular, you don't get to give up on yourself, in any way at all. It is unnecessary and incorrect for you to give up on you.



GERMANY • LYNDALL KATZ

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

² Stick around means stay involved in RC.

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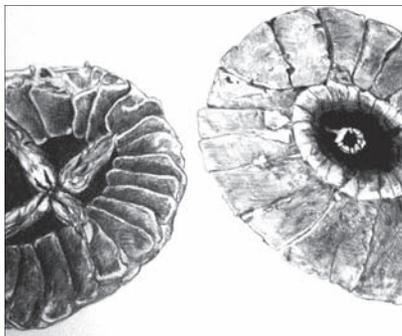
EASIER TO DO FOR OTHERS

We all have a sizeable collection of distresses that we have given up on ever freeing ourselves from. We don't say that to anybody. We dare not say it in RC. We know how to take positive directions against the distresses. And we know how to do that for other people, or how to have that appearance. We know it is correct, and we care enough about people that we can push ourselves into a correct position for them. The problem is that it doesn't work for ourselves in the same way. Faced with our discouragement, our feelings that we can't fight those battles, it is almost impossible for us to have enough perspective, to be hopeful enough or even care enough about ourselves, that we can muster the ability to take that stance for ourselves. However, you cannot give up on yourself, you must not give up on yourself.

YOU ARE WORTH THE BATTLE

It is a struggle we don't admit to easily. We hide it from each other. It's a little harder to hide with three Co-Counselors sitting there. If we have a hundred and fifty people, that makes a big difference. It makes a difference because we have this big slice of present-day reality, of live intelligences interacting with us. It is alive in a way that none of the distresses we work on are. It is alive, and we know it's alive. We can see the difference between how the distress feels and what it's like looking out and seeing those faces and eyes. We remember something. We can think a little further. We take heart³ where before we had given up.

You have to make up your mind⁴ that you are worth fighting for, no matter what—that nobody is more important than you are. It is about simply being human. In that sense no human is more important than another. Each of us is



COCCOLITHOPHORE • CYNTHIA JOHNSTON

worth fighting for completely, without qualification, just because we are us. Every single one of us is worth the battle. This is easier to think about for other people, but you have to think about it for you. You are worth the battle.

When you take this position, you'll find all sorts of arguments coming up in your mind. Those are what you get to work on. They are what your counselors need to argue against, call stupid, and do whatever else they need to do to contradict them forcefully enough that you can stay there. You also need to decide that you might be able to get everything back.

You need to decide that I might be right. I'm the one who is pushing this. I don't know that I'm right, but I think I am. I've got similar distress, but I think I'm right. What you need to decide is that maybe I am, and that you are willing to test it and see, that you are willing to face all the things that were so hurtful and confusing.

GOING BACK, BUT NOT IN THE VICTIM ROLE

You get to go back and look at these distresses, but differently than before. It seems to me that often when we go back and work on old heavy distresses, we inhabit the defeated victim role, we go back and work on how bad we felt. We tried to work on the hurts that way right after they happened, but there wasn't enough resource to let it work and some part of it got stuck. It isn't the only way to go back and work on old

distresses. It is our habit. We slip into suffering in the same way.

I think it has a limited usefulness. It does work—we have discharged through a lot of things while feeling miserable—but doing it that way is accepting the confusion. It isn't really you any longer. Now you can make up your mind and go back to finish the battle.

THE WORST THING WAS THAT YOU COULD NOT DISCHARGE

You got defeated back then, of necessity. Those were the conditions. It had to happen, and the defeat got frozen in the distress recording. Also, all those harsh ways you got hurt were not the worst thing that happened to you. The worst thing that happened to you was that you never got to discharge on them. It isn't that they happened but that you had to keep living them. If you had been able to discharge, you would have bounced back and they wouldn't be troubling you now. You would understand something from them, and they wouldn't be pulling on you. The worst thing that happened to you is that you had to continue to live them because you could not discharge.

EVERY HURT CAN BE RESOLVED

The events themselves you survived. You lived through them, and now you can recover from them. You have to decide to go back now and resolve them—decide that you are not trapped, you are not small, you are not alone. You have all this information now about how to fight that battle—information you didn't have back then. You have all this resource behind you, reality in your corner. You can go back and say, "I lost. I was beaten by this. No other way was possible then, but now I am back to finish it." You get to revisit it now that you have gained the muscle and ability, and the information about it. This doesn't mean that it won't still

³ Take heart means gain courage.

⁴ Make up your mind means decide.

feel hopeless, but you get to understand the hopelessness as something you are going back to correct, something you are going back to resolve and end. You are not going back and revisiting it endlessly as the one who got crushed. You are going back as the one who now has all the resource and ability to finally correct the situation's ongoing effect on you.

The general principle is that every mistake, every hurt in each of our lives, we get to resolve. And not just in our own lives. We also get to resolve the distresses that have come down from our peoples through generations. We have the tools to undo the hurt and confusion from every mistake that has been made and that has stuck with us.

We can reach a point where we actually get to live in the present and plan the future without having to see it all through the past difficulties. The past difficulties won't matter. We will be able to see the reality of the present and figure out what we want to have happen on that basis, instead of compensating forever for old distresses. We will actually get to have a real present life, uninfluenced by undischarged distress.

“NOW I GET TO FIX IT”

It is going to take each of us deciding to take on⁵ that challenge. I think we will, and we will have to. We can begin here amongst a hundred and fifty of us. With this much backing,⁶ we have a chance to do it. When the resource is less, it's more difficult to do. That's okay. Don't give in to patterns that say that if it is possible, then we have to do it all now. We have built up our resource over sixty years to the point where it is possible. It wasn't possible five years ago. Things move, we move, resource gathers, we get a better picture, we get to do more.

⁵ Take on means undertake.
⁶ Backing means support.

We're involved in the resolution of all the mistakes of the past.

This is something more to do, and it is in our future. We get to be aware of it and start on it now. It will affect every other thing we counsel on, because we have seen most of those things from the perspective of being hurt and crushed by them. I don't think that is necessary. I think we get to have the perspective of "Now I get to fix it. Now I get to go back and make it different." We don't have to revisit it the way it was. It isn't the way it was. It was at that moment, and our minds are still stuck there, but as soon as the discharge starts and our perspective changes, things move. That's what we are involved in. We're involved in the resolution of all the mistakes of the past.

MAYBE YOU COULD

You have to dare. You have to dare in the places where you feel hopeless, where you feel like you can't. You have to entertain the idea that maybe you could. Maybe you could face and feel all the things that you have run away from, all the distresses that have

seemed unbearable. Maybe they can be challenged.

What made things unbearable in the past was feeling heavy distresses and not being allowed to discharge. That's unbearable. But as soon as you challenge those same heavy distresses and begin to discharge, things begin to shift, in both your feelings and your understandings.

I want you to fight for yourself. No matter what. I know you have a thousand arguments against it in your head. You get to say those out loud, and your counselor will say, "Nonsense! You are going to fight this fight. I don't care how scared you are. I don't care if you think you can't make it.⁷ I don't care if you think you're not worth it. I think you are, so we are going to do it. Got it?"⁸ It takes some force to contradict how easily we have given up here.

⁷ Make it means succeed.
⁸ Got it means do you understand that.



DEAN COLLEGE, FRANKLIN, MASSACHUSETTS, USA • TIM JACKINS

Drug-Free, and Discharging Early Distress

In the raised-Native support group I lead, we have been noticing some substantial changes in our attention. It used to be that we would have to do two or more rounds of “news and goods” to pull everyone’s attention out at the beginning of the group. (It was such a contradiction¹ to take time to notice that, despite the challenges we were all facing, some things were actually good.) Now we only need to do one round. We come into the group ready to work, and we can notice that we’ve missed each other and are happy to see each other. Also, the changes each of us has made in our lives are huge. We are living bigger and healthier lives after discharging consistently for several years on genocide. Many in the group made it to² the last West Coast (North America) Natives workshop and had a great time.

One of the group members, who was put on an anti-depressant right around the time she came into RC, announced in the last support group that she is now drug-free. I was impressed that she felt safe enough to tell me about being put on drugs.

When she told me about her “panic attacks,” which left her in the hospital, I stayed calm and positive. She is a hard worker and would dive head-first into her heaviest stuff³ with not quite enough knowledge about how to pull herself out again. I consistently tried to reframe her experience and stated that she was fine and doing a great thing to discharge so heavily. I stayed positive, and sure that the distress was rolling off her quickly and permanently, and kept saying so. And I told her that

we would work to get her gradually off drugs. She had already made the decision to get off them, but I reassured her that she didn’t need to do it alone and that we would help her get a balance of attention⁴ for discharging some of her heaviest early stuff.

I also shared some theory. I said that working on early memories may kick up⁵ feelings that seem too big and out of control and that this is partially because when we were young, we had limited resources and information to help us figure things out. I said that young people’s oppression can be compounded by the additional hurts from the genocide and racism directed at Native communities. As young people handling all the oppression, we most of the time had to stifle or hide our discharge, because it wasn’t safe, and just had to function on top of the feelings.

I encouraged her for several months to take her time and focus on pleasant memories and “news and goods.” Now she is back to working on the early hurts and seems to be much more skilled at deciding how deep she wants to go and at pulling her attention out at the end of a session. She is feeling positive about cleaning up the early hurts, rather than worried that her discharge is weird or her distress is too heavy. She is proud about becoming drug-free and is eager to get to the support group and discharge.

Nola Hadley Torres

Union City, California, USA

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

¹ Contradiction to distress

² Made it to means succeeded in getting to.

³ Stuff means distress.

⁴ Balance of attention means enough attention on good reality to be able to discharge effectively.

⁵ Kick up means bring to the surface.

Ending Overweight by Loving Ourselves

It seems to me that for you, J—, everything is about appreciating yourself and realizing how good you are right now, in every way, without any improvement. Let me tell you that you are good, you are beautiful, you are strong, you are caring, you are honest, you communicate well; you are a lovely woman. I am proud to know you, I am glad for every bit of closeness we can get between us, and you have every reason to just stop and gloat about yourself and no reason for the other, except the hurts that were all put on you from the outside.

I think you must appreciate yourself and guide your counselors into furnishing appreciation steadily for you, too. I think that all of us who have weight problems are pretty well¹ stuck with them until we can just really love and adore ourselves, and then the patterns discharge.

*Harvey Jackins*²

From a letter written in 1980

¹ Pretty well means mostly.

² Harvey Jackins was the founder and first International Reference Person of the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities.

Exam Stress!

At the age of thirty-five I decided again to get my driver's license, after not having passed driving exams four times before. It had been twelve years since my last try.

This not-being-able-to-get-a-driver's-license had become quite a thing for me. It was mingled with feelings of failure, shame, inadequacy, and worthlessness. On top of that was the sheer concept of an exam. That moment of being judged made me quite uncomfortable. But I decided to go for it¹ anyway.

The driving lessons were a lot of fun. My instructor turned out to be² a capable, humorous man who was quite stern when necessary. As I had already said so many times, I told him, "It's not that I can't drive a car, it's that I don't behave in traffic as most people do. I stop for others when I should be driving to keep the traffic behind me going, or I look at birds in trees when I should be looking for bikes in lanes."

But I couldn't go on just having fun driving lessons, could I? I had given myself a challenge, and I didn't want to run away from it. So at some point my instructor and I decided together that I could apply for the exam.

At that time I was in a starter class of Re-evaluation Counseling. Already I had been discharging on my feelings of inadequacy and low self-esteem. Now, with the exam coming closer, it was time for a battle plan to overcome my feelings about the "impending doom." The week before my exam, I had sessions with each member of the class, sometimes more than one in a day. I focused completely on the driving exam and discharged about experiences

during my previous exams. (Oh, how I still could hear that one examiner spit her words at me: "What are you doing?" Hahaha. Even as I type this, I discharge about that piercing, nagging voice.) I discharged while telling how awesomely elegantly I can take curves. I discharged to rid myself of the weird idea that I was clumsy, and so on. I can tell you, a lot of stuff got cleaned up!

I decided during those sessions that I would be me during the exam. I would be open about my feelings and not ashamed if my nerves made me discharge.

And then it was the day of the exam. I was nervous. I was discharging a lot! I was sweating and needed to wee³ every five minutes, and my tics were in overdrive.⁴ When I met the examiner, I told him I was nervous. He told me it was fine, nothing out of the ordinary, to be nervous. In my head a mantra had started, saying it was not the end of the world, only a driving exam.

So off we went. I knew part of the drill, of course, and I settled

down a bit while the examiner and my instructor talked together and I focused on driving. Then it happened. I was sent to drive onto a turnpike, and, mind you, it was one of the most busy turnpikes in this country. And I didn't do it. I was aware that I was unaware of what I should be doing. I said in a bit of panic, "I'm not doing it," and kept driving on straight ahead. The examiner kept calm (yay!) and helped with simpler instructions to drive further. I tried to calm down, but to no avail. Thoughts and feelings were bouncing up and down in my head, and I couldn't get them to settle. When we reached a more calm area, the examiner asked me to turn around. I asked him if we could instead stop the car because I was still upset and needed time to re-collect myself. He agreed, and I parked the car in a very creative manner. I turned off the engine. He asked me what I thought I had done wrong. My reply was that I hadn't done anything wrong yet but that if we continued I would start making mistakes. By then tears were in my eyes, snot had started to build up in my nose, and I was trembling a bit. I was on the verge of a good sobfest!

continued . . .

³ Wee means urinate.

⁴ My tics were in overdrive means my face was twitching a lot.



ALAN EPSTEIN

¹ Go for it means pursue it.

² My instructor turned out to be means as it happened, my instructor was.

COUNSELING PRACTICE

... continued

I thought of how I could discharge in a way that would allow me to collect my senses again but would not be too intimidating for my company, though of course I already was crying a bit. I said, "I want to tell you about another time when I was overcome with feelings of panic and how I calmed down again." My examiner agreed to listen, and I told him about a panic attack during scuba diving and how I managed to fight against it. Though he didn't know he was actually counselling me, I made the best of it. I discharged the most intense emotions and calmed down. After he thought I was ready again, we resumed the exam.

Not surprisingly, I was sent back to drive onto the turnpike. This time I did it, and according to the instructor I even did it perfectly!

When the exam was over, the examiner congratulated me for passing it. Well, I discharged some then! He commended me especially for realising when a situation was dangerous, even when it didn't have to do with surrounding traffic. He said that I had proven I could assess very well when it was dangerous for me to drive and that I had shown that I knew how to handle such a situation in the most sensible manner.

I think that my knowledge and experience of discharging greatly contributed to the experience, and even helped me in passing my exam! And you know⁵ what? I am so proud of myself, and I agree entirely that I am a capable driver. And I love the fact that I had this wonderful experience in my life, and have an inspiring story to tell—well, certainly still inspiring for me!

Tessa Kersten
Amsterdam, the Netherlands

⁵ You know means do you know.

..... Discharging Fear, Rescuing Me

Barbara's¹ leadership at the Black Liberation and Community Development Workshop this past May was phenomenal. Tim² started the workshop by reminding us that if we are going to lead, we need to be constantly in motion—having Co-Counseling sessions, maintaining and building relationships with our Co-Counselors and allies, and going for³ the hard stuff.⁴ Barbara focused on how we get there: by making sure we all have big lives. We get to have big lives by having sessions, and supporting each other to have sessions, about what gets in the way. Barbara pushed us to work on one of the things that gets in our way—*fear*.

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

² Tim Jackins

³ Going for means pursuing.

⁴ Stuff means distress.



HELEN PARKIN

Since I came back from the workshop, fear has been at the centre of my sessions. Fear gets in the way of my approaching almost anything fully, zestfully, powerfully. It can be something as simple as getting out of bed, making a phone call, or exercising, to something as big as producing a recording, renovating a property, or applying for a loan. I somehow manage to do things, but the fear is there, and it is hard and big. I see it in my hands. What do I mean by this? As far back as I can remember, I have bitten my nails (right down to my cuticles, sometimes till they bleed). Since I can only remember back to age four, that's where I've gone to work.

In my sessions about what it was like for me at age four, I notice the terror and trauma of separation and loss. I've gotten to go back there and cry and shake and, bit by bit, rescue *me*.

As I continue to discharge fear, I will figure out more and more. Barbara's immense thinking about and around us, as individuals and as a Community, has reminded me that the best choice—no matter how hard the distress—is to continue to discharge, discharge, discharge.

Chantal Esdelle
Tunapuna, Trinidad and Tobago
Reprinted from the RC e-mail discussion list
for leaders of African heritage people

Jewish Law, and Mourning

I recently played an important role in counseling three different RC leaders, including my regular Co-Counselor, who had lost a parent. I learned a lot from it. In particular, I found it useful to refer to the Jewish laws of mourning.

Jewish laws of mourning assume that people who have lost a loved one need to take time away from the details of daily life and pay attention to the grief. Jews have different laws governing the first week, the first month, and, in the case of losing a parent, the first year after a death. The degree to which the person who is mourning abandons or lessens the responsibilities of daily life and focuses on the grief changes accordingly. Also, in formally assigning a period of time to the mourning, the assumption is that the grief will eventually end.

In the United States, where capitalism is most advanced, there is little permission to set aside work and responsibilities to take time to grieve. As an Israeli, I have found it shocking to learn about people who lose a parent and go to work the next day, and have seen the backlash of that approach.

I found that heavy discharge came when I reassured the mourners that it was okay to set aside responsibilities and focus on the grief. I encouraged them to take a free pass,¹ shrug responsibilities, and grieve. I adopted the attitude that, although many old hurts may be attached to it, losing a family member is a present-time hurt, which needs to be discharged. Because it is a present-time hurt, it often seemed to be a mistake for the mourner to engage in “attention out” activities, which sometimes seemed to only serve as distractions.

¹ Take a free pass means give themselves full permission to do what they needed to.



VICTORIA, BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA • AMANDA MARTINEZ

How long and to what extent should people focus on their grief and avoid work and other responsibilities? I found it useful to apply Jewish traditions as a rough guide in assisting my Co-Counselors.

In Jewish tradition, during the first week after a death people stay at home and are visited by friends and family who bring them meals and just sit with them. Visitors are encouraged not to chit-chat² but to join the mourner in paying attention to his or her loss. Friends bring meals because the mourner is expected to have no responsibilities other than mourning. There are even guidelines about not using the usual greetings, such as “hi, hello, how are you,” when visiting a mourner. This is a small but thoughtful way of showing that the visitor is not proceeding with business as usual but is recognizing that the world is different now that the loved one is gone.

In Co-Counseling terms, I think that in the first week after a death it's important to offer the mourner

² Chit-chat means engage in superficial conversation.

daily one-way time.³ It was easier for me to give daily one-way time when I had the guideline that it was only for a week. I also found it useful to reassure the mourner that he or she wasn't wrong to stay at home and would not be left alone.

In Jewish tradition, during the first month after a death a mourner may leave home and go back to work but is still formally in a state of heavy mourning and should not attend parties or social gatherings, hear live music, or engage in levity that could distract him or her from the grief. It is useful to stay away from activities that would make the mourner feel like the world is going on without his or her loved one, to not trivialize the death by going on with business as usual.

In Co-Counseling terms, I think of the first month of mourning as a time to have daily sessions, in person or by phone. These can be one-way or lopsided.⁴ I've let mourners be in charge of when, over the course of the month, they can pay enough attention to counsel back. And as client I've determined if they are, in fact, able to pay attention or are stretching too far, perhaps because of an over-responsibility pattern.

In Jewish tradition, after the loss of a parent, the person is still formally a mourner for a period of one year. After the initial month ends, the mourner spends the rest of the year reciting daily kaddish.⁵ In Co-Counseling terms, I think of the first year as a time to have as many sessions as possible.

continued . . .

³ Time means counseling sessions.

⁴ Lopsided means ones in which the time is not equally divided.

⁵ Kaddish is a prayer found in the Jewish prayer service. The term often refers specifically to the mourners' Kaddish, which is said as part of the mourning rituals in Judaism.

COUNSELING PRACTICE

... continued

When Co-Counselors of mine have apologized for still working on a death, I've found it useful to reassure them that for a whole year they are formally in a state of mourning. I often steer their attention back to the death and away from distractions. They will also often discharge chains of old hurts that are attached to the death or to the person who died.

After the first year passes, Jews pay attention to the loss and remember the deceased person every year on the anniversary of the death. I don't know yet how to translate that to Co-Counseling except to assume that any time Co-Counselors wish

to grieve the loss they may need to be reassured that they get to do that as often for as long as they wish, and never need to forget the person who died.

I think these guidelines from Jewish law make the process of mourning more human, contradict the inhuman pressures of capitalism, and can help people discharge more effectively and thoroughly. And making the mourning period finite can be useful—to the mourner and to his or her counselors.

I also think it's important that people (like me) who haven't lost a member of their immediate family

assume that they can't know what it's like to experience a loss of that magnitude. Because I've not lost a parent myself, I've found it useful to refer to Jewish law in figuring out how to assist my Co-Counselors.

Because many RC leaders are at a stage in their lives when they could lose a parent, we will need to think about mourning time and again. Having a rational approach to it would help us in our relationships and in our work with each other.

Ela Thier

New York, New York, USA
Reprinted from the RC e-mail
discussion list for leaders of Jews



KIERAN REICHERT

Coming Soon:

***Ruah Hadashah* No. 11**

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

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

Marya Axner, Editor
Somerville, Massachusetts, USA

\$4.00 (U.S.) plus postage and handling
Ordering information on page 109

I have a supportive Co-Counselor who reminds me of my goodness so that I won't doubt it. Encouragement is a contradiction to the early messages we all get. The current society fosters isolation and competition instead of cooperation and encouragement. I experienced a moment of creativity and wanted to share the result:

I am good
And if you would

Remind me of that fact
I'll shed a tear
And hold you near
And proud is how I'll act

When those who doubt
My power shout
Or send me grim-faced looks
I get a mini¹
Take time to whinny²

And smile at them, un-hooked³

Mike Lyons

Austin, Texas, USA
Reprinted from the e-mail discussion
list for RC Community members

¹ A mini-session

² Whinny means make a sound resembling a horse's neigh and is used here to mean discharge.

³ Un-hooked means no longer in the middle of distressful feelings.

Violence in the Home



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



On the subject of ongoing violence in the home, I think immediately of Harvey.¹ He was clear as a bell that there are times when it's important to act first, then discharge. I think that when there's violence, acting first to stop the harm, once and for all, is the only powerful response to the situation. Trying to mop up a flood of feelings while the hydrant is spewing is wasted work.

Ask for help from people you think will help. Ask for help from people you don't think will help. Ask for help from people you know and from people you've never met before in your life.

Decide you are worth a leap into the unknown, and make that leap. You are not going to know how it will turn out,² but there are thousands of people who can tell you how it turns out if you stay (in the violent situation). That picture is not a good one for you or your daughters.

Use the people in your RC Community for discharge and support. But they can't get you out of the situation. Only a decision by you can do that. So don't lean on them waiting for clarity to come from that source. It has to come from you.

Palo Alto, California, USA
Reprinted from the RC e-mail
discussion list for leaders of parents

¹ Harvey Jackins

² It will turn out means things will eventually be.

Going Through Heavy Fear

I will try to call you before you get this letter, so this may seem a little out of date. I feel the urge to take a plane and fly to you and simply stay with you for two or three days until "all your fear is gone," but I know from experience that that would only lead you to bring up more fear.

I will try to get you on the phone and by letter and remind you that reality is fine; that the pseudo-reality—the gross, gray, glubby guck that seems to cover everything—is only the result of human distress and that the real reality underneath is golden and safe. That we have evolved for billions of years, finely tuned to fit this beautiful universe of which we are the leading edge. And that if you look into my smiling face and bright blue eyes, you will feel terribly scared but you will be shaking while you do it.

There is just a small, finite amount of your fear still to get out, and you must in the main* remember to keep your direction on reassurance, to brush the small gray cloud away from the front of your eyes so you can see some of the sunshine beyond. And I, for my part, will do the small amount that I can do—that is, be an outrigger for your canoe, be a glimpse of reality for you, and guarantee you that you are never alone, since our feet are always touching the same earth. I will see that you get out into the sunshine permanently.

Harvey Jackins
From a letter written in 1980

* In the main means mostly.



“You Are a Perfect Example of Us”

A talk by Tim Jackins to the people targeted by racism attending the West Coast North America Reference Persons' Workshop, January 2011

Many things in society have shifted in the direction of things we have been talking about in RC and have demonstrated in our lives. Our ideas are out in public more as we have gotten less scared, and things have shifted. We can't say what part we have played in these shifts, but we can't dismiss that they are happening, and that they are happening along the path that we are laying out. I think we are having big effects that we will never know. We don't need to. We just need to know that things are moving and that they line up well with our work.

To create good conditions for future generations, we have to include fighting for ourselves. Sacrificing ourselves for somebody is almost never necessary. There may be a few isolated times when something has to be done so quickly that self-sacrifice is useful. But any belief you have that sacrificing yourself is the best way to go is probably wound up in a lot of distresses. You, your family, and your people have acted out recordings¹ that say that sacrificing yourself is better than being self-centered. In some limited sense, it could be. But it is a very limited sense.

Your children don't need to see you sacrificing yourself. They need to

see you pushing for what is correct, including for yourself. If they don't see you pushing for yourself, how do you expect them to push for themselves? You can't just work to create better conditions for others. You have to show your best picture of reality, your best picture of what's possible for humans, and include in that what's best for you. Your welfare and prospering are not inherently at odds with anybody else's. All our real interests line up. And don't worry that by giving up the idea of sacrifice you will become self-centered. There are self-centered patterns (distresses have the ability to take amazing forms), but they, too, are only distresses to discharge and get rid of.

Self-centeredness, in the way the culture talks about it, is a set of patterns. It's putting yourself first and not being able to think about the ramifications for those around you. By fighting for yourself I mean fighting for yourself *as one of us, not leaving yourself out*. The best phrase I have come up with² is that *you are a perfect example of us*. Each one of us is a perfect example of us. Although we are all quite different from each other, we are all the same in the crucial ways. We are all exactly the same in our humanness.

It makes no sense to not be able to fight for ourselves. Many of us can do it in reactive ways. We reactively refuse to give up. Most of us have a piece of that. It's what got us this far. You know a lot of people who don't have that. They have given up, and they are not here. Some patterns do work better than others, are more successful, but that doesn't mean that you want to be satisfied with that. You want to be able to think of you as the perfect example of us.

Everybody wants a bigger life. In capitalism we're supposed to get more at the expense of other people. Let's make it better for all of us. We want to figure out how to move *us*. It's perfectly correct that you have more information, more contact, but how do we move *together* in that direction instead of asking, "How do I pull things away from somebody else so that I have more?"

An oppressive society can't survive if people can fight for themselves. How can it keep people oppressed and confused and divided if they are actively struggling for their own interests instead of shrugging and giving up? I don't think oppressive societies can survive unless resignation is installed on everybody. It's not done intelligently. There is nothing thoughtful about an oppressive society. It's manipulative. It restimulates people in different ways. It's not intelligent.

Comment: I want to go back to the statement you made: "fighting for yourself as one of us." That is such an important statement. It is related to differences in cultures and the difference between individualism and collectivism. When you say it, you validate a culture, which doesn't always happen when people are being counseled on fighting for themselves. I think white RCers are more confused

¹ Distress recordings

² Come up with means thought of.



CESARIANI, ATHENS, GREECE • MARGIE DOYLE PAPADOPOULOU

by the dominance of individualism, and it seems to be the direction in which they counsel us people targeted by racism. It doesn't fit for us. There is something right about collectivism (for example, we would have universal health care in this country if collectivism dominated).

You are correct about patterned collectivism—we do have to fight for ourselves—but I don't see that happening flexibly yet. We still lose people from RC because of this. I'm so happy to hear your statement. I think we need to start teaching that concept to white RC leaders, because they are not getting³ it.

Tim: Yes. There is great confusion all around this. I think it's based on patterns from early defeats. The patterns in a society affect all the people in it, whether they are in RC or not. It would be wonderful if a fundamentals class cleansed us of all that, but it doesn't. So these confusions are there. They are part of what we have to change to fully understand the idea of fighting for ourselves.

Every human being is a valuable example of us. Every human being, every single one of us, deserves the universe to line up behind her or him. It is in our interest to back⁴ each other to

fight for ourselves—in an intelligent, full way, not in some meager, oppressively-defined way. And it's going to take work.

Comment: Will you say this to the white folks then?

Tim: Yes, I will (*group laughter*). It doesn't mean all will understand it. You know that, too. But yes, it is part of what we will have to do to clarify a lot of things.

Comment: I believe this is key to keeping us people targeted by racism in RC. That one concept validates the way we cooperate³ in the world.

Tim: Yes, it's a struggle in every culture not to abandon the culture because it has patterns connected with it—to value the wonderful things in it.

Comment: But I would suggest to you that in some Communities we are asked to throw away the culture.

Tim: I do understand. Good.

So you, as a perfect example of us, deserve the entire universe behind you in your fight to be yourself. As far as we know, you are the best thing that has come out of the universe so far. You are the most complex, interesting entity that has developed. There are a lot of ways of assigning value and importance to things. One is complexity, and you are it. You can interact with everything much more fully than any other organism has

been able to do so far. The universe is much more interesting with us in it, and our complexity makes it interesting to have each other. If you're the best example of that, then you should be backed.

You get the chance to be you, whatever it is you are, using all the influences you've collected in your life and being as unique as you wish to be. You are worth the fight. You are very much worth fighting for. You are worth every effort you can make, your counselor can make, we can make. This is not in conflict with anyone else's interest. I want you to be as big and strong and smart as possible. It's in my interest that you be that. Doing it your way is fine. It will be your way, if you get the chance. None of us develops any other way except our own, when we get the chance.

Can we take this on⁵? Are we at a point now when we can provide a clear enough picture of it, provide enough resource for each other, and tighten up our courage enough that we can face the things that have been so hard for us to face? We have done a lot of good work and made a lot of progress, which is creating the conditions for the next step. It seems to me that this is an important piece of becoming ourselves and of moving this whole project forward.

³ Getting means understanding.

⁴ Back means support.

⁵ Take this on means undertake this.



Web Special

A bundle of twelve CDs of talks given by Tim Jackins at workshops he led in 2006, 2007, and 2008—four CDs for each year (part of the RC Teacher Update series)



See page 104 for the titles of the talks.

\$40 (U.S.), plus postage and handling
Available only on the RC web site
<<http://www.rc.org>>



NEW ZEALAND • LANCE CABLK

A New Way To Look at Oppression

I have been listening again to the CDs of Tim's talks¹ and recently was struck by a comment Tim made that went something like, "The main form of oppression now is in our heads."

I took this to a Co-Counseling session and after discharge had an idea about what it means for me as an adult woman: No man can actually oppress me in the present. This made me excited. It seems to be a way for me to stay clear about what is happening when I have feelings about how the men in my life restimulate my old hurts from sexism.

It also helps me remember the complete goodness of men and the way that structures of privilege and oppression are installed. The human who is acting oppressive (and therefore might restimulate me) is being "played" by a pattern and is still there for me to reach for, if I can think and move on what is happening.

If I apply this understanding to the ways I am set up² as a white, "First World," English-speaking, Protestant, urban, owning-class woman to thoughtlessly and unwarily maintain the structures that give me privileges and sustain capitalism, I can set myself against the pull to wallow in feeling bad about my situation as an oppressor. I can use my mind to remember my complete powerfulness and goodness, discharge any restimulation, and, when I can think again, move against patterns and for humans.

Remembering that all of us have both oppressor material³ and victim material helps me to keep deciding, acting, and discharging, and thinking in the face of others' acting on feelings of being oppressed in the present.

Anne Barton

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

¹ Rational Island Publishers has been producing quarterly CDs ("RC Teacher Updates") of talks given by Tim Jackins at recent RC workshops. To see the current list of these CDs, go to page 105 of this *Present Time*.

² Set up means predisposed.

³ Material means distress.



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

You can order back issues as regular literature items (see pages 103 and 109).

The Impact of Decision

I have been puzzling about the impact of decision-making. Sometimes a response from another mind helps me to make an important decision in a split second, and what seemed to be a huge struggle is all of a sudden totally gone.

As a Frisian speaker I sometimes feel stuck with having to deal with all the English in RC. As I worked on the first RC journal for care of the environment, I felt like my brain was stuffed with fog. I asked Tim Jackins if I had to read everything that would be in the journal. He said yes and told me why. After that I needed no more Co-Counseling sessions. My brain felt light and clear, and I began reading everything. It was easy to think, and my fears of being inadequate or stupid seemed to be gone. Something similar has happened to me a couple of other times.

I'm asking myself what happened when Tim explained that. Was it the tone? Was it the words? Was it being taken seriously? Were our minds totally out of any distress at that moment? I knew right away that I would be fine reading it all. I felt energized, knew it was the right decision, knew I could do it, and knew it would not be hard to do.

Could some of our distresses move that easily? Making a decision for real has always made things so much easier for me. It has saved lots of time by my not having sessions I do not need to have. I would love to hear what others have figured out about this.

Wytske Visser
International Commonality Reference Person
for the Care of the Environment
 Ljouwert, Fryslan, the Netherlands
 Reprinted from the RC e-mail discussion
 list for leaders in the care of the environment



Toward Well-Being

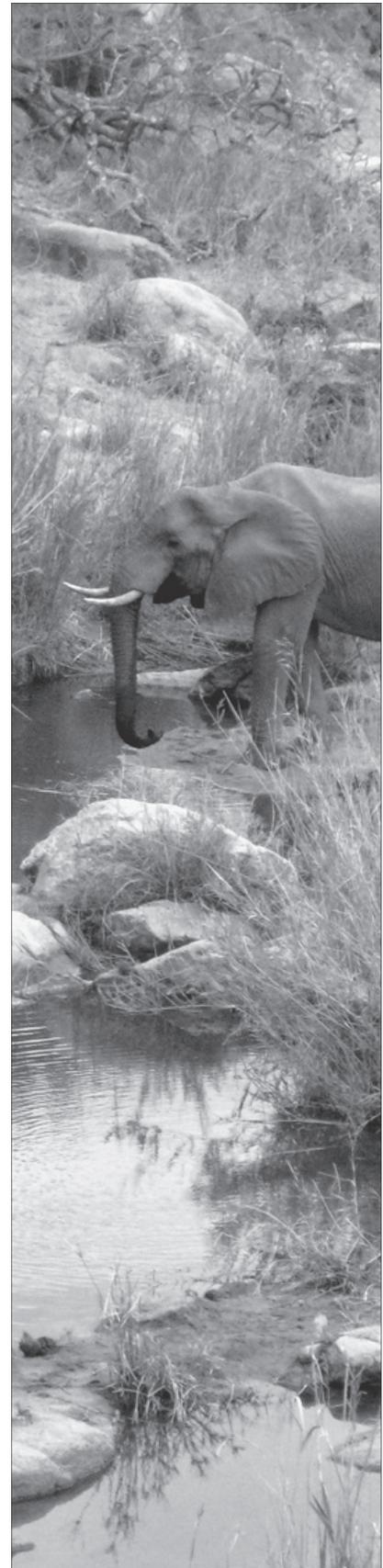
I remind you that with any physical ailment, the [counseling] direction is toward well-being. Talk and think about your pancreas working splendidly, or about other people's pancreases working splendidly, or about the great

pancreas in the sky secreting just the right amount—anything against the distress—and I think you will find the discharge, the crucial part of which will be the yawns.

Harvey Jackins
 From a letter written in 1976



KK



DIANE SHISK

The Physiology of Discharge

The physiology of discharge has long fascinated me. I remember reading an article a long time ago about a study done on post-operative surgical patients. The group that was encouraged to yawn recovered faster than the control group. I also read many articles about the physiology of crying.

In the 1970s, a year after my father died, my son got a bad flu with a high fever. I lay down with him on top of me and started asking him questions about his day and his week. I asked if he could remember anything that had upset him. I remembered that we had watched

some slides that included a picture of him and my father. I asked if that had anything to do with his being sick, and he started crying heavily. I had taken his temperature earlier in the evening, and it was 104 degrees (Fahrenheit). After ten or fifteen minutes he stopped crying, and his temperature was 100. We lay together for a while, and I noticed his temperature go up. I took it again, and it was back at 104. I asked him to talk more about his grandfather. He started crying again, and his temperature went down. We repeated this several times until he went to sleep.

Once on a camping trip my son wandered off a path, turned over a log, and released a nest of wasps that stung him all over his body. By the time we got back to the tent, his whole body was swollen from the stings and he was in great pain. He was crying, and I encouraged him to cry louder. We were far away from any doctor, so we could only rely on crying. As he cried, the swelling went down and so did the pain. He stopped crying, and after about ten minutes the swelling and pain returned. Every time he cried, the swelling went down. After a few hours of this (at least it seemed that long) the pain and the swelling subsided. Although there was still some pain, it was not enough to stop him from enjoying the camping trip.

As a result of these experiences, and a few others, I became convinced of the power of discharge to cause significant physiological changes in the body and to help the body heal.

I'm concerned, however, about trying to convince people about the power of discharge by citing research. My experience as an educator has been that few people change their beliefs as a result of research. Most people need to have a personal experience with a phenomenon in order to understand it. I've seen this over and over again with research on learning, oppression, and health. And I find that I, too, am not exempt from ignoring the research when it does not fit in with my own belief systems.

Julian Weissglass

Santa Barbara, California, USA
Reprinted from the e-mail discussion
list for RC Community members



SAN JUAN ISLANDS, WASHINGTON, USA • ALISA LEMIRE BROOKS

Researching Discharge

It may be useful to remember that crying, laughing, yawning, and sweating are just the outward physical signs of what must be a set of profound and complex mental processes that we currently understand only in terms of their effects on our minds.

I think that measuring chemical changes in tears, sweat, and so on, or even the changes of blood flow or electrical activity in the brain, are not in any way measuring these profound mental processes. I don't think that any of these physiological measurements contribute much to a scientific understanding of the aspects of the discharge processes that we in RC are most concerned with.

I think these measurements are more on the level of observing a computer and noticing that the power consumption goes up a certain amount when you move the mouse. Observing the power of consumption won't tell you anything about the most interesting things about how the computer works internally.

I imagine that someday we humans will understand how our minds work, including the discharge processes. Although I think we are a long way from that, I don't think that not knowing holds us back at this point. Few people know how a mobile phone works internally, but that makes almost no difference to how useful mobile phones are.

I think that trying to convince people that discharge is useful by talking about chemicals released or brain activity may reach some people at first, but ultimately it is misleading and not RC theory.

I think that, at this point in our development, we decide whether discharge is useful or not by experiencing the effect it has on our own minds and guessing at the effects it has on other people's minds by our contact with them.

It's also good to remember that the discharge processes are instinctive to humans. We have to be conditioned to stop using them. By analogy, I like to eat food, and I haven't needed any scientific proof that food is good for me. If I came across¹ someone who had difficulty eating, to help him or her I wouldn't rely on scientific backing² that food is good for people. I would contradict the distress recording that was getting in the way of his or her instinctive enjoyment of it.

Karl Lam

Cambridge, Cambridgeshire, England
Reprinted from the e-mail discussion
list for RC Community members

¹ Came across means encountered.

² Backing means support.

More Feelings Since Being in RC

You are not alone in feeling that distresses bother you much more since you began RC than they used to. It is a temporary price we have to pay to get rid of the layers of unawareness and false composure that have encrusted us. I know it is uncomfortable, but it is just something to work through.

The best way of working on these things is very lightly, with a direction that treats them as humor. Perhaps, "I have a wonderful collection of intense feelings!" or "If I've lived this long with them inside, I can certainly live well with them coming out—Ouwuuuuuh," the last being the noise of a shudder. If you treat them lightly, your counselor is not likely to get bogged down or to worry.

Harvey Jackins

From a letter written in 1980



YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK, CALIFORNIA, USA • LISA VOSS

Discharging After a Physical Hurt

Last night I stepped on a glass table. It broke and my left foot went through it. I felt no pain and did what I have done in similar situations—remain overly calm. I thought, “I don’t feel anything, so I’m going to lift my foot carefully; it will either be fine or my sock will be red with my blood.” It was the latter.

I spent an hour in the emergency room. Soon my partner, Megan, who Co-Counsels, came in and allowed me to talk, yawn, and shiver.

I shook and yelped as the doctor cleaned my wound. She asked if she should stop. I explained that the pain was relatively mild but that my yawning, shaking, and verbal reactions helped me to feel it and get through it more easily. She seemed to accept that. I held Megan’s hand while my teeth chattered away.

The doctor told me she was going to put a local anesthetic in my foot that would block the pain receptors and decrease feeling in the area. I asked her if it was necessary. She said it was my choice but that sewing my skin together could be painful and it was critical that my foot not move. I was feeling scared of the pain and not sure I could keep my foot motionless, so I agreed to the anesthetic. Moments after the injection, I felt, or imagined, a slight shift in my brain and felt sad that my foot had lost feeling in the injured spot. I continued to lightly discharge and received a tetanus shot.

When I arrived at home, I spent a little time with my daughters and cuddled up with Megan. I had been walking easily on the bandage. I’m now realizing that the anesthetic, mixed with my adrenaline, had probably masked pain that would have told me not to walk on my foot—or better, let me know that I should be noticing my body and discharging. We watched a movie and fell asleep.

I awoke at 5:15 AM to tremendous pain in my foot and throbbing in my shoulder where I’d had the tetanus shot. Megan gave me an hour of one-way time. I screamed and cried and screamed and cried. At first it felt like a direct response to the injury. However, it was soon clear that I was also discharging on old memories of physical pain; lifelong terror, including about the Holocaust; and images of torture and other atrocities I’d seen on television and in movies.

I was aware of how far I’d come in my liberation from men’s oppression: I knew that Megan wanted to be there for me, and I knew that I wanted her there.

She sat with me while I sent a text message to twenty Co-Counselors requesting immediate one-way time (it was 6:00 AM) as well as time throughout the day. I discharged with joy thinking about the amazing support system we RCers have created and how far I’d come that I had twenty people to reach out to. From 6:00 to 8:00 AM I received one-way time from several Co-Counselors, and I had additional brief sessions throughout the day. I worked on my chronic terror more effectively than I had been able to previously.

The injury helped me to understand at a new level the impact of physical hurts, their connection to non-physical hurts, and how much men’s oppression affects us men. We get strong messages to “keep it together.”¹ Our training to take pain with a straight face² brutalizes us and sets us up³ to be martyrs. It is perfectly designed to perpetuate male supremacy and sexism.

Matthew Leber

Nashville, Tennessee, USA

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

¹ “Keep it together” means not express our feelings, stay in control.

² With a straight face means without showing any emotion.

³ Sets us up means predisposes us.

Some Basics of RC Family Work

(CD 20)

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

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

\$10 (U.S.), plus postage and handling

To order, see page 109.

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

Community Building in Togo and Benin

Over the past two years, the two of us have had the privilege of deepening connections with the leaders of RC and the members of their Communities in the West African countries of Togo and Benin.

The main leaders, Hokameto Missigbe in Togo and Eric Amoussou-Guenou and Angelo Amoussou-Guenou in Benin, were introduced to RC by Eyidie N'gangue in 1999. Melphy Sakupwanya, the Regional Reference Person for Sub-Saharan Africa, has led several workshops in these countries, and some of the leaders have attended teacher-training workshops led by other experienced RC leaders.

The Co-Counselors in Togo and Benin have been building RC Communities, despite the language isolation from the Anglophone Communities in Africa and the limited number of local Co-Counselors who can translate from English to French. Until recently they had only a few pieces of RC literature in French. (In the last year we have sent two libraries, each with a few copies of every piece of RC literature that has been translated into French, plus a number of recent articles by Tim Jackins translated into French by Régis Courtin¹ and others.)

THE FIRST COMMUNITY VISIT AND WORKSHOP

Tim and Melphy approved our going to Togo and Benin in October and November 2010, to give the Communities there a workshop in their own language. The local leaders helped set up several activities in their Communities and selected fifteen of the most

experienced Co-Counselors from each Community to attend a workshop.

We spent the first week in Lomé, Togo, meeting with many Co-Counselors whose RC experience ranged from a few weeks to several years. We led groups for women, men, and students; classes on basic RC theory for Community members; and introductory talks for new RCers. We also had Co-Counseling sessions at every opportunity with Missigbe and other Co-Counselors.

Then we traveled to Cotonou, Benin, along with fifteen Togolese Co-Counselors for a workshop with the combined Communities. People were visibly delighted to connect with one another and proud of being part of a Francophone RC Community. We reviewed basic theory and did some beginning work on oppression and Community building, all with lots of mini-sessions and demonstrations. I (Ellie) led the overall workshop, and I (Marion) taught some classes—notably one on “mental health” oppression that was a highlight for many. We got to discharge while noticing what it would be like if we didn't worry about being too visible, too loud, or too anything. The last mini was a three-way in which each person made visible some aspect of himself or herself. The room erupted in laughter as clients pushed back constraints about how they were to be and talked louder, sang, danced around, strutted about, and so forth.

During the following week in Cotonou we met

with the Benin Community and did classes, groups, and individual sessions, much as we had done in Togo. We also had time to meet and counsel with the leaders.

We were touched by people's willingness to put aside their struggles for survival and show up with eager hopefulness in their eyes. Some RCers' homes had been flooded during the rainy season, which had just ended, and we saw some of the homes and met some of the people living in them who had resulting serious medical conditions.

We worked hard to be available to the Community and to share RC as much as we could. It didn't matter to us that we had to lead a gathering the morning after our fifteen-hour journey, when some of the participants had walked an hour to get there or hadn't had any breakfast before arriving. We learned that when our attention was on bringing RC to eager minds, we stepped up² and kept stepping up. We used the hours in the day well, with contacts in various configurations.

continued . . .

² Stepped up means did what was necessary.



LYNDALL KATZ

¹ Régis Courtin is the RC Translation Coordinator for the French language.

... continued

A RETURN VISIT IN JULY 2011

When we got back to Seattle (Washington, USA), Tim's response to our enthusiastic report was to give us an unhesitating go-ahead to return. "Clear your calendars so you can go back within eight months!" So we booked our flights, and this past July we flew back to Togo. It was important to follow up soon after our first visit because of people's keen interest and the need to keep solidifying the gains they had made.

People were eager to continue learning more. Many came daily to the activities we offered. Some came twice a day. They greatly appreciated how RC could help them think about the problems in their countries, Communities, and families, and improve their own lives.

We became more aware of the challenges they faced as we listened to their stories. Many of the things we take for granted in Communities with more economic resources are not available or possible there, such as reliable transportation or space or privacy for Co-Counseling events. Some people had to walk an hour each way to attend our

meetings. Others had to travel long distances by motor taxi. There was widespread illness and death among family and friends and daily struggles to secure food and shelter. Given these obstacles, everyone's eagerness to learn and master RC inspired and moved us.

Our schedule was similar to that of our first trip: a Community visit with the Togo RC Community the first week, a combined Togo-Benin workshop over the weekend (this time in Togo), followed by a Community visit in Benin the second week. The Community visits were much like last time's but included more Co-Counseling sessions with experienced Co-Counselors, to give them more opportunities to discharge, watch us as clients, and ask questions.

The workshop began when the delegation from Benin arrived amid joyous shouts of "Bienvenu"³ and lots of hugs all around. We all were so glad to see each other. After all, it had been several long months.

At the workshop we continued to review the basics of RC theory and emphasize the internal growth

³ Bienvenu means welcome in French.

of the Communities. People were enthusiastic about spreading RC to new people and growing in numbers, but we wanted to focus on strengthening their understanding of RC theory and practice, and on Community building and leadership development. For parts of the workshop, we each met with half of the folks to give them opportunities to practice being client and counselor in smaller groups and to review important concepts like paying attention, restimulation, contradiction, chronic patterns, identifications, and the spectrum of techniques. These smaller groups were very successful.

Another successful teaching device was a twelve-week fundamentals class outline we developed based on the materials in the *Fundamentals Teaching Guide*. We translated it into French, made copies of it for everyone, and went over it in the workshop classes.

The sadness of farewell was heartfelt: "When are you coming back?" "Maybe you can stay two more weeks?" and a tearful "Please don't forget about us." Both visits had ended with our wanting to do more, stay longer, hear more about the leaders' plans, and think more about how we could support the leaders. They have the commitment, but for most of them resource is extremely limited.

It is rewarding to bring support to Communities that have limited resource but are so eager for RC ideas. We see people's hopefulness, and we want to keep thinking of how to offer support. One leader personally guaranteed that his Community would have a meeting place. He is building it, block by block, with limited financial means. We applaud his fierce determination as he keeps thinking of ways to get RC ideas out to more people.



TOGO • HOKAMETO MISSIGBE

The closeness the leaders have built among themselves, and with us, has created safety for people to work more deeply as clients. The relationships have deepened. We are forever connected and forever committed!

A side benefit has been the two of us working together. One of us is African American and was raised poor; the other is European-heritage, raised owning-class.

We have become more skilled at listening to each other, thinking about words and expressions, and noticing ways that classism, racism, nationalism, imperialism, and internalized classism and racism can get inserted unintentionally into our language, thinking, and actions. We notice, examine, and discharge about this, which is useful for our relationship and also for thinking as clearly as possible about the oppressions that affect

these Communities. We don't catch everything, but we are committed to discharging our way to being as clear as possible. We also try to let the Togo and Benin RCers know that we learn from them, and are encouraged by their steadfast interest in using RC ideas and telling everyone they know about them.

*Marion Ouphouet
and Ellie Putnam
Seattle, Washington, USA*

*Traduction en français, par Régis Courtin, de l'article précédent:
(French translation, by Régis Courtin, of the preceding article:)*

Bâtir une Communauté au Togo et au Bénin

Au cours des deux dernières années, toutes deux avons eu le privilège d'approfondir les liens avec les dirigeant-e-s de Co-écoute et les membres des Communautés des pays d'Afrique de l'Ouest que sont le Togo et le Bénin.

Les principaux dirigeants, Missigbe Hokameto au Togo et Eric Amoussou-Guenou et Angelo Amoussou-Guenou au Bénin, ont été formés à la Co-écoute en 1999 par Eyidie N'gangue. Melphy Sakupwanya, la Personne de Référence Régionale pour l'Afrique Sub-Saharienne, a dirigé plusieurs ateliers dans ces pays, et certains des dirigeant-e-s ont participé à des ateliers de formation d'enseignant-e-s dirigés par d'autres dirigeant-e-s expérimentés de Co-écoute.

Les Co-écoutant-e-s du Togo et du Bénin ont bâti des Communautés de Co-écoute malgré l'isolement linguistique vis-à-vis des Communautés anglophones d'Afrique, et malgré le nombre limité de Co-écoutant-e-s pouvant localement assurer une traduction de l'anglais vers le français. Jusqu'à récemment, ils ne disposaient que de quelques publications de Co-écoute en français (Ces derniers mois, nous avons expédié deux bibliothèques, contenant chacune quelques exemplaires de chaque publication de Co-écoute traduite en français, ainsi que des articles récents de Tim Jackins traduits en français par Régis Courtin* et d'autres).

LA PREMIÈRE VISITE À LA COMMUNAUTÉ ET LE PREMIER ATELIER

Tim et Melphy approuvèrent notre déplacement au Togo et au Bénin en Octobre et Novembre 2010, afin d'animer un atelier pour les Communautés de ces deux pays dans leur propre langue. Les dirigeants locaux aidèrent

à organiser plusieurs activités dans leurs communautés et sélectionnèrent quinze des Co-écoutant-e-s les plus expérimenté-e-s de chaque Communauté pour participer à un atelier.

Nous avons passé la première semaine à Lomé (Togo), rencontrant un nombre important de Co-écoutant-e-s dont l'expérience de Co-écoute allait de quelques semaines à plusieurs années. Nous avons animé des groupes pour les femmes, pour les hommes, et pour les personnes en formation ; des classes sur la théorie fondamentale de la Co-écoute, et des présentations de base pour les nouveaux Co-écoutants. Nous avons également fait des séances de Co-écoute à chaque occasion avec Missigbe et d'autres Co-écoutant-e-s.

Nous avons ensuite rejoint Cotonou (Bénin) avec quinze Co-écoutant-e-s togolais-e-s pour un atelier conjoint des deux Communautés. Les gens étaient visiblement enchantés de se rencontrer les uns les autres et fiers d'appartenir à une Communauté de Co-écoute francophone. Nous avons passé en revue la théorie et amorcé un travail sur l'oppression et sur l'art de bâtir une Communauté, tout cela avec de nombreuses mini-séances et démonstrations. Ellie a assuré la direction générale de l'atelier, et Marion a animé quelques classes — notamment une sur l'oppression de la "santé mentale" qui fut un évènement marquant pour beaucoup de participant-e-s. Nous avons pu décharger en pensant à ce que serait notre vie si nous ne craignions pas d'être trop visibles, trop bruyants, ou trop "je ne sais quoi". Dans la dernière mini-séance, qui fut faite à trois, chaque personne dévoila un aspect d'elle-même. La salle

suite à la page suivante . . .

* Régis Courtin est le Coordinateur des Traductions de Co-écoute pour la langue française.

TEACHING, LEADING, COMMUNITY BUILDING

... suite de la page précédente

résonnait de rires tandis que celles et ceux qui étaient écouté-e-s repoussaient les contraintes imposées sur leur façon d'être en parlant haut et fort, en chantant, en dansant, en se pavanant, ainsi de suite.

La semaine suivante à Cotonou, nous nous sommes réuni avec la Communauté du Bénin et nous avons animé des classes et des groupes, et fait des séances individuelles, comme nous l'avions fait au Togo. Nous eûmes également du temps pour rencontrer et faire des séances avec les dirigeant-e-s.

Nous fûmes touchées par la volonté des gens de mettre de côté leurs luttes pour la survie et de participer les yeux pleins d'un espoir enthousiaste. Certain-e-s des Co-écoutant-e-s avaient vu leur maison inondée pendant la saison des pluies qui venait de s'achever, et nous avons visité quelques-unes de ces maisons et rencontré leurs habitants dont certains souffraient en conséquence de sérieux problèmes de santé.

Nous avons déployé beaucoup d'efforts afin d'être disponibles pour la Communauté et partager la Co-écoute autant que possible. Cela nous importait peu d'avoir à diriger un rassemblement le lendemain matin d'une journée de voyage de quinze heures, alors que certain-e-s des participant-e-s avaient marché pendant une heure pour nous retrouver ou n'avaient pas pu prendre de petit-déjeuner avant de venir. Nous avons compris que quand il s'agissait d'offrir la Co-écoute à des esprits enthousiastes, nous devons faire le nécessaire et ne pas relâcher nos efforts. Nous avons bien rempli nos journées, en organisant des contacts dans diverses configurations.

UNE NOUVELLE VISITE EN JUILLET 2011

A notre retour à Seattle (Washington, USA), la réaction de Tim à notre compte-rendu enthousiaste fut de nous donner sans hésitation le feu vert pour une nouvelle visite. "Fâites de la place dans votre emploi du temps pour pouvoir y retourner avant huit mois !" Nous avons donc réservé notre billet d'avion, et en Juillet dernier nous sommes retournées au Togo. Il était impotant de renouer le contact peu de temps après notre première visite à cause du vif intérêt qu'avaient montré les gens et le besoin de consolider les progrès accomplis.

Les gens étaient impatients d'en apprendre davantage. Beaucoup d'entre eux ont participé de manière quotidienne aux activités que nous leur proposons. Certains venaient deux fois dans une même journée. Ils ont beaucoup apprécié le fait que la Co-écoute peut les aider à réfléchir aux problèmes rencontrés par leur pays, leur Communauté, leur famille, et comment elle peut améliorer leur propre vie.

A leur écoute, nous avons pu mieux prendre conscience des défis auxquels ils font face. Beaucoup de ce qui nous paraît évident dans les Communautés possédant des moyens économiques plus importants fait défaut ou est impossible là-bas, comme par exemple des moyens de transport fiables, ou un lieu de réunion ou de l'intimité pour des évènements de Co-écoute. Certaines personnes devaient faire une heure de marche dans chaque sens pour assister à nos réunions. D'autres devaient se déplacer sur de longues distances en taxi. La maladie et la mort faisaient des ravages parmi les familles et les amis et il fallait se débattre de manière quotidienne pour trouver à manger et se loger. Compte tenu de ces obstacles, l'enthousiasme de chacun-e pour apprendre et maîtriser la Co-écoute nous a beaucoup sensibilisées et nous a émuës.

Notre programme fut semblable à celui de notre premier voyage : une visite à la Communauté du Togo pendant la première semaine, un atelier conjoint Togo-Bénin pendant le week-end (cette fois-ci au Togo), suivi d'une visite à la Communauté du Bénin pendant la deuxième semaine. Les visites à ces Communautés se sont déroulées à peu de choses près comme la dernière fois, mais elles comprenaient davantage de séances de Co-écoute avec des Co-écoutant-e-s expérimenté-e-s afin de leur fournir plus d'occasions de décharger, de nous voir travailler en tant que clientes, et de poser des questions.

L'atelier a démarré par l'arrivée de la délégation du Bénin parmi les cris joyeux de "Bienvenue" accompagnés de nombreuses étreintes à tout-va. Nous étions tous tellement heureux de nous voir. Après tout, ça faisait de longs mois.

Pendant l'atelier, nous avons continué de passer en revue les bases de la théorie de Co-écoute en insistant sur le développement interne des Communautés. Les gens étaient enthousiastes pour étendre la Co-écoute à de nouvelles personnes et pour croître en nombre, mais nous voulions nous focaliser sur le renforcement de leur compréhension de la théorie et de la pratique de la Co-écoute, et sur le fait de bâtir une Communauté et de faire émerger des dirigeant-e-s. A certains moments pendant l'atelier, nous nous sommes réunis avec une moitié des participant-e-s pour leur permettre de s'exercer à travailler comme client-e ou comme écoutant-e dans des groupes plus petits et pour passer en revue des concepts importants comme donner de l'attention, la restimulation, la contradiction, les automatismes chroniques, les identifications, et l'éventail des techniques. Ces groupes réduits furent très réussis.

Un autre support d'enseignement très productif fut un plan structuré pour une classe fondamentale de douze semaines que nous avons mis au point à partir du contenu du *Fundamentals Teaching Guide*. Nous l'avons traduit en

français et distribué un exemplaire à chacun-e, et nous l'avons parcouru ensemble pendant les classes de l'atelier.

La tristesse des au-revoir était sincère : "Quand est-ce que vous revenez ?" "Vous pourriez peut-être rester deux semaines de plus ?" et un "S'il vous plaît, ne nous oubliez pas" avec des larmes dans les yeux. Les deux visites se sont achevées sur notre désir d'en faire plus, de rester plus longtemps, d'en entendre davantage sur les projets des dirigeant-e-s, et de réfléchir davantage sur la façon de les soutenir. Ils et elles se sentent engagé-e-s, mais pour la plupart, les ressources sont extrêmement limitées.

Il est enrichissant d'apporter un soutien à des Communautés qui ont des ressources limitées mais qui sont si enthousiastes vis-à-vis des idées de la Co-écoute. Nous constatons l'espoir des gens, et nous voulons continuer à réfléchir sur la façon de leur apporter du soutien. Un des dirigeants s'est personnellement engagé à ce que sa Communauté possède un lieu de réunion. Il est en train de le construire, brique par brique, avec des moyens financiers limités. Nous applaudissons sa féroce détermination tant il continue à réfléchir aux moyens d'étendre les idées de la Co-écoute à plus en plus de gens.

La proximité que les dirigeant-e-s ont établie entre eux-mêmes, et avec nous, a créé une sécurité qui permet aux gens

de travailler plus à fond en tant que clients. Les relations se sont approfondies. Nous sommes à jamais connectés et à jamais engagés !

Un bénéfice supplémentaire a été le fait de travailler toutes les deux ensemble. L'une d'entre nous est une Américaine d'origine africaine et a été élevée dans la pauvreté ; l'autre est d'origine européenne, élevée dans la classe possédante. Nous sommes devenues plus expertes dans notre écoute réciproque, dans notre réflexion sur les mots et les expressions, et dans notre perception du fait que le classisme, le racisme, le nationalisme, l'impérialisme, et le racisme et le classisme intériorisés peuvent s'insinuer malgré nous dans nos paroles, dans notre pensée, et dans nos actes. Nous détectons, examinons et déchargeons tout cela, ce qui est utile pour notre relation et aussi pour avoir une pensée aussi claire que possible sur les oppressions qui affectent ces Communautés. Nous ne remarquons pas tout, mais nous nous sommes engagées à décharger afin d'atteindre une pensée aussi claire que possible. Nous essayons également de faire savoir aux Co-écoutant-e-s du Togo et du Bénin que nous apprenons d'eux, et que nous sommes encouragées par leur intérêt constant dans l'utilisation des idées de la Co-écoute et dans le fait de dire à tout le monde qu'ils les connaissent.

Marion Ouphouet et Ellie Putnam
Seattle, Washington, Etats-Unis



Déterminés à aller de l'avant

La graine de la Co-écoute semée par Mama Melphy,¹ et l'arrosage que vous² en avez fait durant votre périple, fera de l'arbre qui prend déjà forme un solide baobab dont l'ombrage ressourcera et reposera toute personne qui prend la Co-écoute au sérieux et en fait un mode de vie.

Nous vous renouvelons notre ferme détermination d'aller de l'avant pour que vive la Co-écoute chez nous en Afrique.

Angelo Amoussou-Guenou
Cotonou, Littoral, République de Bénin

¹ Melphy Sakupwanya, la Personne de Référence Régionale pour l'Afrique Sub-Saharienne

² Marion Ouphouet et Ellie Putnam, de Seattle (Washington, USA)—les dirigeantes des récents ateliers en Afrique de l'Ouest (voir article précédent)

Determined To Go Forward

The seed of RC sown by Mama Melphy,¹ and the watering you² did during your journey, will transform the tree that is already taking shape into a solid baobab, the shade of which will recharge and rest anyone who takes RC seriously and adopts it as a way of life.

We reaffirm to you our solid determination to go forward so that Co-Counseling may live at home in Africa.

Angelo Amoussou-Guenou
Cotonou, Littoral, Republic of Benin
Translated by Régis Courtin

¹ Melphy Sakupwanya, the Regional Reference Person for Sub-Saharan Africa

² Marion Ouphouet and Ellie Putnam, of Seattle, Washington, USA—the leaders of the recent West African workshops (see preceding article)

Les Communautés d'Afrique de L'Ouest vont de l'avant

Ceci est un rapport concernant l'atelier de Co-écoute et la visite à la Communauté qui se sont tenus à Lomé (Togo) du 17 au 24 juillet 2011, et qui étaient dirigés par Marion Ouphouet et Ellie Putnam*. Au total une cinquantaine de participant-e-s ont bénéficié des échanges et des formations qui eurent lieu. Pour ceux et celles qui participaient pour la première fois à un évènement de Co-écoute, la satisfaction fut totale.

Le premier volet s'est tenu du 17 au 21 juillet. Il fut marqué par des rencontres avec les différents groupes de la Communauté du Togo : les femmes, les hommes, les responsables de groupes de soutien, et les nouveaux Co-écoutants. Quarante-cinq membres de la Communauté du Togo ont participé à ce premier volet.

Le deuxième volet, du 22 au 24 juillet, était un atelier regroupant les dirigeant-e-s des Communautés du Togo et du Bénin. Ces dirigeant-e-s suivirent des formations théoriques et pratiques de Co-écoute ponctuées de nombreuses séances de décharge, à la fois comme écoutant-e et comme client-e. Des séances d'auto-appréciation et de décharge devant le groupe entier ont été bien appréciées de tous.

L'ensemble des participant-e-s ont été répartis en deux sous-groupes : un groupe s'est réuni avec Marion et l'autre avec Ellie. De plus, des groupes de soutien dirigés par les responsables de groupes de soutien se sont réunis à plusieurs reprises. Quinze membres de la Communauté du Togo et dix de la Communauté du Bénin ont participé à l'atelier.

Cet atelier et cette visite à la Communauté ont véritablement renforcé les capacités de Co-écoute de nos dirigeant-e-s qui se sont engagés à les utiliser pour devenir de meilleur Co-écoutant-e-s. Nous profitons de cette opportunité pour témoigner notre profonde gratitude à la fois à Marion et à Ellie pour les formations, ainsi qu'à Tim Jackins et au staff de Re-evaluation Counseling Communities Resources pour leur soutien au développement des Communautés de Co-écoute francophones d'Afrique de l'Ouest.

Hokameto Missigbe
Lomé, Togo

* Marion Ouphouet et Ellie Putnam sont des dirigeantes de Co-écoute à Seattle (Washington, USA).



ELLIE PUTNAM

English translation of the previous article:

West African Communities Move Ahead

This is a report on the RC workshop and Community visit in Lomé, Togo, from July 17 to 24, 2011, led by Marion Ouphouet and Ellie Putnam.* A total of fifty participants benefited from the exchanges and training that took place. For those who attended an RC event for the first time, the satisfaction was total.

The first part was from July 17 to 21. It was notable for meetings with different groups from the Togo Community: women, men, support group leaders, and new Co-Counselors. Forty-five members of the Togo Community attended this first part.

The second part, from July 22 to 24, was a workshop that brought together the leaders of the Togo and Benin Communities. These leaders got training in the theory and practice of RC interspersed

with numerous discharge sessions, as counselor and client. Sessions on self-appreciation and discharge, in front of the whole group, were appreciated by everyone.



TOGO • ELLIE PUTNAM

All the participants in the workshop were divided into two sub-groups: one that met with Marion and the other with Ellie. Also, support groups, led by support-group leaders, met several times. Fifteen members of the Togo Community and ten members of the Benin Community participated in the workshop.

This workshop and Community visit truly reinforced the RC skills of our leaders, who are committed to using them in order to become better Co-Counselors. We gained much from this opportunity and extend our profound gratitude to Marion and Ellie for the training and to Tim Jackins and the staff of Re-evaluation Counseling Community Resources for their support of the development of the West African francophone RC Communities.

Hokameto Missigbe

Lomé, Togo

Translated by Régis Courtin

* Marion Ouphouet and Ellie Putnam are RC leaders in Seattle, Washington, USA.

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Gordon Jackins, Publisher

Un atelier au Togo

Les Communautés de Réévaluation par la Co-écoute du Togo et du Bénin ont eu droit à un atelier de formation du 17 au 24 juillet 2011, dans un bel hôtel de la capitale togolaise.

La Co-écoute est un programme de libération individuel, un outil pour aider les individus à lutter plus efficacement pour leur libération en les aidant à éliminer les actions basées sur les émotions douloureuses, et à agir intelligemment avec succès.

Deux formatrices expérimentées, Ellie Putnam et Marion Ouphouet, sont venues de Seattle (Washington, USA) pour la circonstance. Elles ont passé en revue la théorie de base de la Co-écoute, ainsi que les rôles de conseiller et de client.

Les cours étaient ponctués de séances pratiques et de groupes de travail. L'accent a été mis sur l'art d'écouter, car en Co-écoute tout commence à ce niveau. Nous avons discuté de la façon de regarder avec attention, de toucher avec tendresse, et de témoigner amour et sécurité à la personne cliente de sorte qu'elle puisse décharger, guérir des vieilles blessures acquises depuis l'enfance et récupérer le plein usage de son intelligence. Les démonstrations de séance sagement menées par



YONI KALLAI

les deux formatrices ont convaincu les participants de l'efficacité des outils de travail de la Co-écoute. Ils savent désormais pourquoi les pleurs, les rires, les tremblements, les accès de colère, et les bâillements ne sont pas des maux à combattre mais font intégralement partie d'un processus de guérison. Ils indiquent que quelque chose de profond est en train de se produire, que la personne cliente est en pleine récupération d'une parcelle de son intelligence. C'est pourquoi il est justement conseillé de multiplier les séances de Co-écoute.

Des supports de cours ont été donnés aux participants et la bibliothèque a été pourvue de livres concernant la Co-écoute.

Le ravissement sur le visage de tous les participants au dernier jour de l'atelier était un témoignage du caractère pratique et efficace des outils de la Co-écoute. C'est à l'unisson que les participants ont demandé au dirigeant local et co-organisateur de l'atelier, Pierre Missigbe, d'obtenir des formatrices une autre rencontre dans les mois à venir.

Nous pouvons affirmer sans nous tromper qu'avec ce renforcement des capacités dans la Co-écoute et la diffusion de ce savoir-faire dans leurs communautés respectives, le Bénin et le Togo prennent un nouvel élan pour l'humanisation vraie de chacun de leurs citoyens.

Je suis ravi d'avoir participé à mon premier atelier de Co-écoute. J'en ai appris énormément. Je sais maintenant comment écouter sans interférence et encourager le processus de la décharge. Je ressens une gratitude à l'endroit de la Co-écoute et remercie les leaders qui sont venues de loin pour renforcer nos capacités. En tant qu'Ivoirien, il me revient d'installer une communauté de la Co-écoute chez moi. Mon pays sort d'une guerre et je crois que c'est le moment propice pour de diffuser les idées de la Co-écoute.

La Co-écoute est un espoir pour l'humanité!

Zounon Cyrille
Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire

English translation of the preceding article:

A Workshop in Togo

The Re-evaluation Counseling Communities of Togo and Benin were treated to a training workshop from 17 to 24 July, 2011, in a nice hotel of the Togolese capital.

Co-Counseling is a program of personal liberation, a tool to help individuals fight more effectively for their freedom by helping them to eliminate actions based on painful emotions and to act successfully, with intelligence.

Two experienced trainers, Ellie Putnam and Marion Ouphouet, came from Seattle, Washington, USA, for the occasion. They reviewed the basic theory of Co-Counseling, as well as the roles of counselor and client.

The classes were punctuated by hands-on sessions and working groups. The emphasis was on the art of listening, because in Co-Counseling everything starts with this. We discussed how to focus with attention, how to touch with love, and how to show love and security to the client so that he or she can discharge, heal old wounds from childhood, and recover the full use of his or her intelligence. The demonstrations, artfully conducted by the two trainers, convinced the participants of the effectiveness of the tools of Co-Counseling. Now they know why tears, laughter, trembling, yawns, and outbursts of anger are not evils to fight but rather an integral part of a healing process. They indicate that something profound is happening, that the client is in full recovery of a piece of his or her intelligence. This is why it is rightly advised to multiply Co-Counseling sessions.

Course materials were given to the participants, and the library was stocked with books about Co-Counseling.

The delight on the faces of all the participants during the last day of the workshop was a testimony to the practicality and efficiency of Co-Counseling tools. In unison, the students asked the local leader and co-organizer of the workshop, Pierre Missigbe, to obtain from the trainers another meeting in the coming months.

We can say without any doubt that with the strengthened abilities in Co-Counseling and the dissemination of RC know-how* in their respective Communities, Benin and Togo are making a new start at the true humanization of each and every one of their citizens.

I myself am delighted to have participated in my first seminar in Co-Counseling. I learned a lot. I know now how to listen without interference and to encourage discharge. I feel gratitude to Co-Counseling and thank the leaders who came from afar to strengthen our capabilities. As an Ivoirian, it is now my responsibility to set up RC in Ivory Coast. My country is emerging from a war, and I think it's the right time to disseminate the ideas of Co-Counseling.

Co-Counseling is a hope for humanity!

Zounon Cyrille
Abidjan, Ivory Coast
Translated by Régis Courtin

* Know-how means knowledge.

What You Can Do for Me

As for what you can do for me, I would say at this point that it consists exactly of building the RC Community.

It is crucial that we get our improved policies out into the world, but unless the Community grows and more people like you re-emerge, we will not have the resources to reach enough people for the critical times ahead.

Everything you do to build a strong Community and bring new people along lifts the burden on my shoulders. When we get all that done, I'll let you help me with my laundry.

Harvey Jackins
From a letter written in 1980

Sharing RC During an Election Campaign

I recently ran for re-election to a position in my union. Because campaigning is difficult for me, I planned to set up at least one mini-session every day with a Co-Counselor.

As I was making the list of possible counselors, I thought of a friend I knew through my union work with whom I had been discussing the possibility of an RC class. I had given an introductory talk to him and his wife, and they had been interested in RC but always too busy to take a class.

I decided to tell him that I was setting up mini-sessions to help get me through the campaign. I said that being able to do that kind of thing for each other was exactly why I wanted him in RC with me and that I had a proposal for him.

I proposed that the following weekend I come to his house and we do a half-hour crash course* on how to have a Co-Counseling session. Then he could sign up for some minis on my campaign calendar. He responded enthusiastically: "I can do that—as long as we can thin raspberries while we talk!" (In addition to his union work, he and his family run a small farm.) I eagerly agreed.

That weekend I went to his house, and we pruned and thinned raspberries while I gave him a condensed fundamentals class. I covered, in a simple form, what patterns are, how we get them, the role of discharge, the role of the counselor, and the role of the client.

He then proposed that we have a mini every week of the campaign.

* Crash course means short, condensed class.

So at 8:45 on Tuesday morning, almost every week for the next nine weeks, we counseled on the phone for five minutes each way.

A few weeks before the end of the campaign, he suggested that when the election and the legislative session were over (he did a lot of work in the legislature, and it had been a difficult year), we should have a big celebration session together.

I did not win the election, but a few days afterward I reminded him about the celebration session idea he'd had and said that I thought there was plenty to celebrate anyway. I proposed that we compare our busy calendars and find an hour and a half that we could spend together. I suggested that we use roughly a half hour to

debrief on our experiences, review the crash course, and see if he had any questions about our sessions, and then use the remaining time for a session. Again he responded enthusiastically.

That meeting went well. By way of celebration, we started by being pleased with ourselves for getting through the previous couple of months. He had questions from the sessions we'd had. (Keeping confidentiality in mind, I referred only to my own sessions.) I talked more about what good listening really means and about paying attention to the results of what one tries as counselor. It went well. Then we both had good sessions with significant discharge.

Cynthia Phinney
Livermore Falls, Maine, USA



RANDI FREUNDLICH

He that will not sail until all dangers are over must never put to sea.

Thomas Fuller



“Somos una Comunidad bien plantada” “We Are a Solid Community”



Queremos contarles que el 24 y 25 de Junio de 2011 estuvimos reunidas las líderes de la Comunidad de Argentina.

Fueron días maravillosos en los que celebramos el camino recorrido desde lo/as primera/os escuchas en Argentina. Agradecemos a quienes sembraron la semilla de RC en Argentina desde Harvey Jackins, Francisco López Bustos, Alicia Ochoa, Verónica Rafferty hasta quienes recientemente y con tanto amor continúan asumiendo el liderazgo de su propia vida y proponiendo la práctica de co-escucha a diferentes personas y grupos.

También brindamos todo nuestro apoyo a Silvina Spagnuolo como nueva Persona de Referencia para la comunidad en nuestro país.

En este pequeño lugar del planeta la semilla de la comunidad de co-escuchas ha seguido desarrollando. Nos reunimos mujeres líderes con grandes sueños. Hemos celebrado lo vivido. La teoría de Reevaluación en nuestro país ayudó a cientos de personas a vivir de un modo más humano. Algunas de ellas ya no están en nuestras comunidades. Otras continúan. El conocimiento y la práctica de co-escucha ha marcado la vida de cada una de ellas para siempre. Cada persona dio lo mejor de sí mismo. Se entregó por su propia reemergencia y la de otras personas.

La Comunidad ha crecido mucho a lo largo de estos 37 años porque ininterrumpidamente líderes de diferentes lugares, de diferente género, de diferentes edades, de diferentes condiciones sociales se comprometieron con su propia reemergencia y la de otras personas. Hicimos un recorrido de la situación de nuestras comunidades en el país. Con asombro y alegría constatamos la vitalidad de las mismas.

De pie miramos el futuro y con voz firme expresamos al unísono: ¡Somos una comunidad bien plantada!

English translation:

We would like tell you that on the twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth of June 2011, the leaders of the Argentina RC Communities met.

Those were wonderful days during which we celebrated the road travelled since the beginnings of Co-Counseling in Argentina. We appreciated those who had planted the seed of RC in Argentina—Harvey Jackins, Francisco López Bustos, Alicia Ochoa, Verónica Rafferty—and those who more recently and with much love have continued taking leadership and spreading the practice of Co-Counseling to different people and groups.

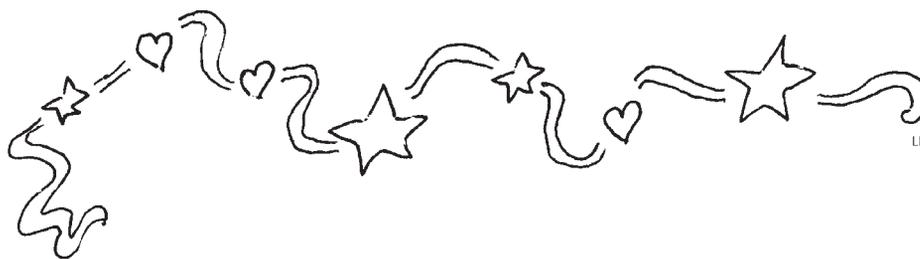
We also gave our support to Silvina Spagnuolo, the new Regional Reference Person for our country.

In this small place on the planet the seed of the Co-Counseling Community has continued to develop. We have gathered women leaders with great dreams. We have celebrated life. Re-evaluation Counseling in our country has helped hundreds of people to live in a more human way. Some of them are no longer in our Communities. Others continue. The knowledge and practice of Co-Counseling has marked the life of each of them forever. Every person has done his or her best. Each has contributed to his or her own re-emergence and that of other people.

The Community has grown a lot over these past thirty-seven years, because uninterruptedly leaders of different kinds and ages, in different places and social conditions, have been committed to their own re-emergence and that of other people. We reviewed the situation of the Communities in our country. With surprise and happiness we affirmed their health.

Standing, we looked at the future and in strong voices said in unison, “We are a solid Community!”

Florinda Ines Gramajo
Buenos Aires, Argentina
Translated by Katie Kauffman
and Maria Franco



From a Fundamentals Class

Here are some comments made at the end of a ten-week RC fundamentals class*:

I find it liberating to know that it's okay to cry and that I'm worthy and so are my thoughts and feelings. I also know I'm not alone.

I love to discover the real me—the person hidden underneath the layers of patterns and oppression. I love learning to appreciate myself and those closest to me. I love to feel completely safe in a warm, loving environment.

Coming to Co-Counseling has helped me regain my peace of mind. It has helped me understand the control patterns that can cripple our lives when we are hurt. And it's okay to cry and show our emotions in a safe environment.

Co-Counseling means that I don't worry so much, as I know everything can be discharged and re-evaluated.

These past ten weeks have been a time of personal growth and awareness. It is the beginning of a new road on which to travel.

Western Adelaide, South Australia, Australia

* A class taught by Sheila Eime, the Area Reference Person for Western Adelaide, South Australia, Australia

God

Your question about God's existence, I think, requires that you decide on some kind of a definition of "God" before you debate it. I'm certainly glad that you "feel" the existence of God in the universe. I think that if you refused to define God as anything smaller than the entire universe, then there would be little argument about this entity's existence, whether you call it "God" and I call it "the universe," or I agree to call it "God," too, for the sake of better communication.

Harvey Jackins

From a letter written in 1980



BRIDGE AT LA CONNER, WASHINGTON, USA * WATERCOLOR BY KATIE KAUFFMAN

Short Talks by Tim Jackins, on CD

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

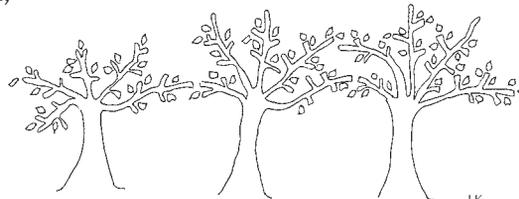
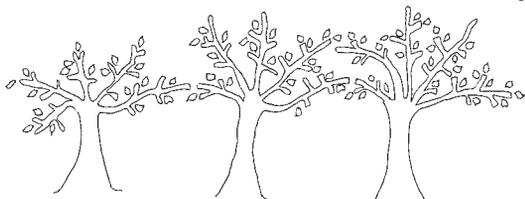
For a complete list of all the CDs produced up until now, see page 105 of this *Present Time*.

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

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

If you are a certified RC teacher, the upcoming four CDs per year are available on a subscription basis, one calendar year at a time (but mailed out quarterly as they are released), for \$25 a year.

For ordering information,
see page 109.



LK

Dos talleres en Colombia

En abril del 2011 lideré dos talleres, uno en Barranquilla y otro en Bucaramanga, Colombia. Creo que los dos salieron bien. Ahora la mayoría de la gente está desahogando mucho más y todos y todas pueden dar mejor atención. Los talleres representaron un salto en cómo la gente considera la Comunidad RC, en cómo establecen vínculos con las Comunidades de otros países y en considerarse como una parte de un proyecto más amplio.

UN TALLER DE FUNDAMENTALES

Treinta y tres personas, de las cuales cinco eran de la Comunidad de Bucaramanga, asistieron a este taller de fundamentales en Barranquilla. El propósito de este taller era desarrollar las habilidades de liderazgo de la Comunidad de RC de Bucaramanga con el propósito de apoyar la creación de nuevos grupos de RC y se organizó como respuesta a la solicitud que hizo la organización CEDESOCIAL¹ que tenía un interés por aprender más de RC—tanto para el propio proceso personal de sus integrantes como para llevarlo a las personas con las que trabajan.

La mayoría de las participantes entendieron rápidamente las partes esenciales de la teoría básica y tuvieron muchas buenas sesiones con bastante desahogo. Hubo mesas de temas, juego, creatividad, cierta explicación acerca de la estructura internacional de la Comunidad y la oportunidad de compartir cómo el grupo de Bucaramanga comenzó a hacer RC y cómo se ha propuesto consolidarse más y más. Todo ello le permitió a la gente tener más claro de qué se trata RC.

¹ CEDESOCIAL es una organización en Barranquilla que promueve mejores vidas para todos, especialmente mujeres y niños, en la región caribeña de Colombia.

Al final se compartió de qué forma ciertas partes de la teoría y lo que habían aprendido al escucharse podían ser importantes para su vida. Una participante se comprometió a nunca más volver a reprimir el desahogo de su hija. Eso surgió de una demostración en la cual ella se dio cuenta de lo violento que era detener el desahogo de su hija, preguntándole “¿por qué estás llorando? ¿estoy muerta? ¿perdiste un ojo o un brazo? ¿estás sangrando? Entonces ¿por qué estás llorando?”

Las mesas que se hicieron fueron con los temas de hombres, gente joven, dificultades en el trabajo y sexismo. La gente apreció la oportunidad de poder hablar y escuchar a otros, con toda la atención y sin interrupciones. Y lo apreciaron pues les permitía lidiar con la vida y el trabajo llenos de estrés de los que venían.

Fue impresionante lo bien que funcionó el grupo de quienes tienen experiencia en RC, la buenísima atención que tuvieron para el resto de las participantes y el gran apoyo que representaron para mí. El grupo encontró que esta experiencia les

permitió tener una nueva perspectiva, desarrolló su capacidad para el liderazgo y, fue muy divertida. (Así, yo comenté acerca del gozo del liderazgo.)

Al final del taller, veintisiete personas querían continuar en RC. Las directoras de la organización CEDESOCIAL comentaron acerca de los cambios que notaron después del taller y del interés que despertó la literatura. He recibido un par de cartas donde me dicen lo entusiasmadas que están leyendo *El Lado Humano de los Seres Humanos*. Este grupo, estoy convencida, tiene muchísimo potencial. La mayoría son adultas jóvenes que entendieron rápidamente lo que es RC y que están comprometidas con sus comunidades y con la sociedad. Ellas pueden, realmente, enriquecer la Comunidad de RC en Colombia.

UN TALLER SURAMERICANO PARA CONSTRUCCION DE COMUNIDAD

En el taller de Bucaramanga estuvieron treinta y dos participantes de Colombia—de Bogotá, Cali, Los Santos, y Bucaramanga—y líderes de RC de Perú, Chile, y Argentina. El propósito de este taller fue el siguiente:

- Continuar fortaleciendo la práctica de co-escuchar y la claridad acerca de la teoría y el liderazgo de la Comunidad, como forma de construir una comunidad fuerte en Colombia
- Enriquecer la experiencia al promover la cercanía entre la diversidad de participantes, al compartir niveles y formas diferentes de experiencias al construir sus Comunidades; brindar una visión más amplia de lo que es RC a quienes provienen

continuado . . .



MAHONE BAY, NOVA SCOTIA, CANADA • BILL DARNELL

... *continuado*

de Comunidades aisladas; tener la contradicción² de una líder Latinoamericana; apoyar a desarrollar las habilidades para organizar talleres con poblaciones muy amplias a la manera de RC; discutir la situación financiera de la Comunidad como un factor para su crecimiento y trabajar sobre el clasismo, el racismo y otras opresiones.

La teoría fue sobre la opresión internalizada y su contradicción a partir de sentirnos bien acerca de nosotras mismas. Hubo mucho trabajo acerca de la cercanía, la seguridad y la exploración de cómo sesionar eso.

El Grupo Afro-Descendiente de Cali

Un gran reto fue que el grupo de afro-descendientes que vinieron de

Cali³ (dos mujeres y dos hombres jóvenes) no tenían ninguna idea de lo que era RC. Además, el resto del grupo no había hecho mayor trabajo acerca del racismo. Pero, al hacer al grupo de Cali visible, promover la cercanía, insistir en tratarnos bien unos a los otros en todo momento y la participación valerosa, inteligente, gozosa de ese grupo, hizo que su presencia fuera una de las cosas más significativas del taller.

³ En noviembre del 2009, Barbara Love, la Persona de Referencia Internacional para la Liberación de las Personas Afro-Descendientes, y Maritza Arrastía, líder de RC en Brooklyn, New York, EEUU, lideraron una presentación de RC en la Universidad del Valle en Cali, Colombia. Su trabajo llevó a la participación de este grupo en el taller del 2011. La gente afro-colombiana son un grupo oprimido en Colombia. Sólo recientemente su existencia ha sido reconocida oficialmente. Muchos colombianos blancos todavía no se percatan de su existencia, o la niegan, lo que hace su lucha por la liberación aún más difícil.

² Contradicción a la angustia



MOUNT BAKER, WASHINGTON, USA • TIM JACKINS

Ellos constituyeron una denuncia conmovedora de la situación opresiva que soportan los afro-descendientes en la zona del Pacífico Colombiano. También ellos tuvieron total claridad de que RC los puede ayudar y se comprometieron a usarlo.

Son jóvenes brillantes y comprometidos que quieren aprender todo lo que sea posible para llevarlo a toda la población para la cual trabajan y a la universidad, para fortalecer el trabajo que ya han venido haciendo para eliminar el racismo.

Las Líderes Suramericanas

Las líderes suramericanas han trabajado mucho para lograr una Comunidad más fuerte. Siempre están llenas de entusiasmo por aprender más acerca de cómo hacer bien RC. Una de ellas comentó “No pueden imaginarse el impacto que el taller tuvo en todas nosotras. Ha dado un gran impulso a las líderes y a toda la Comunidad.”

Luding Ocaziones, la organizadora, realizó un excelente trabajo. La “cultura” de los talleres de RC no siempre es bien conocida en las Comunidades nuevas. Todos los detalles, desde recoger con gran amabilidad a los que llegan, revisar los menús pensando en todos, a la vez que se incluyan platillos típicos que todos puedan disfrutar, la elaboración de folders y señales hechos con creatividad y gusto exquisito, hicieron que todos nos sintiéramos tratados bien e importantes.

Un sincero agradecimiento a Tim Jackins por aprobar el financiamiento de estos talleres y a Diane Shisk por todo el cuidado, apoyo y confianza que nos brindó.

Laura Aguilar Fisch
Ciudad de México, México

English translation of the preceding article:

Two Workshops in Colombia

I led two workshops, in April 2011, in Barranquilla and Bucaramanga, Colombia. I think both went well. Most people are now discharging much more, and all of them can give better attention. The workshops were a great leap in how people regard the RC Community, in their establishing bonds with the Communities of other countries, and in their having a sense of being part of a larger project.

A FUNDAMENTALS WORKSHOP

Thirty-three people, five from the Community in Bucaramanga, attended the fundamentals workshop in Barranquilla. The purpose of the workshop was to develop the skills of the RC Community of Bucaramanga in order to help start new RC groups. It was held in response to a request from the organization CEDESOCIAL¹ that asked to learn more of RC—for their own individual processes and to extend it to the people they worked with.

Most of the participants quickly understood the essential pieces of the basic theory and had many good sessions with discharge. There were topic tables, play, creativity, some explanation of the International structure of the Community, and sharing of how the Bucaramanga group had started and how it has aimed to consolidate more and more. All this allowed people to see a little more of what RC is about.

At the end they shared how different pieces of theory and what they had learned about listening could be important in their lives. One participant committed herself to never again repress her daughter's discharge. That came out of a demonstration in which she realized how harsh it was to stop her child by asking, "What do you cry for? Am I dead? Did you lose an eye, an arm? Are you bleeding? So, why do you cry then?"

Topic tables were called for men, young people, work difficulties, and sexism. People appreciated getting to talk and listen to others, with full attention and no



JAPAN • YUKO HIBINO

interruptions. They appreciated it for dealing with the stressed life and work they were coming from.

I was impressed by how well the experienced RC group functioned, the great attention they had for the rest of the participants, and the support they were for me. They found that the experience brought a new perspective, developed their leadership capacity, and was really fun. (I had talked about the enjoyment of leadership.)

At the end of the workshop twenty-seven people wanted to continue in RC. The directors of the organization CEDESOCIAL commented on the change they noticed after the workshop and the interest in the literature. I've gotten a couple of letters letting me know how excited they are reading *The Human Side of Human Beings*. This group, I think, has a lot of potential. They are mostly young adults who have understood RC quickly and are committed to their communities and society. They could really enrich the RC Community in Colombia.

A SOUTH AMERICAN WORKSHOP ON BUILDING COMMUNITY

Attending the workshop in Bucaramanga were thirty-two Colombians—from Bogota, Cali, Los Santos, and Bucaramanga—and RC leaders from Peru, Chile, and Argentina. The purpose of this workshop was as follows:

- To continue to strengthen the counseling practice and clarity on theory of the Community and its leadership, as a way to build a strong Community in Colombia
- To enrich the experience of the variety of participants by promoting their closeness; having them share different levels and kinds of experiences in building Communities; giving those from isolated Communities a broader vision of what RC is about; having a Latin American leader as a contradiction²; helping them gain skills in the RC way of organizing extended workshops; discussing the financial situation of the Community as a factor in growth; and working on classism, racism, and other oppressions.

continued . . .

¹ CEDESOCIAL is an organization in Barranquilla that promotes better lives for everyone, especially women and children, in the Caribbean region of Colombia.

² Contradiction to distress

TEACHING, LEADING, COMMUNITY BUILDING

... continued

The theory was about internalized oppression and contradicting it by feeling good about ourselves. There was a lot on closeness and safety and exploring how to counsel.

The Cali Afro-Descendent Group

A big challenge was that the Afro-descendent group from Cali³ (two young women and two young men) had no idea at all of what RC was about.

Plus the rest of the group had not worked much on racism. But we made the Cali group visible, promoted closeness, insisted on everyone treating each other well at all moments, and their brave, intelligent, joyful participation became one of the highlights of the workshop.

They provided a moving exposure to the oppressive situation Afro-descendents endure in the Colombian Pacific zone. They were also absolutely clear how RC can help them and were committed to using it.

They are bright and committed young people, wanting to learn as much as possible and then take it to all



SWEDEN • WYTSKE VISSER

the populations they work for, and to their university, to strengthen the work they are already doing to eliminate racism.

The South American Leaders

The South American leaders have worked hard to get a stronger Community. They are always eager to learn more about how to do RC well. One of them commented, “You cannot imagine the impact the workshop

has had on us all. It has given a big push to the leaders and to the whole Community.”

Luding Ocazones, the organizer, did an incredible job. The “culture” of RC workshops is something unknown in new Communities. All the details, from picking people up⁴ with a lot of care and going through menus thinking of everybody while at the same time letting everyone enjoy typical dishes, to folders and signs made with creativity and exquisite taste, made all of us feel well treated and important.

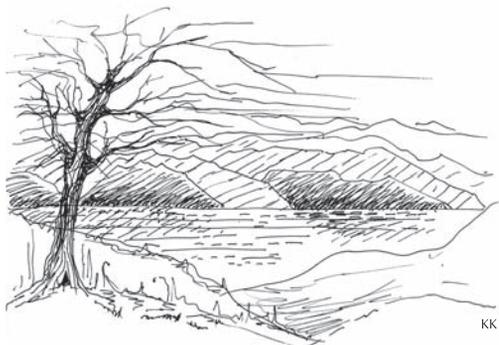
A sincere thank you to Tim Jackins for approving the financing of these workshops and to Diane Shisk for all the care, support, and confidence she provided.

Laura Aguilar Fisch
Mexico City, Mexico

Translated by Laura Aguilar Fisch

³ In November 2009, Barbara Love, the International Liberation Reference Person for African-Heritage People, and Maritza Arrastia, an RC leader in Brooklyn, New York, USA, led an introduction to RC at the Universidad del Valle in Cali, Colombia. Their work led to the participants' attendance at this 2011 workshop. Afro-Colombian people are an oppressed group in Colombia. Only recently has their existence been officially recognized. Many white Colombians are still unaware of or deny their existence, which makes their struggle for liberation even more difficult.

⁴ Picking people up means meeting people upon their arrival.



Everybody is wonderful. We can have everyone. Anything that gets in our way of seeing how wonderful a person is is something to be discharged, is something that *can be* discharged.

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

... *continuado*

Me di cuenta que la opresión internalizada me estaba impidiendo ver la realidad benigna en mí como ser humano, y como consecuencia en los demás y estaba juzgándome y desvalorándome. Pese a que llevo más de cinco años en RC y que veces leo la teoría básica, estar en el taller hizo una diferencia. Laura explicó teoría básica y fue impresionante darme cuenta que eso sencillo no lo veía por la opresión internalizada. También entendí que para construir mi Comunidad de RC no había otra cosa que hacer que seguir desahogando. Eso tan sencillo es poderoso y cambió mi perspectiva. También vino a mi mente algo que leí de Harvey,² siempre tenemos que volver la mirada a la teoría básica y repasarla.

Nancy Callañaupa Mesco
Cusco, Peru



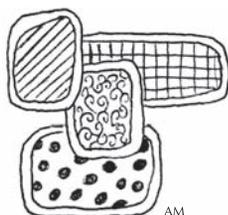
A María Stella,³ gracias por todos los detalles—la acogida, organización—con el cariño puestos en cada momento. Disfruté viendo el camino que ha recorrido desde que estuve en Colombia en el 2008.

A ti Laura, gracias por tu cercanía y liderazgo—claridad, delicadeza, sencillez, profundidad y fluidez para ir llevando cada momento y contenido. He reforzado y profundizado mucho aprendizaje. Seguimos unidas y conectadas.

Carmen Rodríguez Sánchez
Santiago, Chile

² Harvey Jackins

³ María Stella Gómez de Velasco, líder de RC en Bucaramanga, Colombia



Este taller fue como un baño con agua clara y fresca.

El ambiente que vivimos fue muy agradable y propio para gozar de la diversidad de los participantes: una mexicana, una argentina, dos chilenas, dos peruanas, cuatro de Cali, Colombia, cuatro de Bogotá, Colombia, quince de Bucaramanga y tres campesinos de una zona cercana, Colombia. Participamos personas de raza mestiza, afro-descendientes, indígenas, blancos, así como personas de clase trabajadora, clase media y campesinos. Hombres y mujeres entre los 17 y 67 años. Estas aparentes grandes diferencias fueron una poderosa oportunidad para apreciar nuestra fundamental igualdad.

El taller se caracterizó por la sensibilidad, afecto, alegría, cercanía, juego y creatividad. Hubo una claridad que permitió que todas y todos nos abriéramos y comportáramos de manera más humana.

He participado en excelentes talleres, he leído y releído la mayor parte de la teoría de RC traducida al español, he percibido los avances en mi proceso y en el de mi Comunidad. No obstante, no había logrado antes tener una conciencia tan plena de cuán perdida estaba yo en un mundo de mentira y engaño, y de todas las maneras en que la opresión internalizada sabotaba mi vida. Escuchando a Laura hablarnos de esto con tanta claridad, sentía que una nube enorme se desvanecía.

La claridad respecto a que *yo estoy bien* me permite mantener una perspectiva de la realidad, a pesar de todos los ruidos causados por mis angustias que me confunden. Ahora tengo una mirada diferente de mí misma, de mi Comunidad,

del mundo y sé que necesito continuar luchando y liberando mi mente por medio del desahogo. Mi decisión, forjada a lo largo de este taller, fue no volverme a sentir mal conmigo misma por ningún motivo y apreciarme sin medida. Sé que lo tengo que hacer miles de veces, hasta derrotar por completo el patrón crónico que por tanto tiempo había estado acomodado en mí.

Sí, esta vez sucedió algo especial en mí que me permitió comprender cómo la opresión internalizada había dificultado mi vida, haciéndome sentir incapaz e inadecuada. Este nuevo entendimiento me da gran poder, me mantiene entusiasmada y hace que mis sesiones y mi liderazgo funcionen en mejor forma. Hace que yo continúe trabajando con gozo en busca de mi re-emerger.

Mi aprecio a Laura por su interés en la Comunidad de Colombia y su apoyo, paciencia y comprensión, que me han permitido descubrir a la verdadera María Stella. Hoy existe en Colombia una Comunidad de RC fuerte y comprometida.

No dejo de pensar con admiración y agradecimiento en el gran trabajo que hizo Harvey, ese maravilloso ser humano que nos brindó el gran regalo de RC. También por sus luchas, las de Tim,⁴ Diane⁵ y todas las personas comprometidas en este proyecto mundial por ser más humanos y transformar el mundo. Este trabajo que estamos haciendo juntos es muy esperanzador, exige esfuerzos y sus resultados son muy gratificantes. Me siento orgullosa y privilegiada de pertenecer a esta Comunidad.

María Stella Gómez de Velasco
Bucaramanga, Colombia

⁴ Tim Jackins

⁵ Diane Shisk

English translation of the preceding article:

◇◇◇◇◇◇◇◇◇◇◇◇◇◇◇◇ **The Workshop in Bucaramanga** ◇◇◇◇◇◇◇◇◇◇◇◇◇◇◇◇

The following are reports on the RC workshop held in Bucaramanga, Colombia, in April 2011, led by Laura Aguilar Fisch, an RC leader in Mexico City, Mexico. They were translated into English by Laura Aguilar Fisch.

The workshop in Colombia was an enriching experience—sharing with people who are so committed to RC and seeing the diversity of groups, especially the young people who are creating a group on liberation from racism. I was taken by¹ how organized the Colombian leaders are in the study of RC literature.

It is always good to reinforce basic RC theory and to learn about the distress patterns that impede the re-evaluation process. For me it was also important to realize that hurts are present in our society, with no exclusion of sex, social class, race, or age.

I learned that it is good to make use of all our tools in achieving discharge, that it is important to contradict the pattern that inhibits discharge, and finally to always persevere and treat ourselves with respect and kindness.



Ana Cristina Maturana
Santiago, Chile

There is a clear “before and after” to this experience. I found many directions I was looking for. Some of my leadership skills were strengthened. I strengthened successes I’d already had as a counselor. A lot became tangible in this “RC laboratory.”

I think that building our South American Community, and our local ones, is based on all the small personal achievements. I believe the more kind and sincere we become with ourselves, the better we will take off the “masks” of our distresses, hold them to the light, and recover much more space—intelligent, creative, joyful, and free—to act in the present.



Laura Silvina del Valle Fares
Buenos Aires, Argentina

I have attended many workshops, meetings, seminars, and forums in representing our organization, CADHUBEV (Colectivo Afro-Colombiano Pro Derechos Humanos Benkos Vive), but never have I returned home so calm as after this RC workshop.

¹ Taken by means impressed by.

Last weekend was far too nice an experience for us. We were surprised from the moment we stepped onto Bumangués soil. We had never lived something like this.

We have now internalized the importance of listening to others and being listened to. In our organization, CADHUBEV, we are fighting for the eradication of racism and all other forms of discrimination, but we know that in order to make decisive and determined progress we have to listen to each other more and take turns when we take the floor.²

We are convinced that we need to get deeper into RC. We are glad to know that we are not alone in the world fighting against discrimination, that we have excellent allies who understand our struggle and acknowledge that we are not making it up.³

Barriers have been built worldwide that keep us apart, but we also know (and this is the more gratifying) that there are people committed to knocking them down to create a world where we can all live in harmony. To achieve that harmony, we have to question the power of those who have set themselves up as the world’s owners. We are the ones to reclaim the world, because we have the capacity to make a better place of it. We are the ones to help those who have monopolized what does not belong to them see clearly. That is part of our goal.

I’m convinced that this work (RC) is a vital step in pushing out the hatred that is in our hearts. Here in Colombia racism is strong, particularly in politics, and we are fighting to eradicate it. So we ought to understand it. I believe we need more theory to understand how the various forms of oppression operate in the racism against Afro-descendents. The only thing that matters is that we are human beings, period. If the world was like this, we would have lives more filled with happiness.

Thank you for opening your hearts to us. Here in the Colombian Pacific and in the Valley,⁴ there are now Co-Counselors.

Jesús Carbali
Cali, Valle del Cauca, Colombia
(with Nairobi Ruiz, Martha Rivas, and Steven Cuero)

continued . . .

² Take the floor means speak to others.

³ Making it up means inventing it.

⁴ The Valley refers to Valle del Cauca, which is one region or Department in Colombia.

... continued

I realized that internalized oppression was preventing me from noticing the benign reality in me as a human being and, as a result, in all other people, and that I was judging and devaluing myself. Even though I had been in RC for over five years and sometimes reviewed basic theory, being at the workshop made a difference. Laura explained basic theory, and I realized I had not been able to hear that simple information because of internalized oppression. I also understood that for me to build my RC Community, I have to keep discharging. That simple idea is powerful and has changed my perspective. Something I read by Harvey⁵ also came to mind: that we always have to return to basic theory and re-read it.



Nancy Callañaupa Mesco
Cusco, Peru

Thank you Maria Stella⁶ for handling all the details—the welcoming, the organization—with care and love at every moment. I enjoyed seeing the long way you have come since 2008 when I was in Colombia.

Thank you Laura for your closeness and leadership—your clarity, gentleness, simplicity, depth, and fluency in each moment and subject. I reinforced and deepened my knowledge. We will stay united and connected.



Carmen Rodríguez Sánchez
Santiago, Chile

This workshop was like bathing in clear and fresh water.

We experienced a propitious ambiance for enjoying the diversity of the participants: a Mexican, an Argentinian, two Chileans, two Peruvians, four from Cali (Colombia), four from Bogota (Colombia), fifteen from Bucaramanga (Colombia), and two from a nearby area. We were mestiza, Afro-descendants, Indigenous, and white, as well as working-class, middle-class, and peasants. We were men and women, ages seventeen to sixty-seven. Having these apparent huge differences was a great opportunity to appreciate our fundamental sameness.

⁵ Harvey Jackins

⁶ María Stella Gómez de Velasco, an RC leader in Bucaramanga, Colombia

The workshop was characterized by sensitivity, affection, joy, closeness, play, and creativity. There was a clarity that allowed everybody to open up and behave in a more humane way.

I had attended excellent RC workshops. I'd read and re-read most of the RC theory that is translated into Spanish. I had felt my process and that of my Community advance. Nevertheless, I had not previously had full consciousness of how lost I was in a world of lies and deceit, and of all the ways internalized oppression had sabotaged my life. In listening to Laura talk about it with such clarity, an enormous cloud faded.

The clarity regarding *I am okay* allows me to keep perspective on reality, in spite of all the noises caused by my confusing distresses. Now I have a different view of myself, my Community, the world, and I know I need to keep fighting and freeing my mind through discharge. My decision, forged during the workshop, is to never again feel bad about myself, no matter the reason, and to appreciate myself with no limits. I know I'll have to decide it a thousand times, until I completely defeat the chronic pattern so long ago installed on me.

Yes, this time something special happened for me. I was able to understand how the internalized oppression has made my life difficult, made me feel incapable and inadequate. This new understanding gives me a lot of power. It keeps me enthusiastic and makes my Co-Counseling sessions and leadership function in a better way. It makes me continue working with enjoyment toward my re-emergence.

My appreciation to Laura for her interest in the Community of Colombia and her support, patience, and understanding that has allowed me to discover the true María Stella. There is now a strong and committed Community in Colombia.

I keep thinking, with admiration and gratitude, about the great work done by Harvey, that marvelous human being who brought to us the gift of RC, and about his struggle, and the struggle of Tim,⁷ Diane,⁸ and all the people committed to this world project of being more humane and transforming the world. The work we are doing together is hopeful and demands effort, and its results are gratifying. I feel proud and privileged to belong to this Community.

María Stella Gómez de Velasco
Bucaramanga, Colombia

⁷ Tim Jackins

⁸ Diane Shisk

A Grading Party

I teach in a mathematics and computer science department that has seventeen members. I tried an experiment with grading, because there is always considerable complaining and venting¹ about students' performance on exams. I came up with² the idea of having a "grading party" during the final exam period. I figured a good way to contradict our isolation as colleagues was to bring us together as we finished up our grades for the semester.

I reserved the faculty lounge in my building for an afternoon and sent out an e-mail invitation to my department. The opening line was "Challenging tasks often go better with good company." I offered a time and place to gather, to vent, to grade, and to work, with an additional incentive of some treats. I also checked in with a colleague ahead of time to make sure at least two of us were interested.

The response was excellent, with seven colleagues attending and three others saying that they thought it was a great idea but they couldn't attend at that time. Because we were centrally located, we even attracted two members from other departments!

Although I didn't incorporate any specific RC practices (for example, mini-sessions), I did encourage folks to share their feelings and frustrations as they worked. There was lots of chatter and laughter, as well as some useful sharing of different methods of grading and evaluation. Nearly everybody felt that he or she accomplished more working as part of a group than in an office or at home alone. It was certainly more fun.

I will keep organizing these gatherings and hopefully incorporate into them more structured listening sessions. This seems like an effective avenue for introducing basic RC theory. I'm curious if others have had similar events at their institutions.

Gareth Roberts
Worcester, Massachusetts, USA
Reprinted from the RC e-mail
discussion list for leaders of colleagues

¹ Venting means expression of feelings.

² Came up with means thought of.

The 2009 Guidelines for the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities

Revised and updated to

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

Also rewritten and reorganized

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

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To order, see page 109.



CHUCK ESSER

Spreading RC in Nigeria

Dateline 25 June, 2011—a remarkably wet day in Lagos State, the commercial hub of Nigeria, located in the southwest of the country, with an estimated population of over eighteen million.

If we had envisaged the rain, the trio of Bode Josephine, Agnes Roy, and my humble self probably would have rescheduled the date of a talk on the fundamentals of Re-evaluation Counseling to a group of thirty-three members of a ministry shepherded by Dr. Benjamin Okoro.

Modele Ibitoye, one of our vibrant RCers, formally of Ajegunle Community, Lagos State, sometime ago relocated to Ijegan, where she has been leading a support group. Our trip to Ijegan was in response to a phone call from her requesting an introductory talk for some members

of the ministry whom she had earlier told about Re-evaluation Counseling. I invited Bode and Roy to accompany me. Both of them belong to the Surulere Community in the north central part of Lagos State.

After driving three hours under the persistent rain, there was limited time to give the talk, as we had another long journey ahead of us driving back.

We met an enthusiastic gathering. A series of lovely songs set a good mood for the class. I began with a two-minute-each two-way session: “Just take turns listening to your partner for two minutes. You talk about anything of interest to you, but first agree on who talks first.”

Thereafter we briefly reviewed what it was like having someone listen: “How did it go? Did your partner listen to you?” Someone responded that rather than talk, her partner spent the two minutes laughing. That brought a torrent of laughter in the class. I assured them that it was okay for someone to laugh through her session as it was a form of “discharge,” which allows people to “re-emerge” from “distress patterns,” to think logically and make rational decisions.

The talk progressed from the art of listening and the need to be listened to, to the meaning of Re-evaluation Counseling, Co-Counseling, sessions, distress recordings, rigid patterns, discharge, re-emergence,

and taking charge. We reminded the class that no one is an island or a super-human and that we all need to seek attention from someone who has agreed to listen to us and encourage us to discharge.

After questions and comments, some wanted to know how they could become RC members. Modele was on hand* to brief them on her ongoing class.

Dr. Okoro, Pastor-in-Charge of the Ministry, was appreciative and expressed the desire to invite us for a more elaborate teaching of RC.

*Onii Nwangwu-Stevenson
Area Reference Person for
North Central Lagos State, Nigeria
Surulere, Lagos, Nigeria*

* On hand means available, there.



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE IKOTUN, NIGERIA, RC COMMUNITY



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE IKOTUN, NIGERIA, RC COMMUNITY

Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Support Groups Must Be Re-emergent

All our experience with support groups on oppression issues is that once the original sharing is past, we had better be teaching very good RC in the group, and seeing to the individual re-emergence of the members, or the membership will disappear.

People come to RC to get help to re-emerge, and the purpose of a support group is simply to provide a safer atmosphere for people with a similar background.

The policy since the 1977 World Conference is that every gathering of RCers should have these three points of content: (1) review of old theory, (2) getting up-to-date on new theory, and (3) attention to individual re-emergence (modeling it with at least a few people, if time does not permit everyone to have a turn).

If you have difficulty in teaching, then yell for help, but your people have to be re-emerging in the support group or they won't stick around* and the internalized oppression will tend to take over instead of being a target of your work.

Harvey Jackins

From a letter written in 1980

* Stick around means stay.



ALISA LEMIRE BROOKS

If you move . . .

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

Thank you,

Rational Island Publishers

What I Have Learned About Fundraising for RC

I have been on the Board of the Re-evaluation Foundation for almost twenty years and have been the President of the Foundation since 1994. During this time I have taken on¹ the challenge of raising money for RC—personally asking friends to donate and also counseling RCers to solicit donations from non-RCers. I have learned quite a bit about the confusions and distresses we need to discharge and overcome in order to be successful fundraisers for RC.

THE MISSION OF THE RE-EVALUATION FOUNDATION AND WHY IT MATTERS TO ME AND TO YOU

The mission of the Re-evaluation Foundation is to financially support the spreading of RC and the development

of RC leaders. The Foundation funds projects around the world that tend to fall into one or more of four major categories: (1) Leadership Development of People Targeted by Racism, (2) Global Initiatives, (3) Leadership Development of Young People/Family Work, and (4) Elimination of Racism. For example, in Africa we have funded workshops, including the bringing of experienced RC leaders there. Recently the Foundation underwrote the cost of RC leaders going to Japan to lead workshops to support the Japanese RC Community after the earthquake, tsunami, and damage to nuclear reactors.

I want RC to spread and for there to be more and more RC leaders. I want this to happen. I believe that to have

the kind of world I want, it is necessary to spread the theory and practice of RC as broadly as possible and to develop thousands, if not millions, of RC leaders. I know what a difference RC has made to me, how different and better my life is as a result of it, and I have seen what a positive difference it has made for many people I love.

One counseling direction I have offered people is to notice what a difference RC has made for them personally and for those they care about. It is useful for all of us to notice this, to notice the reality of the importance of RC in our lives, and it is probably a prerequisite for asking others to donate to RC projects.

continued . . .

¹ Taken on means undertaken.

... continued

ENCOURAGED BUT NOT OBLIGATED

No one is under any obligation to raise money for RC. No one should fundraise for RC because their RC leader would want them to or because they feel like they owe it to the RC Community. It is not a duty to raise money for RC; we are not interested in people fundraising out of obedience or sacrifice.

And our *Guidelines* state that “All Co-Counselors are encouraged to help raise funds for the RC Community.”²

FUNDRAISING IS RE-EMERGENT

We can choose and decide to fundraise for RC because it is in the interest of our own re-emergence. Fundraising is a re-emergent activity.

How is it in the interest of anyone’s re-emergence to do fundraising? It is all about reclaiming power. We want to be powerful in every area of our lives, and one area is our relationship to money. Specifically, we want to see to it³ that the projects that matter to us have the funding that they need.

In order to reclaim power via fundraising for RC, we will need to openly communicate about RC to people in our lives. This is consistent with and reinforcing of the goal the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities adopted at the 2005 World Conference, and re-adopted at the 2009 World Conference, that “Co-Counselors target the distresses that hold them back from making a thoughtful and sustained effort to reach those with whom they already have caring and committed relationships.”⁴

In order to have the lives we want, we need to not only take action against our own personal internalized oppression

but also work to change the realities of society that perpetuate the external oppression. In other words, we need to change the world, to set things right—for ourselves and for everyone. We need to make the world the way we want it to be. Re-evaluation Counseling is a necessary ingredient in ending all forms of humans harming humans. In order to have the world we want, more and more people need to learn Co-Counseling and more people need to become RC leaders.

The only thing in our way of fundraising for RC is our chronic material.⁵ That’s all, nothing more. And we know how to discharge our chronic material, and how to think and act outside of it.

Counseling directions I have found useful include

- “I will fundraise for RC!” and then discharging on whatever comes up.

⁵ Material means distress.



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- “I will see to it that the projects I care about have the funds that they need.”
- “RC matters too much to me to let my patterns inhibit me regarding fundraising.”
- “Does RC really matter, make any difference?”
- “Can I actually do anything that would make any difference at all in the world?” “Does what I do matter?”

As you can tell⁶ from the above directions, we are up against our chronic material. In most cases it is related to feelings of hopelessness, powerlessness, and insignificance. It is no different than the chronic patterns that attach to other areas of our lives. We want to discharge and act outside of our chronic material.

THE CONTEXT FOR FUNDRAISING

Vast amounts of money are donated in the United States to charities each year. In 2008, \$307.7 billion were donated, and in 2009, even with the tough economic times, the amount decreased only slightly to \$303.7 billion. (I have not seen data for other countries but would expect the equivalent, at least in “developed” countries.) Where do all these dollars come from? Over seventy percent of the contributions come from individuals. In 2009 that was \$227.4 billion. Each year individuals donate lots of money to charity. We just want a very, very small percentage of that—like 1/1000th of one percent—to come into RC.

THE MECHANICS OF FUNDRAISING

The number-one reason people do not succeed in fundraising is that they do not directly ask for a donation. The number-two reason is that they do not ask for a donation a second time. So—ask for it.

⁶ Tell means see, perceive.

² See page 39 of the 2009 *Guidelines for the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities*.

³ See to it means make certain, guarantee.

⁴ See page 61 of the 2009 *Guidelines for the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities*.

Some of us feel like we do not know anyone who has the money to donate to RC. We actually do. Most people in the United States make charitable contributions. Over fifty percent of individuals who earn between \$23,000 and \$43,000 per year contribute to charity and on average contribute over \$700 each. And these numbers, both the percentages of people who donate and the amounts they donate, increase for folks who earn more money.

If people have more money than they need, it is in the interest of their re-emergence for them to give the surplus back. You are doing them a favor by giving them someplace to put it. To the extent that they hold on to more than

they need, they are acting on the basis of distress. By letting these people know about the Foundation and encouraging them to donate, you are assisting them to act intelligently and humanly and outside of greed recordings.

You are the best possible ambassador of RC. You know how much RC matters to you and what a difference it makes more broadly in the world. You personally represent, and can communicate, the compelling rationale for someone to donate to RC projects. Think about who you know, who you can ask, and what you can say to solicit donations for RC projects.

WE CAN DO IT TOGETHER

Finally, another chronic pattern that gets in our way is isolation. We do not need to, nor should we, take on fundraising for RC by ourselves. There is nothing we need to do alone. We can do this together. We have set up fundraising discharge groups for various constituencies, geographies, and projects. I would be glad to help insure that you are connected with others as you take on fundraising for RC.

Fundraising for RC is something we can do for our own re-emergence and to help make the world the way we want it to be.

Mike Markovits
Greenwich, Connecticut, USA

RC Well Grounded in Ethiopia

An RC workshop was held in Debre Zeit, Ethiopia, in May 2011. The RCers had reached out well. The large number of participants and the good theory and practice were a reflection of the progress of the Ethiopian RC Community. (Numbers had increased so much that the organizer had to be selective.) The workshop was also inclusive, bringing together many people with special needs. I was impressed by the organization and the delegation of tasks and how smoothly the entire workshop went.

I did not have to do an introduction to RC because everybody was knowledgeable about it. We were able to look at the various types of oppressions; participants discharged a lot on how oppression had affected them. We also focused on addiction (the unrealistic attempt to escape and numb feelings caused by oppression) and looked at various ways of counseling, including contradiction¹ and commitments. People raised many questions, and there was ample time for answering them.

Mesfin² and Dagnachew³ were supportive and worked closely with me from start to end. I was impressed by their leadership.

The Community proposed that we organize a yearly workshop to continue RC growth in Ethiopia. As in many African countries, meeting facilities are limited due to problems of transportation. We agreed to continue discharging about this.

I went away happy at how well grounded RC has become in Ethiopia. People are committed to their own growth and to reaching out to others.

Wanjiku Kironyo
Area Reference Person for Nairobi, Kenya,
and Apprentice Regional Reference
Person for Kenya and Surrounds
Nairobi, Kenya

¹ In this context, contradiction means contradicting distresses.

² Mesfin Taye Woldegiorgis, the Area Reference Person for Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

³ Dagnachew Bogale Wakene, an RC leader in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia



COSTA RICA • THERESA D'AMATO

We Can Do Everything

We went to Debre Zeit (Ethiopia) on Friday, May 13, 2011, for an RC workshop led by Wanjiku Kironyo.¹ During our stay we discussed oppression, addiction, and other important things that are related to disabilities and that affect us in every aspect of life. For instance, economic oppression: the society tries to control or discriminate against us on the basis of our economic level. There are low attitudes toward us women and persons with disabilities. We are considered unable to generate income or perform any economic activities. This affects our psychological perspective. We develop a sense of inferiority and become unable to use our potential and to expect everything from ourselves.

¹ See previous article. Wanjiku Kironyo is the Area Reference Person for Nairobi, Kenya, and the Apprentice Regional Reference Person for Kenya and Surrounds.



JULIE ANN FORGIONNE

We also have mechanisms for avoiding such oppressions. We need to teach the society and create awareness that we disabled people have the ability to do everything, that we have everything that other people have.

Addictions, such as smoking cigarettes, drinking alcohol, chewing chat,² and watching pornography, can affect us economically, socially, physically, and psychologically. We learned at the workshop how we can rid ourselves of addictions by using commitment and valuing ourselves.

The workshop was interesting for all of us because we got things that are essential for our lives, such as self-confidence, strength, brightness, and hope. We became more able to use our potential, avoid a sense of inferiority, accept reality, discharge our distresses, give freedom to our friends to talk about whatever they need to, and teach society by creating awareness about persons with disabilities.

I wish to have an RC workshop repeatedly!

Mamo Tesema Kassa
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

² Chat is a green plant used as a stimulant, especially by young people.



KK

Wide World Work and RC Leadership

I'm pleased with your wide world work. However, don't make the mistake of thinking you don't still have responsibility for the RC Community. How far you can go in the wide world, after the first rush, will be largely a function of how much RC organization you can build as a training ground for leaders.

Your experience of finding RC tools amazingly effective in the wide world is replicated these days by hundreds of other people. It's a shame so many more are still held back by timidity.

Harvey Jackins
From a letter written in 1980

How Do You Use RC in School?

Hello folks,

I hope all is well with you. Some of you may be preparing for your much needed school break.

For my own thinking about how to keep moving educational change work forward, I would like to hear from you about the following:

1) How do you use RC theory and practice in schools? This could be in the school you are working in,

the school your children attend, schools you support as an ally or advocate, and so on. It could be in large projects or daily individual acts. It could be a one-time thing or an ongoing thing. Any way that you see your experience and knowledge of RC influencing how you interact with the education system is important to share.

2) You could also share the plans you have—things you would like to do to influence the educational

system but have not gotten around to doing¹ yet.

My thanks in advance for the sharing.

Marilyn Robb

International Commonality Reference
Person for Educational Change
Tacarigua, Trinidad and Tobago
Reprinted from the RC
e-mail discussion list for
leaders of educational change

¹ Gotten around to doing means made time to do.



Thank you, Marilyn, for the opportunity to share some highlights of my fifteen years in education (and RC)!

I am now co-principal of a small “alternative” high school in Alaska (USA), where I also taught for the previous fourteen years. During that time I taught three RC fundamentals classes, during the school day, to young people from the school. I also invited a few of the young people to be in RC Community classes. Just this year I taught a “peer counseling” class, using RC theory, to twelve students. My assistant for that class was a dear Co-Counselor who happens to work in my building. We are a great team and are able to grab mini-sessions whenever necessary. We are also able to model closeness with and support for each other.

To make my life better, I taught fundamentals to the other teachers. We have a small staff. At one point three of the five teachers and a support staff person had RC experience. One of the other teachers is my partner, so she is familiar with RC and supportive. I taught RC to the staff so that they

could discharge their hurts about the educational system and thus better listen to the students, and so they could understand the nature of young people’s oppression. That made my life better, since I wasn’t the only staff member with RC information.

My proudest moment was when I asked the superintendent to fund my travel to an allies to Natives workshop led by Marcie Rendon.² My school is roughly eighty percent Alaskan Native, and I am active in speaking out against institutional racism in my district. He gave me the money on the condition that I give an in-service to the staff at my school. Win-win for everybody: I got to attend an amazing workshop and then bring back the information.

Phil Burdick

Sitka, Alaska, USA

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

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



DERBYSHIRE, ENGLAND • ALAN EPSTEIN

Looking at Referencing

In an ongoing class I am leading, we are looking at referencing. We are asking (1) What do the terms “referencing, referenced, and Reference Person” mean in an RC context? (2) Can any Co-Counselor reference another Co-Counselor? (3) What are common distresses related to having someone reference us, and how do we counsel on those? (4) What are common distresses related to being a reference person for someone else, and how do we counsel on those? (5) What, precisely, do we want from a reference person (meaning any Co-Counselor who references us)? (6) What, precisely, are we willing to do as part of referencing another Co-Counselor?

We are looking freshly at our relationships to one another and are thinking about our re-emergence in a different way. We are considering what it means to have another mind in close with ours—thinking about us and with us, holding a big picture of us—and each of us doing that for someone else.

Referencing includes tracking someone’s self-identified goals. It means thinking about him or her in a context that is bigger in time and focus than a single Co-Counseling session. Its effectiveness is improved by the referencing person’s boldness, initiative, confidence, and relaxedness. It is limited by his or her doubts about the value of his or her connection, thinking, and leadership.

Considering being referenced by someone creates great opportunities to discharge early hurts that come from when people didn’t think about us well. (We have all had people “referencing” us: parents, teachers, older relatives, Co-Counselors. They tried.) We get to look at what comes up when we think about having someone in close. We get to feel exposed and vulnerable. We get to consider leaning on someone while continuing to think and decide for ourselves about our own re-emergence. One direction is to remember someone who thought well about us.

Each of us in the class is considering asking someone to reference us in regard to a particular counseling project. I introduced the idea like this: “Imagine that you have a completely trustworthy advisor or confidant with a broad, sweeping vision of your life, a clear perspective of your goodness as well as your struggles, confidence in your ability to tackle anything, and an interest in helping you do that. How might he or she be helpful to you? What would you ask of him or her or how would you hope that he or she might take a stand for you?” So far it’s been hard to think clearly enough about this to actually take steps toward setting it up, so we’ll probably slow down and spend more time putting attention on the possibility.

It would be interesting to know what others have tried and figured out about this.

Johnny Lee Lenhart
Brattleboro, Vermont, USA
Reprinted from the e-mail
discussion list for RC teachers



AUSTRALIA • DIANE SHISK

*** * * * IMPORTANT NOTE * * * ***

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Referencing My Regular Co-Counselors

Johnny,

I loved reading your e-mail.¹ Thank you for writing it! Referencing is also something I've been thinking about.

I think of referencing as part of being someone's primary or regular Co-Counselor. I greatly enjoy thinking strategically over time about people I love, assisting them to be completely themselves and have the best lives possible. I have to move through my own distresses to become smarter in thinking about them.

I don't think that all of my regular Co-Counselors think about the role of regular Co-Counselor the way that I do. I recall an article by Tim² or Harvey³ about how each person comes to a relationship with aware and unaware expectations for it, that no two people have the same set of expectations, and that it's useful to write down all the expectations and then discuss which ones both people can agree on. I have had an unaware expectation that my regular Co-Counselors will reference me. I need to discharge and talk to them about what I mean.

I reference my regular Co-Counselors by paying close attention to (a) things they care about, that make their hearts sing, (b) things they notice that get in their way of having the lives they want (sometimes they specifically tell me, "Please ask me about this in our next session," or "Don't let me forget to work on X"), and (c) where their chronic distresses make it hard for them to notice that something is possible or where they are confused about themselves in unaware ways.

I have a running list in my head of things that seem important to their lives and re-emergence, and I periodically think with them about these things. I'll say, "X, Y, and Z seem important to you, and it seems to make a big difference when we can work on them. What do you think? What am I forgetting?" I keep these



SUSAN HUTCHISON

things in mind, so that when the opportunity arises in a session, I can bring them up. My Co-Counselors can forget to work on them, or may dislike working on them. If I know it makes an important difference, I'll say to them at the beginning of a session, "You may already have something in mind to work on, but I know you said that working on Y was important. What do you think about working on it?"

One of my regular Co-Counselors had a big goal he wanted to tackle but had trouble moving toward it. In almost every session I would ask him if he wanted to work on it. Sometimes I would insist that we work on it for at least a little while, or get his agreement to work on it during our next session.

I also think about what the key issue is for each of my regular Co-Counselors (the one that if it moved, everything else would move), and I think with him or her about it. (This is the same concept behind RC's goal #1, to eliminate racism.) A key issue could be anything from getting enough sleep, to discharging on an early sexual memory, to learning how to type. As someone discharges and moves on it, it will also shift over time.

I liked your definition of referencing: "Referencing includes tracking someone's self-identified goals. It means thinking about him or her in a context that is bigger in time and focus than a single Co-Counseling session. Its effectiveness is improved by the referencing person's boldness, initiative, confidence, and relaxedness. It is limited by his or her doubts about the value of his or her connection, thinking, and leadership."

In addition to tracking people's self-identified goals, referencing

continued . . .

¹ See previous article.

² Tim Jackins

³ Harvey Jackins

TEACHING, LEADING, COMMUNITY BUILDING

... continued

may include tracking the chronic distresses that limit their thinking about themselves and thereby affect their goals (or lack of goals)—in other words, working to increase the number of possibilities they see for themselves and their lives. This doesn't mean having one's own goal for them and imposing it on them, but being a mind from the outside and having relaxed high expectations. Some of the best referencing I've received has been when people pointed out that I was capable of doing something I didn't feel capable of.

An International Liberation Reference Person referenced me at a workshop and gave me a direction that changed my life. This was a "one-off"⁴ reference, not part of an ongoing referencing relationship, but his work

⁴ "One-off" means one-time.

was grounded in ongoing referencing of my constituency and I trusted him and his breadth of knowledge about that group.

Referencing might work best when the people being referenced are aware that they're being referenced and agree to being in partnership about it. Then they can notice more directly that someone is actually attempting to think about them. It can also be

useful to decide not to act on secrecy patterns (referencing is harder to do if one lacks important pieces of information).

I loved the questions you raised and will think and discharge more about them.

Emily Cunningham
Seattle, Washington, USA
Reprinted from the e-mail discussion list for RC teachers



ISRAEL • RANDI FREUNDLICH

Leaders Are Not "Public Utilities"

I was reviewing some old correspondence I had with a Co-Counseling leader who had assisted me with a difficulty. She had asked me to agree not to drift away or drop the relationship without our talking about it. At one point she wrote, "I've seen 'drifting away' a lot, and it seems to be related to classism. With upper-middle-class and owning-class people, the relationship often does not seem to be based on a two-way connection to be thought about and tended. It's more like the counselor or Reference Person is a public utility to be used when needed. Early isolation may be at the root of it, but it also has oppressor content that needs to be thought about in the present."

That got me thinking. I realized that it must be related to classism. I cried after reading her words and knew I had some discharging to do to be able to think in this area. I don't want to unawaresly take and not give; the last thing I want to do is treat someone like a public utility. In addition to thinking better about this leader, I also want to think more clearly about my Area Reference Person and Regional Reference Person.

How do you tend your relationship with your Reference Person? How have you made it a two-way connection? How do you think about him or her?

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



TIM JACKINS

A Listening Project at a Juneteenth Festival

On June 18 my RC Region¹ did a listening project² at a Juneteenth festival in Richmond, California, USA. Juneteenth is a holiday celebrated mainly by people of African heritage in the United States. It commemorates the announcement of the abolition of slavery in the U.S. State of Texas on June 19, 1865. The word Juneteenth is formed by combining the words June and nineteenth.

Richmond is a city in the San Francisco Bay area. Most of its residents are poor and working-class people targeted by racism. There is a large African American community. The regional press often carries sensational stories about crime in Richmond, and many people feel like it is a dangerous place. It is rare to hear anything positive about Richmond in the press.

At the listening project, along with listening, we sold RC literature, collected the names and contact information of people who wanted to know more about RC, and passed out flyers for a public lecture we would be doing entitled Ending Racism in Our Lifetime.

We decided on three questions to ask people: "What would a world without racism be like?" "How has racism affected your life?" and "What does this holiday mean to you?"

Two days before the project, I got to lead a meeting for the people who would be participating. We spent most of it in separate discharge groups for white people and people targeted by racism. We white people had many feelings to discharge about going to Richmond and especially about feeling awkward, out of place, or unwelcome at a festival at which most of the people would be African American. I asked the white people to discharge using the direction that we would be completely welcome there and that people would be thrilled to see us. Though I knew that would be a useful direction for discharge, I have to admit that I didn't completely believe it myself, no doubt because of my own undischarged racism.

When I arrived at the festival, our booth was set up and people were already listening. I saw another white RCer listening to an African American man, and I joined in to lend more attention. The man was

saying how thrilled he was to see our booth. He said he'd never seen white people taking on³ the project of ending racism. He motioned to all the other booths at the festival and said that ours was the only one addressing racism, something he thought that everyone should be doing. He signed up to get more information about RC.

A while later an African-heritage woman came up, read my United to End Racism t-shirt, and laughed, "End racism?" She laughed again. She didn't stop to answer our questions, but she discharged!

One man answered the question "What does this holiday mean to you?" by saying, "I'm free!" He laughed a lot as he said it.

My biggest highlight was listening to an African-heritage man who came up to our booth later in my shift. I pointed to the sign with our three questions and offered to listen to his answers. He looked skeptical. "So you want to listen to me answer these questions?" he asked. "Yes, exactly," I said. "Why?" he asked. I told him about what we know in RC about the power of listening.

Another white RCer joined me, and we listened to him for a long time. It took him a while to get around to answering our questions, and he didn't spend much time on them. Mainly he talked about other questions, struggles, and experiences. The whole time he was wearing mirror sunglasses, so I couldn't see his eyes, only my reflection in his glasses.

We listened to him for about twenty-five minutes, and at some point we got back to talking about racism. "We think we can end racism by listening," I said. He looked incredulous. "Listening?" he asked. "What good will that do?" I told him a little about the eliminating-white-racism work I lead and said that I had seen it make a huge difference to other white people and to me as well. I said, "If I hadn't done that work, I wouldn't even be here today. I don't think I even would have come to Richmond." For the first time in our conversation he pulled back his mirror sunglasses and . . . he was crying! He signed up to get more information about RC.



Terry Fletcher
Berkeley, California, USA
Reprinted from the e-mail discussion
list for RC Community members
involved in eliminating racism

¹ A Region is a subdivision of the International Re-evaluation Counseling Community, usually consisting of several Areas (local RC Communities).

² In an RC listening project, several Co-Counselors go to a public place and offer to listen to passersby about some important issue, such as racism or a current war. They may hold signs that invite people to share their thinking about that issue.

³ In this context, taking on means undertaking.



Norway— A Week After July 22



KK

Thank you for your messages of sympathy in regard to the bombing in Oslo (Norway) and the shooting in a youth camp on a small island near Oslo.¹ It warms me to have you thinking of us.

I have been able to reach almost all the Co-Counsellors living in Norway. They were not so close as to be injured by the bombing, and they were not present on the island during the attack. But many people here know survivors or victims, or their relatives or friends. We are a small nation, and youth delegations from all parts of Norway were at the camp.

I guess you know from the news about the cruelty; I will not repeat that. But I would like to share some hopeful and moving things.

¹ On July 22, 2011, a Norwegian man set off a car bomb near some government buildings in Oslo, Norway, and then attacked with gunfire a camp for Norwegian Labor Party youth on an island near Oslo. In all, seventy-six people died.

The prime minister, the head of police in the municipality of the attacked island, the king, the queen, leaders of different political parties, have all cried on national television. The leaders of the nation have encouraged people to hug, hold hands, be close, cry, tell their stories, and listen to each other with love and respect.

There is little demand for revenge against the anti-Islamic offender. Instead a collective agreement has been reached to embrace the values the offender wished to destroy, by creating a more open, friendly, and inclusive society. A young woman said, "If one person can hate this much, think of all the love we are able to show together."

On Monday in my town many people were out on the streets—Muslims and Christians, young and old, thousands and thousands of people—hugging, giving flowers to each other, putting flowers on buildings and fences. A wonderful

statement was made: "Tonight the streets are filled with love."

This atmosphere of sisterhood and brotherhood will probably fade as society goes back to normal. But something special and precious has happened during these days. It has showed us what is possible, and that many, many people will make an effort to have this as a permanent part of society. It will definitely have an impact on the upcoming elections. Racist statements and extreme right-wing² sympathies will be unpopular.

Myself, I can't help smiling at every person I meet, thinking, "You precious person; I am so glad you are alive."

I am proud of my people.

Anne Helgedagsrud
Bergen, Norway
Reprinted from the RC e-mail
discussion list for leaders
of wide world change

² Right-wing means politically reactionary.



ELLIE PUTNAM

Love is something you and I must have. We must have it because our spirit feeds upon it. We must have it because without it we become weak and faint. Without love our self-esteem weakens. Without it our courage fails. Without love we can no longer look out confidently at the world. We turn inward and begin to feed upon our own personalities, and little by little we destroy ourselves. With it we are creative. With it we march tirelessly. With it, and with it alone, we are able to sacrifice for others.

Chief Dan George

To Change Things, Make Friends

In terms of your work, I think you need to back up. It's good that you are aggressive and take forceful positions, but the idea is always to make effective contact with other people. If you are going to be a champion of women, you have to get along with them and you have to be able to communicate with them. Instead of thinking primarily, or to start with, of where you want the women to be, *think first of where they are*; then move from there.

All good organizing consists of making friends. You have to start where the person is. The goal is to have everyone as close a friend or ally as you can bring them. This means that in a group situation, such as your job, you will have some very close to you, some less close, some friendly, some neutral, and, hopefully, no one hostile.

It may be that living in the co-op has affected you a little. This is a difficulty in trying to found perfect communities—we get out of touch with where most of the population is and forget how to work effectively with them. Even the most backward of them is human and loveable, just back of their conditioning.

Putting up a sign is the self-conscious, timid way of being militant. Listening to the people until they see us as warm friends, and then asking discreet questions, is the way we can help them to change.

Harvey Jackins
From a letter written in 1980



—Rational Island Publishers



TIM JACKINS

The Long Journey of the Monarch Butterflies

At one point during the February 2011 International RC Conference on Care of the Environment, Wytke Visser* made a comment that reminded me of the life cycle of monarch butterflies.

She told us that we will have to face confusions that previous generations could not figure out. Their situation was too difficult. Now, with the help of the discharge process, we can take steps to make the world better. For us to live with integrity, we have to make many choices in our lives that are different from those made by our ancestors.

* Wytke Visser is the International Commonality Reference Person for Care of the Environment and was the leader of the conference.

Joining together, we can take the big steps that are needed to protect the environment.

Ah, the image of butterflies migrating thousands of miles brightened my mind.

Let me explain. Monarch butterflies hibernate for the winter months in the highland forests of Michoacán, Mexico. During late February or early March, they mate in the warmth of the sun and then start north. Along the way, three generations of eggs mature to adults that will lay more eggs. The fourth generation, the brave generation, is then born. It is obliged to fly more than 2,500 miles back to its ancestral winter

home in the high-altitude pine and fir forests of central Mexico.

We are like that fourth generation. We can and we will prepare ourselves to work together to end the harm being done to people and nature in our present social and economic systems. We will find ways to protect and preserve all life on the planet.

© A. Laurel Green

Brattleboro, Vermont, USA

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



NE

Traducción en español del artículo precedente (Spanish translation of the preceding article):

El Largo Viaje de las Mariposas Monarcas

En un momento en la Conferencia Internacional de RC sobre Cuidado del Medio Ambiente en febrero de 2011, Wytke Visser* hizo un comentario que me hizo recordar el ciclo de la vida de las mariposas monarcas.

Ella nos dijo que tenemos que enfrentar las confusiones que las generaciones anteriores no podían entender. Su situación era demasiado difícil. Ahora con la ayuda del proceso del desahogo podemos tomar medidas para crear un mundo mejor. Para que podamos vivir con integridad, tenemos que tomar muchas decisiones en nuestras vidas que son diferentes de las cuales hicieron nuestros antepasados. Unidos, podemos tomar grandes medidas que son necesarias para proteger el medio ambiente.

Ah, iluminó mi mente la imagen de las mariposas migratorias volando miles de kilómetros.

* Wytke Visser es la persona de referencia internacional para el cuidado del medio ambiente y ella lideró la conferencia.

Les voy a explicar. Mariposas monarcas hibernan durante los meses de invierno en los bosques de las tierras altas de Michoacán, México. A finales de febrero o principios de marzo se aparean en el calor del sol y comienzan de nuevo al norte. En camino, tres generaciones de óvulos maduran y se hacen adultos a poner más óvulos. La cuarta generación, la generación mas valiente, entonces nace. Tienen que volar más de 4.000 km hasta su hogar de invierno ancestral en los bosques de pinos y de abetos en el centro de México.

Somos como la cuarta generación. Podemos y vamos a prepararnos para trabajar juntos para acabar con el daño infligido a la gente y a la naturaleza por nuestros sistemas sociales y económicos. Vamos a desarrollar maneras para proteger y preservar toda la vida en el planeta.

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Brattleboro, Vermont, EEUU

Traducida por A. Laurel Green y Maria Franco
Reimpreso de la lista de discusión para líderes del cuidado del medio ambiente



JV

Making the Best of an Earthquake

On September 4, 2010, we had a 7.1 earthquake in Christchurch, New Zealand. It caused lots of damage to our city. On February 22, 2011, another more devastating earthquake hit. Although it was 6.3, it caused far more damage than the first one as it was much closer to the city and was shallow. The inner city was badly damaged, and a hundred and eighty-two people died. The eastern suburbs, some of the poorest areas of our city, were badly affected for the second time, with major damage to thousands of homes, streets, schools, shops, and businesses.

In the days following the second quake, two RCers, Nikki Berry and Jacinta O'Reilly, went to the community centre in Aranui, the poorest suburb in Christchurch, to see what they could do to help. They assisted with the distribution of food. They then suggested to the local leadership that they run a listening project in the area and asked me to join them.

We finished the listening project in Aranui two weeks ago. We visited 2,800 households, over nine weeks, and then went back to those where no one was home the first time, so it was a big job. We had about thirty volunteers working with us. We all did “news and goods” and mini-sessions before going door to door and again when we got back (we called the mini-sessions “listening pairs”).

We told the residents we had come to see how they were doing following the earthquake and then listened to them. Most said, “Oh, we’re fine. There are lots of people worse off than we are,” but if we waited so they could see that we really meant it, then most were keen¹ to talk. Some immediately said, “Well, I’m not doing too well,” or, “How long have you got?!” Sometimes asking how their house was got them talking. It seemed it was easier, to start with, for

¹ Keen means eager.

them to talk about the damage to their houses than how they were feeling. Thousands of houses are badly damaged and will need major repairs or will have to be demolished, so this is a huge worry for people.

Many spoke of how scared they were of the aftershocks and about fearing another major quake. Many were angry about the delays in getting repairs to their homes. We listened to lots of stories about where they were when the quake hit and what they did. Some had been in the inner city and had seen people injured or killed. Some had lost people close to them. One woman had crawled out of a collapsed building. She said, “I saw things that day no human being should have to see.”

We also asked if they had any urgent needs—if they had food, water, power, a working toilet; if they needed repairs to their houses or had medical needs—and then reported their answers back to the local community trust, which would go out and do basic repairs. We told them where to get food parcels and chemical toilets. I think the mixture of listening to them and offering practical help worked well.

We met many wonderful people who showed resilience and humour even though things were tough for them. Lots of people were caring for their neighbours as well as their own families. We learned lots. It was a great thing to do. We built good relationships with the local leadership that will be ongoing. We were clear that we were working under their direction, as they knew their community best.

Nikki now plans to run community choirs for older people in Aranui

continued . . .



YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK, CALIFORNIA, USA • LYNNE SHIVERS

WIDE WORLD CHANGING

... continued

and two other suburbs that were badly hit by the quakes. Now that many people have their basic needs sorted out, at least to some extent, they need to get together around some enjoyable activity. Nikki is looking for funding so that people with low incomes can take part.² She has a lot of experience running community choirs. She uses them as a way to naturalise RC. People discharge as they learn to sing, and she teaches them about RC along the way. A lot of the people then join RC classes, as they can see how well it works.

This is an exciting place to live, with lots of community input into how the city should be rebuilt. We have a great opportunity to make it better than it was. We are used

² Take part means participate.

to aftershocks, as we have been through over five thousand of them now. The ex-mayor of San Francisco (California, USA) was here recently and said that after the 1989 quake in San Francisco, the aftershocks stopped after a month. We have had almost nine months of them. The smaller ones seem normal now, but once they get to 5.0, they are scary.

The challenge is to live in present time, to go on and live our lives and enjoy them, while knowing that in the next second there could be another big aftershock to deal with. They come without any warning, but don't usually last long. They are getting further apart now but apparently could go on for a year or more, so we have to learn to live with them. Rationally, there is no point in worrying about them.

When I go to another city now for a visit, it is a relief in some ways to be away from the aftershocks and the heaps of rubble we live around. But I miss the buzz³ of living here, too. We have been through an intense experience together and gotten a glimpse of how human beings can really be there for each other. We don't want to lose that in so-called "normality." We talk of the "new normal" here, as we will never be able to have our city the way it was. If we can hold on to all we have learned, things will be much better than they were in terms of real human connection.

Diane Shannon
Regional Reference Person
for New Zealand
Christchurch, New Zealand

³ Buzz means excitement.

The Collapsing Society

The present situation is that the oppressive society cannot function much longer. It is already malfunctioning to an enormous degree. Nothing of classical economics works anymore. The system is functioning at all only on patches and temporary repairs made with dirty string and chewing gum.

... We do not have to furnish the motive power or the drive to overthrow the system. That's a misleading concept. The system is heading for collapse. It's "going to hell in a bucket," and fast. All the activist can do is guide and steer the process.

Harvey Jackins
From *The Rest of Our Lives*, page 13 (1985)

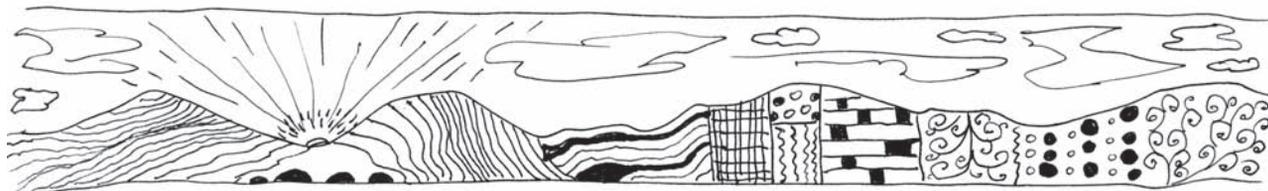
The Unexpected Regiment¹

Imagine a world in which owning-class people are so clear about their own goodness that they can face unflinchingly the genocide, slavery, war, and oppressions they have engineered and profited from for centuries, and commit to backing² those who can end them.

Jo Saunders
International Liberation Reference
Person for Owning-Class People
Alresford, Hants, England

¹ For more on the owning class as the "unexpected regiment," see page 69 of the article, by Harvey Jackins, on pages 68 and 69 of issue No. 1 of *Coming Home*, the RC journal for owning-class people and their allies.

² Backing means supporting.



KATIE KAUFFMAN

• • • • • **Crises Pushing Us into Reality** • • • • •

I just cried my way through part of the transcript of a talk Seán Ruth¹ gave at the recent Middle-Class Leaders' Conference. It's in the July *Present Time*, along with other reports from middle-class people.

Also in that *Present Time* is a lengthy discussion about the Holocaust, a set of reports on how people in Japan are using RC to think about handling the crises there, and a great talk by Tim Jackins on class.

A conclusion I might come to from reading *Present Time*, discussions on the RC lists, and even discussions in the wide world is that this "collapse of capitalism" that Seán talks about may not be such a disaster—that it may be pushing us, especially those of us in oppressor roles, into a clearer understanding of our situation in the world.

I think crises are pushing many of us out of our self-absorbed, isolated struggles to maintain our lives within a capitalist economy. They are pushing us to look more sharply at reality. They are making us feel the necessity, for our own survival, to think beyond the day-to-day demands that capitalism places on us.

This is a good thing.

As a working-class leader, I have been saying more or less the same things about our economic system for a couple of decades, but I have never seen people in RC so receptive to my thinking as in the last two years. All of a sudden I am a popular guy!

¹ Seán Ruth is the International Liberation Reference Person for Middle-Class People.

Something is changing.

It is not that I am the smartest guy in the world. Nor do I seek popularity. I don't see my role as having all of the answers. But I do see it as helping to create the space for people to try out their thinking. It sounds like Seán is doing the same thing.

It is encouraging to see people so engaged.

If you want to know, one of the things that brought the tears was Seán saying to the middle-class people, "We're in good enough shape² now to start actively going after³ our relationships with working-class people and people raised poor, and figuring out how to get close to them and back⁴ them."

That would make a difference to me. It is not that the middle class is the largest or most powerful group in the world, but the switch of allegiance from helping to maintain society to actively backing the working class and people raised poor would be a powerful contradiction.⁵

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

² Shape means condition.

³ Going after means pursuing.

⁴ Back means support, stand behind.

⁵ Contradiction to distress



Cover Quotes Needed

PT workers toil away
Lots to do, every day
You can help us, here's the way
Send a cover quote* — don't delay!

The Present Time staff

* A possible quote for the cover of *Present Time*



LURAY CAVERNS, VIRGINIA, USA • SHIRA ROSEN

Speaking Up About a Conflict

Last week I attended a meeting of a non-profit organization of non-RCers who lead personal growth work in the Eugene (Oregon, USA) area. Like many change organizations, this one struggles with internal strife and distresses about leadership. The goal of the meeting was to receive input from the wider community about the financial sustainability, leadership, and future of the organization.

Thirty people came to the meeting. I was there primarily to support one of my friends, who also Co-Counsels with me. I said very little, but at one point I spoke up in response to some blaming. Multiple people had said that the conflict among the leaders of the organization proved that they were not using the skills they teach in their workshops (personal-growth and interpersonal-conflict-resolution skills). That was when I spoke up and said the following:

“When we struggle to get along, and butt heads, and can’t seem to get past a block, it isn’t our fault. We are doing our best. We are living in an oppressive society, full

of sexism, ageism, classism, anti-Jewish oppression, racism, and a bunch of other oppressions. We carry around the hurts from these oppressions, and we act them out unawarely at each other. Much of this is hard to recognize.

“We are struggling to create a new world that is free of oppression, but when we go out and walk around on the streets, we encounter the oppression every day. It’s like a sea we swim in, so we have trouble remembering that we are under water. We need to remember that we *are* using our skills, that we are doing what we can, and that it isn’t our fault that it is so hard. We can support each other and remember that we are good people, even when the conditions of our various oppressions make it difficult or impossible to get past a barrier between us. There may not yet be enough attention or resource for us to get past that block, but we are working to make it possible. We are getting better and better. Reality is hopeful.”

After the meeting one of the leaders e-mailed to ask me to write

down my comment for her. She then sent a letter to all the other leaders (and to me) describing how she had not paid much attention to my comment during the meeting but that after the meeting it stuck with her. She said that she realized, because of what I said, that everyone at the meeting was a good person who was doing his or her best, and that it was okay for her to let go of blaming people when things got hard.

This is part of why I stay committed to my RC Community—because we understand about oppression and how historical hurts make present-time advances more complicated. In RC we work to understand and end the systems of oppression that make it hard for us to make the changes we need in the world. It’s a lot of work to clean up the effects of centuries of slavery; thousands of years of anti-Jewish oppression; generations of classism, sexism, and so on, but the advances are satisfying!

Kara Huntermoon
Eugene, Oregon, USA



GRAND TETONS, WYOMING, USA • HOLLY JORGENSON

Working Together to End Racism

A pamphlet introducing
RC from the perspective
of ending racism

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

Ordering information
on page 109

We Are Everywhere



LANCE CABLK

A few weeks ago I participated in the Confederation of Midwives triennial congress, in Durban, South Africa. We were three thousand participants, mostly female midwives, from more than a hundred countries (a thousand from South Africa alone), coming together to understand, present, and promote ways to conquer the inequities of women's and girls' health by building midwifery human resource, especially in the low-income countries of the world. The power, impact, and hope of that event was remarkable and historic in itself.

What I want to share with you is that when I walked into the registration hall on the first day, I went over to the notice board and a pink piece of paper caught my eye. It said, "Co-Counselors, we will meet for a support group every day at 12:30 behind the escalator. Please look for me. I will be wearing a pink scarf. There will also be a workshop on Wednesday for those who would like to learn more about listening and Co-Counseling." I smiled to myself and immediately felt much safer and more connected to everyone there.

Due to a busy working schedule, I did not manage to be on time for the support group any of the five days, which of course I would have wanted. The important thing, however, was the difference it made for me that there was a Co-Counseling support group at that important event. The fact that people got to learn more about RC, and that somewhere there was a special ally in a pink scarf with whom I shared important knowledge, was a great support to me, especially when I gave my speech to the congress.

Support can be many things, but I think the most important is to be reminded that we are out there, together, in this great project of RC. And sometimes all that is needed is a notice on a notice board.

Anneka Knutsson
Göteborg, Sweden

The World's Bad State, and the Real Reality

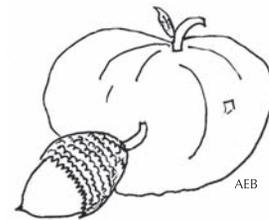
The world is in a bad state today, and the "pseudo-reality" that patterns have spread over everything really does look alarming.

But underneath that "pseudo-reality" is the real reality of a good world, a good universe, that we are beautifully adapted to take complete charge of.

There is certainly the possibility of disaster, but there is a much larger probability that enough of us will wake up and reclaim our power in time to keep the damage very minimal in the transition to a rational society and a rational world.

Certainly it only takes one of us to start.

Harvey Jackins
From a letter written in 1980



Discharging on Films About Race

The Gandhi-King Conference* closed at the National Civil Rights Museum with a film, *I Am a Man*, about the sanitation workers' strike in 1968. After that several of the United to End Racism attendees, and some other folks, went to another documentary, *The Freedom Riders*, at a local film festival. After that we saw a final documentary, *Thunder Soul*. Then we all gathered to discuss the films.

We talked about how useful it would be to set up a space to gather in after viewing films about race, where we could talk and discharge. As a result, a few weeks later I organized an outing for ten people to see the premiere of the Tyler Perry film *For Colored Girls*, with discussion and discharge afterward.

Laura Sullivan
Memphis, Tennessee, USA

* The author was part of a United to End Racism delegation to the Gandhi-King Conference—an annual conference on non-violence and social change—in Memphis, Tennessee, USA, in October 2010. For more on this United to End Racism project, see pages 74 to 76 of the January 2011 *Present Time*.

A Perspective on National Liberation Struggles

The national liberation struggle of a group of people may be like our own fight for ourselves. We fought and fought and eventually were defeated back there, because the odds were stacked against us. However, the odds have changed—we have our allies and can make the adult decision to fight for ourselves, and (as Tim* has said) guess who wins this time?

Pascal McCulla

Belfast, Northern Ireland
Reprinted from the RC e-mail
discussion list for leaders of Catholics



LOUISA FLANDER

* Tim Jackins

Building Alliances To End Gay Oppression

Over the last several years, Keith Osajima¹ and I have integrated RC into our activities at church. I have developed close friends in our church community, many of whom Keith and I have introduced to RC.

Last spring I led a five-session Lenten² series called Allies Ending Gay Oppression, as a way to give folks in our congregation an RC perspective on how oppression works and how to be allies. Doing it helped me to think more about the RC goal of sharing our theory and practice through thoughtful and sustained contact with people in our lives.

Our congregation has a long history of working for social justice, and standing up to Gay oppression has been central for many people. A substantial number of the most active, committed folks in the church are Gay or Lesbian, while the majority of the congregation is heterosexual.

I met with the minister, who knows RC, and we did a Co-Counseling session about doing the Lenten series

on Gay oppression. It seemed exciting and scary to both of us. We wanted to make sure that the Gay folks thought it was a good idea, since it would put attention on them, so we decided I would see what one of my Lesbian friends in the church thought about it. She and her partner found it a bit odd that I wanted to check it out with them. They said something like, “Of course we think it’s a good idea, but what about the straight³ folks?”

They helped me think about how to set up the five-week series. We decided that each week we would focus on a

different aspect of the oppression. Our goal was for allies to learn more about how the oppression works, and for all of us to get closer by listening to each other and talking about our lives. We figured out resource people in the church who could be guest speakers on each topic.

After church the next day we asked other Gay folks for their feedback and had a rowdy, impromptu conversation with lots of laughter and people sharing stories about their experiences with the oppression. Things were off to a good start.

³ Straight means heterosexual.



COOKING IN A COB OVEN • BETH CRUISE

¹ Keith Osajima is the author’s husband and an RC leader in Redlands, California, USA.

² Lent is a forty-day liturgical season that begins on Ash Wednesday and ends on Easter.

I led the series and started each session with five or ten minutes of basic RC theory about the goodness of humans, how people get hurt, and how oppression is the systematic mistreatment of one group of people by another, or by the society. I talked about how groups targeted by oppression are hurt in particular ways and how being an ally involves understanding how the oppression works and taking a stand against it. I said that this series was a way for us to take the next step in getting closer to each other, Gay and straight together, and understanding how all forms of oppression work to divide people. After the basic theory, the guest speaker gave some information. I then divided people into groups of six to exchange time⁴ after which they came back together to share highlights and ask questions. Thirty to forty people attended each time; most came to more than one session.

Since it was a church group, the topic for the first week was how the Bible has been used as an instrument of Gay oppression. A minister talked about the different Bible verses

often used to support the idea that homosexuality is a sin and gave us alternative interpretations and a context in which to understand them. The second week focused on the workplace. Someone who worked in the area of diversity and employment talked about the law and how it applied to Gay people and Lesbians at work. The third week we talked about Gay oppression in health care. Two Lesbian church members shared their experiences with discrimination in health care and discussed strategies to deal with it. The fourth week was about family. A Lesbian mom and a Gay man talked about how they'd experienced the

oppression in their family situations and how they'd handled it. Finally, we talked about activism. Two church members who had been involved in the fight for equal marriage and other Gay rights talked about current struggles and strategies and how people could get involved.

The series was a success, and leading it was re-emergent for me. I asked for help in thinking about it all along the way and felt closer to people as a result. It contradicted discouragement about our ability to fight against something as big as Gay oppression.

One of my favorite moments was on the first night. I came in feeling a bit nervous, and two of my Gay male friends hugged me enthusiastically, saying, "We're here supporting you supporting us! Now how cool⁵ is that?" I knew I was part of something, that I was moving this group I care about in the direction of liberation.

Sara Schoonmaker

Redlands, California, USA

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



COSTA RICA • THERESA D'AMATO

⁴ Exchange time means take turns listening to each other.

⁵ In this context, cool means great.

Energy Use, Racism, and Closeness

I use lots of energy. I use more than my share of the planet's resources. This makes my life "more luxurious than kings of old could have dreamed of in their wildest imagination" (Chris Martenson, *Crash Course*). I have

hot running water, access to the Internet, fresh food in all seasons, and electric heat, to name only a few things. I have more than most of the people in the world.



MAHONE BAY, NOVA SCOTIA, CANADA • BILL DARNELL

I am a white owning-class U.S. Protestant woman. When I grew up, I learned about the wrongs committed by white people and naively believed that the atrocities had ended. I thought that the greed of my people was almost over. As I got older, I realized that wasn't true, but it didn't really hit home¹ until I learned more about the environmental degradation of the planet and its link to racism and classism.

continued . . .

¹ It didn't really hit home means I didn't fully grasp it.

WIDE WORLD CHANGING

... continued

In 2008 I learned that the energy emitted from a light bulb is equivalent to the labor of a fit person pedaling. I got the idea that I had “a virtual stable of slaves generating energy for me” (Chris Martenson). This led to a series of re-evaluations.

I have been discharging toward reducing my energy use by eighty percent. I have come to realize that the rationale for the energy I use resembles the rationale of U.S. enslavers in the nineteenth century. “I need the energy to maintain my business,” “I need the energy to maintain my lifestyle and keep in contact with my family and friends,” “I just can’t manage without the energy I consume,” are likely similar to the thoughts of enslavers when they were confronted with the idea of abolition: “I need these people to run my business,” “I can’t possibly manage without their help.”

We owning-class people in RC have policies to help us look at our relationship with money. People with inherited wealth are encouraged “to divest of inherited wealth at their own speed and with all haste.” The Owning-Class Commitment includes, “I will give up² my control of wealth and the justification for it.” What do I get to discharge if I apply this same policy to my use of energy?

I am sloppy with my energy use. My racism makes me act as if my energy needs are more important than the needs of the rest of the world. In the United States, which acts in the world as an owning-class entity, those of us in the dominant culture feel entitled to more than our share. Aggressive capitalism was built on the use of easily available, cheap energy. With the coming decline in the types of energy we’ve used and with global climate change, we will need to make a huge adjustment in our relationship with the natural world and the energy we use. In order to fully reclaim our humanness, we will have to counsel about and get out of our oppressor role toward the environment.

I see how the energy I use keeps me separate from people. I do not have to ask for help, work collectively, or live closely with others. Currently my survival depends more on my energy use than on relationships. Amish people,³ in their adaptation of new technology, add nothing, without careful examination, that will lessen their dependence on each other. Their culture

² Give up means relinquish.

³ The Amish people are a Protestant anti-modernist religious group founded in the 1690s. They are known for simple living, plain dress, and a reluctance to adopt modern conveniences.

supports this, while the dominant culture of the United States encourages the use of energy and technology that separates us further. In order to use less energy, I have to discharge toward wanting people close, depending on them, and making that central to my life. What does real comfort look like? How do we provide for real security?

I have decided to stop flying except in extreme emergencies. This has already slowed my life down and changed my interactions with people. I have begun to work locally to help move my community toward a lower energy, more connected future. I have made changes to live with more people.

Each of us gets to be in close with others as we discharge and think about these issues. Old fear and desperation make me want to be critical and urgent with others. I get to slow down and connect with the environment, and with people.

Linda Stout
Concord, North Carolina, USA



RANDI FREUNDLICH

No World War III

There won't be a World War III simply because the great population of the world has made up its mind against it and cannot be organized to that degree anymore by war-makers. There are many indications of this. Of course, the media doesn't make that prominent, but it is my very firm judgment.

Harvey Jackins
From a letter written in 1993

Looking at Male Domination

A talk by Tim Jackins, at the East Coast USA Men's Leaders' Workshop, May 2011

We get to look at how male domination has affected us. Who ordered you around? Who made life hard for you, more than anyone else? Sometimes it may have been female schoolteachers or members of your family, as they reacted to what had been acted out at them. (Something happens to lot of boy babies: they are welcomed, it's wonderful, but Mommy also wants them to be different from other men.) However, it is extremely likely that it was another male's distresses that dominated your life.

MEN DOMINATED YOU

We picked up¹ male domination, and we act it out at each other and at women. We'll get to the second half in a little while, but I want to look now at the first part: that every man has been trained to try to dominate.

In the present society, somebody has to dominate. That's how most societies work. Somebody gives the orders. You can hunt for reasons why it's that way, but it happened. It all fell that way. This is where we are. And it doesn't matter if there were good reasons for it or it was simply a "twist of fate."²

This is our situation, and so men dominate. Men dominated you. You were separated from and dominated by men in many different ways. It got played out³ in all the institutions you came into contact with: church, school, public transit, television, radio, your family. The larger the institution, the more uniformly it came down. (There was more variation within our families as to who had the upper hand and could intimidate the others.)



ALAN EPSTEIN

We get to look at and start talking about the men who dominated us. It could have been our dad, our older brother, an uncle, or an older playmate in the neighborhood. Just about everybody was trying for the upper hand. Everybody was under pressure to hunt for a way to dominate.

Some of us gave up on dominating. Some of us went silent, sullen, and covert and refused to play that way. We each grew up with our own set of distresses from male domination. We all have them, and we would greatly benefit from looking at them. So let's do a mini-session, six minutes each way, going through the list of top male oppressors in our young lives.

WHO HAVE WE DOMINATED?

The next question is, who have we dominated? We know that distresses push us to play out what was aimed at us—to play it out when we aren't the smallest one anymore, when we have an apparent advantage that allows us to stop being stepped on by stepping on someone else. We have done this in our families, and in all the institutions

that have encouraged it, done it to us, and passed it on down. I suspect that one of the places it gets played out most fully is in boys' schools. Boys are set up to oppress and intimidate the boys who come after them. How many people here ever went to an all-male institution? Whooh!

Discharging our distresses is harder when we have acted them out. It is much easier to work on having been targeted. Then we feel justified in working on the hurt, justified in being mad at the people who did it to us. We feel like our Co-Counselor will sympathize, even if he or she doesn't understand.

If it got heavy enough, we acted it out, and that is just as sad. It is just as destructive. It is just as hard on us. But how do we talk, and to whom, about acting out distress? People outside RC try to work on it, and they often do it by bragging. They brag about how tough and oppressive they are in an attempt to get some slack to work on it. It doesn't work.

It can be hard, even in RC, to trust that somebody will remember how good and dear and lovable we are when we are talking about what an oppressor—how thoughtless, heartless, and mean—we have been. Meanness is one of the hardest things to live around, and yet all of us have mean tones in us, feelings that it doesn't matter that the target is human. We forget that fact entirely. Our awareness of it is sacrificed, in an attempt to get the distress out.

All of us have done that. All of us have been restimulated enough to forget the humanness of the people who then accidentally became the targets of our distresses. We may have first targeted our younger siblings, because they were nearby.

continued . . .

¹ Picked up means adopted.

² "Twist of fate" means an unpredicted or random occurrence with far-reaching consequences.

³ Played out means acted out.

LIBERATION

... continued

It doesn't matter how the pattern got there. We need to handle and discharge what it has done to our minds. That is the reality in the present. Nobody can make the distress move except us. We have to decide to work on it, even though we feel really guilty about it. (Sometimes we are so defensive we can't feel guilty.)

WE ARE FORTUNATE

Male domination, like all oppressions, plays a big role in determining the conditions of people's lives. Oppressions are all ultimately connected to keeping economic exploitation in place. They serve the purpose of dividing and confusing all people about each other so that they can't become allies and think together well enough to create a society that serves everyone's interest.

We can't accept the oppressor material. We have to be fighting against it even before we can discharge it. We have done that well enough that we have gotten this far, and we get to use our progress to accelerate the work.

We can decide that we are fortunate to be in a position to discharge the oppressive side of our distress. We are lucky to have that opportunity. We have lived through all the distress, including playing it out at others, and now we can stop it. It doesn't have to be passed down to another generation. We actually have the chance, because of the work we have done, to interrupt it and keep it from flowing on from here. This really is our job. We are trying to stop it. We are trying to resolve all the distresses so that they don't flow any further in time. We are the first set of people to really have a choice about it. We can stop ourselves. That is what we do first. We get to take responsibility for and look at all the mistakes we have made, so we don't continue to pass them on in the way they were passed on to us.

“GETTING EVEN”

One version of the distresses is the “getting even” category. We feel

entirely justified in targeting someone because he or she did something first. The argument in childhood was “they started it.” Once it is started, we feel justified in acting out all our distress. They did this little thing (*laughter*), and we open the floodgates. We can look at all the places where we've felt justified in acting out our material.⁴

Once we get restimulated, we start bringing up other pieces of material, and this is where the sexism and racism and other oppressions get added in. It was a personal disagreement, a snagging of personal material, and then both people start throwing the whole arsenal of distress at each other.

DOMINATION PATTERNS AIMED AT WOMEN

We also need to look at where our male domination patterns are aimed at women. This is pervasive in society, so we all have something of it. Where do you get irritated at women? How easily do you get irritated? How much of your time with women do you spend controlling your irritation at them? (*Laughter*) You may try to distract yourself, try to put your mind somewhere else, so you don't seethe uncontrollably.

I want us to look at our relationships with women. How does male domination affect those relationships? Let's see who gets irritated with women—will you raise your hands? Who gets irritated

⁴ Material means distress.



KIERAN REICHERT

with women you care about deeply? Who gets irritated with the most important woman in your life? It tells you something, doesn't it? How much of the time does it get away from you? How much of the time do you think you're hiding it? (*Laughter*)

Even if you don't have ongoing close relationships with women, how do you get irritated with them? Where do you become impatient? Where do you try to correct them? Where do you try to hurry them along? Where do you try to tell them what the real picture is? Where are you dismissive? Where can you not respect them, and their minds and their struggles? Where do their struggles seem trivial to you? Where are the places they are struggling that you can't even think about?

One place I have had to struggle in this area is in creating beauty and order. A lot of important things are involved in care of the environment, in care of ourselves. It takes organization, resource, and intelligence to make the environment reflect our best qualities and what we want to do. The environment can be a doorway to the future instead of a closet of our past. Many of us men live in a closet of our past. It's a mess. It's a mess of old things, and it's restimulating and we are simply numb to it. We can't make it pleasant. My confusion is between making my personal environment more thoughtful and attractive, and consumerism—being manipulated by capitalism. Why would I buy that? Because it's lovely? I think women, in general, have a better sense of beauty and order.

We need to look at all of these things. We need to work on where our restimulations drive us into our material, where we end up trivializing women's perspectives and struggles. We don't yet fully understand how male domination and sexism have twisted women's existence and made everything a struggle, so we often end up not being able to respect women.

Learning from a Women's Panel

A group of women came to a men's workshop on the east coast of the United States and did a panel in which they talked about how sexism had affected their lives. Many men who were not there have wanted a report on it.

In respect for the confidentiality of the women, I will not report on the content. I will report on what I think was useful, what made it effective, and what my thoughts are for next steps.

The panel was excellent and courageous. The women clearly had organized as a team and done a lot of work to make it go well for them as well as make it an accurate report on the realities of the oppression. I could see the result of Diane Balser's¹ renewed commitment to pushing women to directly face the effects of, and end, sexism and male domination.

In the response of us men, I could see the result of Tim's² work with us on our oppression and his pushing all people to give up feeling bad about themselves. His classes prior to the panel were effective in preparing us to look directly at the effects on women of sexism and male domination.

I could also see the good effects of Diane having had a small group of men attend the last two Contemporary Women's Issues Workshops. She had thought well about both the men and the women there. It was an interesting challenge for us men to stay present but not take over, and to not get defensive or lost in our own feelings of victimization when sexism or male domination was the topic.

I think the work on Goal 1³ has helped us men a lot, too, in figuring out how to work on the oppressor role.

So the panel was not a simple matter of inviting a few women to speak to a group of men on sexism.

Some people who were not at the workshop have wanted to reproduce the same format and use it in other places. There has been some talk about that by

those who were there, and so far, from what I gather, the consensus is that more work needs to be done, by both men and women, before simply reproducing the panel would be effective.

It is good that there is this strong interest in moving forward the work on ending sexism and male domination. I think we just need to put a little check on our urgency and desperation and make sure that we're taking the many smaller steps required to enable something like this to be useful. I think having strong men's and women's support groups, classes, and workshops in any Area⁴ would be a minimal prerequisite. And I think each of us needs to figure out more about the places where society has placed us in the oppressor role. Another thing would be for men and women to have persistent and thorough sessions discharging on the effects on women of sexism and male domination.

A small and simple step would be for us men to simply spend a week noticing the presence of women in our lives rather than just taking them for granted, like we might the sky over our heads or the force of gravity. We could pay more attention and notice their strengths, how they function, what concerns them,

continued . . .

⁴ An Area is a local RC Community.



JULIA WATT-ROSENFELD

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

² Tim Jackins'

³ Goal 1 of the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities, as adopted by the 2001 World Conference of the RC Communities 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 Communities.

LIBERATION

... continued

what their lives are like, where they confront or are limited by sexism, what brilliant and effective ways they have of relating to the world and to each other. In doing this we may also notice where we do not have interest in paying this much attention to them. I would like to see us have Co-Counseling sessions on just what it feels like to not be in control, to be in "foreign" territory, and to stay there and appreciate the culture of women.

This week would not be so much about paying attention to the patterns women carry or our feelings about women but rather paying attention to who they really are outside of their relationship to us. This is, as I understand it, step zero of "Four Things to Do to Be a Better Counselor"⁵: first notice the strengths and goodness of the person.

I think it would be good to keep our mouths shut as we do this and then take what we notice in ourselves to sessions and work thoroughly on it. We could work on any struggles we have in paying attention to the women, but I think we should keep bringing the focus back to the women themselves, keep putting as much attention there as we can.

I think of this sort of work as starving out the pattern of always wanting the attention to be on us, the discussion to be about us. That is one aspect of the pattern of domination that we in any oppressor role

⁵ See page 42 of *The List*, and page 131 of *Start Over Every Morning*, both by Harvey Jackins, for the four steps Harvey suggested.

carry—whether we are acting out classism, racism, sexism, the oppression of young people, or any other oppression.

Even when we are told we are being oppressive, we tend to want to pay attention to how we feel rather than to what it is like for the person communicating to us. I think we can break this addiction. It has to be a frozen need⁶ for attention that gets transformed into an oppressor pattern.

One of the most "interesting" aspects of oppression is how the oppressor can so often feel like the victim. It is bizarre. I think we have come a long way in RC in getting rid of that, and I think persisting with eliminating it from our relationships would be a good thing for everyone. All of us men who listened to the panel expressed how good it was to hear what sexism and male domination were actually like for women. We became aware that we had been missing out on a big piece of reality. How great it is to be aware! And it is "interesting" that such important expansions of our awareness happen so infrequently. I think we can change that.

Dan Nickerson

Freeport, Maine, USA

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

⁶ Frozen need is a term used in RC for a hurt that results when a rational need is not met in childhood. The hurt compels a person to keep trying to fill the need in the present, but the frozen need cannot be filled; it can only be discharged.



KATIE KAUFFMAN

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The RC Teacher No. 30

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LO

Working on Male Domination

When Diane Balser¹ brilliantly introduced the phrase “sexism and male domination,” I began to explore and discharge, from a different perspective, my chain of related distresses. I have now had dozens of Co-Counseling sessions thinking and discharging about how dominance played out² in my relationship with my father. This has changed my life significantly.

My father had four daughters before I was born. In addition to loving me and wanting to be a good father to me, he saw me as a rival and a potential threat to his position as the dominant male in our family. For fifteen years before I was born, he was the only man, and he took advantage of the adoration and attention of five women—not needing to share it with any other men. From the moment of my birth, it seemed he felt that he needed to compete with me for that attention. Consciously and strategically, he trained me to be subordinate to him. I have not yet unoccluded his precise methods, but they were brutal and debilitating, both physically and emotionally. Presumably I put up a fight,³ but all I remember is that I complied.

One afternoon when I was eleven years old, I held a bottle of soda pop over his head, pretending I was going to spill it on his hair. He looked up from the TV and told me that if he felt one drop, he would empty the whole bottle on me. I accidentally spilled a drop, and he stood up, took the bottle out of my hand, and held it upside down over my head. I did not move until the bottle was empty. I was sobbing with humiliation. My mother was incensed and scolded him angrily. And the whole time she was yelling at him, she was on her hands and knees, cleaning up the mess, while he continued to watch TV.

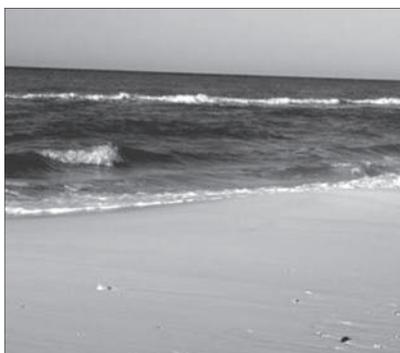
¹ Diane Balser is the International Liberation Reference Person for Women.

² Played out means was acted out.

³ Put up a fight means resisted.

When I was sixteen, I was five feet, eight inches (173 cm) tall. I did some research and discovered I had little chance to reach six feet (183 cm). I was terrified. My father was six feet, two and three quarters inches (190 cm) tall, and I had always assumed that one day I would be taller than he was. Reaching that goal seemed essential to me. I started growing faster and continued to grow until I was twenty-two years old. I stopped growing when I reached six feet, three inches (191 cm). I believe I willed myself to be taller than my father, in a desperately determined attempt to find a contradiction to his dominance. For the rest of his life I continually teased him about my height advantage. He never admitted I was taller and would stand on his toes when being measured against me. Somehow this height competition was how we expressed our love for each other.

Whenever we went somewhere by car, my father was always the driver. When I was thirty years old, he fell asleep while driving on a highway, with me and other family members in the car. Miraculously, he woke up before we were all killed. I suggested that I drive the rest of the way. He chuckled and said that he probably would not fall asleep again. I was incensed and couldn't hold it in any longer. My mind went black. I started screaming at him. I ended it with, “You will pull this car over immediately, and I will drive from now on.” He looked at me



HOLLY JORGENSON

with amazement in his eyes, as if I had broken an ancient promise. With utter submission, in a tone I had never before heard from him, he asked me if he should pull over at the side of the highway or wait until the next exit. For the rest of his life, whenever we drove, he would walk toward me with his head down and his eyes averted and obediently, silently, place the car keys in my hand. It seemed that, in his mind, I had become dominant.

It has been invaluable to re-evaluate my relationship with my father in the context of male domination. I have discharged enough to notice that I have a pattern of wanting to dominate. I have always worked hard to hide it, but it shows itself anyway and creates significant challenges in all my relationships. It is a central component of the sexist patterns I carry. It also explains my life-long struggle with feelings of competition. Some time ago an experienced male Co-Counselor moved into my Region,⁴ and I discharged heavily on hating him for invading my territory and threatening my exclusive hold on heterosexual male leadership. After working on that, I can now back⁵ him and his leadership consistently and reliably.

As the pattern becomes less chronic, I feel more vulnerable, unsure, terrified, ashamed. It feels like I am weakening myself and becoming a less competent leader and like it's exactly the wrong direction for a man to be heading. It feels like failure. Ultimately, it feels like I could be unable to adequately defend myself and thus be killed.

Furthermore, sex is not now as enjoyable or as interesting. For much of

continued . . .

⁴ A Region is a subdivision of the International Re-evaluation Counseling Community, usually consisting of several Areas (local RC Communities).

⁵ Back means support.

LIBERATION

... continued

my adult life, sex was the only place I felt fully alive. Losing that sometimes feels like losing life itself. At the same time, I am able to do things that I couldn't do before. I can be with people without feeling an urgency to be the loudest or the most aggressive.

I can tell⁶ that all this is in the right direction for me, even though it feels like I'm giving up so many things I have relied on. Overall, I seem to be headed toward a revolutionary change in how I interact with all my beloved fellow humans.

I would love to hear how other men have been working on issues of domination in their lives.

Johnny Kline

Brooklyn, New York, USA
Reprinted from the RC e-mail
discussion list for leaders of men

⁶ Tell means see, notice.



LANCE CABLK

Complete Freedom of Decision

Human beings inherently have complete freedom of decision. . . . Complete freedom of decision offers us the opportunity to direct our own lives by making our *own* choices rather than being enforced by patterned behavior based on old recordings of distress or based on the operations of oppression in the oppressive society. . . . Any person of any age, given accurate information, can make a rational decision.

Harvey Jackins

From *The List*, page 12 (1997)

Sustaining All Life

The RC journal about the care of the environment

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

—Tim Jackins

A small sample of the articles:

Relaxed Leading, Jan Venderbos

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

Questioning Patterns that Lead to Overuse,
Marcie Rendon

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

A Household Conservation Project, Glen Hauer
Some Angles on Discharging on the Environment,
Shashi Raman

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

Ordering information on page 109



Every Guy Has Some Version of This



Your posting¹ got me thinking about what goes through a man's mind when he is hurting a woman. This is not easy to write.

When I was four years old, I had a dear friend, a girl, who was a year older than I was. We were playmates and did everything together. One day we were having a fun time and decided to race from my house up the hill to her house. She was bigger than I and could run a little faster. I remember the panic that overcame me at that moment—that I might not win—and I pushed her from behind and she fell down and skinned her knees. I was so ashamed that I hid behind my house until she came with my mother. She was confused, hurt, and bewildered, and I could hardly look her in the face.

After I apologized, my mother made me walk her home and explain to her mother what had happened. It was a long walk of shame for me. I felt horrible that I'd hurt her and was deeply confused as to why I would do that. It had happened before I could think about it.

I grew up in a family of five males and two females. Male domination was a huge part of our culture. When my older sister talks about how that had horrible results for her, I'm struck by the pain she experiences. I do remember, however, how I experienced it as the youngest person in the family.

There was incredible violence at times and a fierce dynamic of putting people in their place (making them know they had less power than the perpetrator). As the youngest person, I craved to have a place to work on the abuse I received.

I showed my struggle in many ways, but particularly in ways that targeted me with violence and being labeled as not male enough. My family, having experienced U.S. World War II concentration camps and horrible racism, had learned that one must be dignified and tough in the world. There was no room for weakness to show. We beat one another for showing weakness. Being less than fully male was seen as weak by everyone in the family. We used words like *yung chung*, which meant "cry-baby," and I was often told to "stop acting like a girl!" There was a lot of hitting and fighting and corporal punishment.

What I experienced as a boy in my family, and in society, didn't leave me wanting to inhabit the male heterosexual identity. It's my challenge to work through all this and find my way toward a clear picture of my goodness and connection to others as a male. This will require me to face where I tried to avoid being the perpetrator of sexism by not identifying as heterosexual. Being Gay doesn't erase the sexism patterns that were installed on me.

In not acting out perpetrator patterns, I think we also need to find a way forward for ourselves. We guys feel like monsters ready to explode and hurt people. We fear one another and ourselves—what we could do if we lost control of the scary stuff we carry. A decision to not act out perpetrator material² has to include for me a decision to end isolation and to like myself enough to take my own side in a battle for my mind and heart. I can still feel like I want to join the violence against a small boy (me) who got beaten down and was left to figure out how he could be a good person since "these things wouldn't happen to a good person."

I suspect every guy has some version of this. It's easy and tempting to go for the "I won't lose here again" mindset, because society allows us to do that, and to not face the motivations beneath it. I can't condone it, but I also keep trying not to hate myself, or other guys, for falling down here a lot, often without an awareness of being hurtful.

The early incident I mentioned must be related to the legacy of racism and classism my family was struggling with. We were exploding. I knew I shouldn't act my material out at anybody, but in the panic of the moment all I could hear in my head was "I CAN'T LOSE THIS TIME—AGAIN!" That little girl was my best and closest friend; she got the brunt of my big undischarged struggles that had nowhere else to go to be worked on. Boys are left alone early on with this material. I think that is the root of bullying patterns for many of us.

Sexism is a bullying pattern. It's a person (man) lost in feeling humiliated, defeated, and powerless and looking desperately for a way to escape from that. Remembering what it's like to plead for mercy at the hands of another male is not a fun session to have, but when I can get there, it's very useful for me. What a difference it would have made for the males of my family to have not been so alone with these struggles, and to have helped one another rather than perpetuate the hurting of one another, and the women in our family. My sister and mother got the brunt of it and were simultaneously our counselors for how alone we all felt. I remember my sister holding me as a small boy on her lap, as I wept after my brothers had tortured and humiliated me, and saying, "We have to stop doing this to him."

I think most every guy has some version of this story. Thank you for asking.

Anonymous
USA

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

² Material means distress.

¹ See article on page 65.

The reason why I sing

Memory speaks of a ship of slaves
Tortured bodies cramped in the belly of the whale
Pained reflections of what had been
Soft murmurs of amazing grace.

Back hung low with strain
Fingers knurled, cut and bruised
Cotton spikes and bosses laugh
Poppa¹ sings of goin'² up yonder to see my lawd.³

Freedom blues strain against concrete jungles
Nappy headed kids playing in alleys of despair
Junkies going wild, pimps all around
Momma sings ole⁴ happy days.

- ¹ Papa
² Going
³ Lord
⁴ Old



MARYA AXNER

Justice delayed, people played
Stagnant hopes fail to redeem the dream
Spooks⁵ sittin'⁶ in de⁷ corner store
Folks crying there's gonna⁸ be a better day.

Playas⁹ shouting rap and rhymes
Ganstas¹⁰ playing nickes¹¹ and dimes
Saints prancing in their new Sunday shoes
Family chanting it's a brand new day.

'Tis the reason why I sing . . .

Busta¹² and baby—looking to see
Just what this new message goin' be¹³
Steps up and declares it straight
Today—the change has finally come.

Rodney Coates
Oxford, Ohio, USA
Reprinted from the RC e-mail
discussion list for leaders of colleagues

- ⁵ Spooks is a derogatory term for black people.
⁶ Sitting
⁷ De means the.
⁸ Going to
⁹ A playa is a competitive and gregarious person.
¹⁰ Gangsters
¹¹ Nickels, a type of U.S. coin
¹² Busta is an alternative for the nickname Buster.
¹³ Goin' be means is going to be.



BETH CRUISE

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Undermining Women's Leadership

Here is a piece of sexism I've experienced but don't understand: Often when I have done something well in a public arena, a man will come up to me afterward and criticize some part of what I did.

For example, I frequently used to be invited to give talks to various groups. I think I am a reasonably good public speaker. After I would give a talk, people would usually come up to me to chat informally. Generally women would be enthusiastic and tell me something positive and appreciative. Almost always a man would come up and act friendly but say something critical to me, often about some trivial point (for example, "You shouldn't have used this word in your speech; I don't think it was the right choice"). It would look like friendly advice, but I think it was actually intended to undermine my self-confidence.

This also sometimes happens when I have led something in an RC setting. Co-Counselors are generally trained well enough to only offer appreciations. From men these sometimes come out a bit oddly though. More than once a man has said to me, "Wow, I had no idea you were so smart!"

I imagine my experiences are a smaller version of the vicious attacks on female political leaders—that is, the same pattern is at work. I have never understood what feelings are underneath it. I've usually been too surprised to offer a man a session on the spot.*

To women: Have you ever seen this pattern and given a man a session on it? What did you learn that I could make use of?

To men: Have you ever done something like this? What were you feeling when you did it?

Barbara Boring
Boise, Idaho, USA

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

Undischarged Oppressor Patterns

This is in response to the post Barbara Boring wrote¹:

I think this goes back to undischarged oppressor patterns and how they get fine-tuned to be more socially acceptable as men and women get older.

Early on boys just call girls "stupid." A boy sees Dad belittle Mom. On the playground he calls a girl "stupid." He feels "better," more powerful.

Over the years he learns not to call girls "stupid." The pattern is refined until as an adult he does things like what you have described, Barbara. What he feels is what any of us feel with undischarged oppressor patterns: We feel "good," we feel justified, we feel superior, we feel "right."

The solution is to get folks to counsel on their earliest memory of acting oppressively—that first time they called a girl "stupid" on the playground.

What you've described has come at me from men out in the world and in Co-Counseling. It has also come from non-Native women (I think then it is either racism or internalized sexism).

Unfortunately, out in the world I am often too stunned to think of an appropriate reply. Occasionally, when I have been able to think quickly, I have said, smilingly, with an incredulous tone, "Are you saying I'm stupid?"

The most recent example: I was meeting with extremely wealthy folks, and an elderly rich man pulled me close and said, "This is money talking here; you know, this is a freebie² for you." I was too stunned to do anything other than look at him in bewilderment and walk away.

Marcie Rendon
International Liberation Reference
Person for Native Americans
Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA
Reprinted from the RC e-mail
discussion list for leaders of women

* On the spot means at the moment.

¹ See previous article.

² A freebie means something free.



KK

Reclaiming a Correct Pride

My thanks to Barbara Boring for describing the pattern of criticism that men have.* I read her e-mail and immediately recognised the pattern in myself. I've been uneasy about it for a long time but didn't have a good way to understand it. Now I can see that what has been going on with me are feelings of being small, being restimulated, and then a desperate attempt to feel better than someone else.



MARYA AXNER

It seems like a good idea to now consciously and actively decide not to act out that pattern.

I like the lead Tim Jackins has taken with us men on reclaiming a correct pride in ourselves by deciding to do what is right, especially in relation to women and sexism. This seems like an opportunity to move forward in that direction.

Karl Lam

Cambridge, Cambridgeshire, England
Reprinted from the e-mail discussion
list for RC Community members

* See the first article on page 69.



CIRCLES OF LIGHT • © BRIAN TOWNSEND

Don't miss . . . *Black Re-emergence* No. 11!

A small sample of the articles in this issue—

“There Were No Slaves,” by Barbara Love

“Discharging Rage and Terror,”

by Laurenti Wright

“How RC Changed My Life—Letter from

Prison,” by Earl C. Amin

“Relationships Key in Community Building,”

by Bafana Matsebula

“Dealing with What May Be Racism,”

by Rachel Noble

\$3.00, plus postage and handling
To order, see page 109 of this *Present Time*.

New Hurts in Adulthood

The statement that there are no new hurts in adulthood except physical damage or the loss of a loved one is a little too sweeping. What should be said is that there aren't many new hurts.

There certainly are situations into which we get catapulted in which the information is so lacking that we become frightened. It's difficult to find one that doesn't also involve restimulation, but I think we certainly could, so the statement shouldn't be that sweeping.

It's just that almost everything that is distressing to us on the purely emotional level, after we're adults, is restimulation, because if we didn't have old material* there, we would simply handle the situation so that it wouldn't be a hard experience.

Harvey Jackins

From a letter written in 1974

* Material means distress.



LK

A Fruitful Discussion

This discussion¹ has been fruitful for me mainly because of two things:

1) Barbara's question was about a concrete example (not about men being "bad" in general) and was put forward without her seeming to feel bad about herself and without putting blame on anybody else.

She didn't appear to believe the criticism by the men. My sense is that she didn't even believe that their critical remarks were the full truth about their opinions about her. That helped me think about it. From non-RC workshops I do with men and teachers, I can tell² that we men, and probably most oppressors, are sensitive to anything that smells like blame. That tends to shut us down³ and make us defensive and unwilling to develop.

2) The answers to the question were open and honest and easy for me to identify with as a man.

I think this discussion is a good example of what we need to do to clear up oppressions. In the oppressed role, we need to get rid of our internalized oppression to the point that we both want to have respectful relationships with the oppressors and can tell that oppressed and oppressor are each as good as the other.

In the oppressing role, we need to "step down from our horses,"⁴ dare to be open about our struggles, and acknowledge that they are only struggles that we happen to carry and not "proof" of our being bad people. That seems to be a necessary step to be able to work efficiently on this material.⁵

Fredrik Eklöf
Oxie, Sweden

¹ See articles on page 69 and the top of page 70.

² Tell means notice, see.

³ Shut us down means cause us to feel bad and think poorly.

⁴ "Step down from our horses" means abandon our arrogant position.

⁵ Material means distress.

Complete Index to *Present Time* Available On-Line

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

A Young Leaders' Workshop

This July, in Newton, Massachusetts, USA, Emily Bloch and Tim Jackins led an International Young Leaders' Workshop. Eighteen young people, ages thirteen to twenty-two, and five allies attended. Many of us had met each other before, and many were meeting for the first time.

It was an incredible workshop. A group of brilliant young people got to get really close to one another. It was a culmination of the past four years of young people's liberation, and a transition to the next phase of young people's work.

Emily Bloch was named International Liberation Reference Person (ILRP) for Young People almost exactly four years ago, when she was eighteen and about to start university. At the time, young people



EMMA PARKER

who had grown up in family work,¹ some of whom had started to use Co-Counseling for themselves, were mostly not connected to each other and not taking any sort of leadership in Co-Counseling. I was sixteen and

continued . . .

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

LIBERATION

... continued

had no idea what it meant to take part² in young people's liberation, led by a young person, or what it meant to back³ a young people's leader.

Emily is a young Jewish female. As a young Jewish female myself, it has been inspiring to watch her fight, over and over again, the hard distresses that target young Jewish women. She has led visibly as a Jew and been central to building a group of young Jews committed to Jewish liberation. She has been very open, refusing to lead on top of feelings while moving toward big challenges.

Emily led workshops for young people on the east coast of the United States; in Boston, Massachusetts, USA; on the west coast of the United States; in London, England, for young people in Europe; and in Argentina, for young

people in South America. Many of the people at these workshops were the only young people doing RC where they lived. The workshops helped to connect them to other young Co-Counselors. They were important for building a base of young people who had regular practice using Co-Counseling and who would maintain, as much as they could remember to, regular contact with one another outside of workshops.

During the last four years, many of us figured out how to set up regular Co-Counseling sessions, sometimes with other young people. Some of us figured out how to be part of young people's RC classes, or adult classes in which young people were well thought about. Several of us taught our own fundamentals classes and brought new young people into our Areas.⁴

The more chances we got to see each other, the more we got a glimpse of how close it was possible to get to each other. We built more safely and were able to work on more difficult material⁵ in our sessions. Internalized young people's oppression often makes it hard to feel like we can count on⁶ other young people to support us and give us big sessions. Our learning how to think about each other and back each other to take on⁷ new things, in and out of RC, was a huge success of young people's liberation in the past four years.

Emily had the idea that it was useful for young people to start by taking on small bits of leadership, for which there was support in the Community, and then move toward taking on bigger and bigger chunks of leadership. With Emily as a reference point and a model of leadership,

many of us all around the world began taking leadership among young people in our Communities.

At the workshop Emily talked about what the job of Young People's Reference Person had been like for her these past four years, and what she had done. We got a chance to feel sad that her time as Reference Person was over, now that she was twenty-two.

Also at the workshop, Tim announced that Mari Piggott, a young person from Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, would be the next ILRP for Young People. We got to have sessions and think about how to support Mari in the next several years. Some of us are twenty and twenty-one and will soon have to figure out how to support her as young adult allies. Others are younger and get to figure out how to support her while taking on their own young people's leadership for the first time.

On Sunday morning of the workshop, all of us young people got to say what projects we wanted to take on in Co-Counseling in the next year and what steps we would have to take to actually do that. People talked about teaching fundamentals classes, teaching their friends RC one-to-one, getting the young people in their geographical region more connected to each other, leading workshops for young people in their home Communities. It was thrilling to hear the hopeful tone in people's voices. They seemed to know that they could go back to their home Communities and attempt the leadership challenges while having the minds of this group with them.

Coming home from the workshop, I feel happy and hopeful about what will come next.

Alana Eichner
Northampton, Massachusetts, USA

² Take part means participate.

³ Back means support.



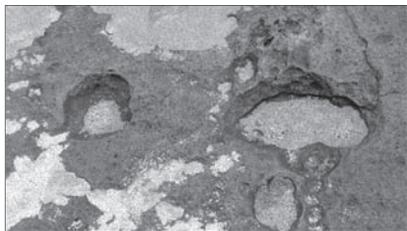
JO PERRY

⁴ An Area is a local RC Community.

⁵ Material means distress.

⁶ Count on means rely on.

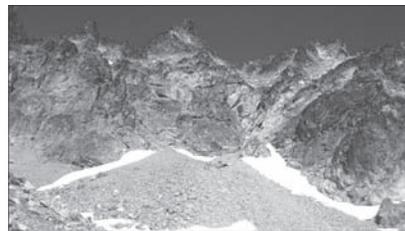
⁷ Take on means undertake.



MOLOKAI, HAWAII, USA • LANCE CABLK



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Share Your Glimpses of Reality

Many of you have sent us your photographs and artwork for use in *Present Time* and our other journals. The effect of your work has been wonderful for all readers, and we greatly appreciate your assistance in providing clearer and clearer views of reality.

We publish *Present Time* quarterly and are also publishing the many other journals a bit more often than we have in years past. Because of this, we could use more photos and artwork from you, our readers.

You don't need to be someone who thinks of herself or himself as an artist or photographer. Many people who do lovely, thoughtful work still have undischarged distresses that leave them feeling unsure and confused about themselves in this area. Please don't let any feelings stop you from sending us what you have done. (Or have some sessions on the feelings and then send us your work.)

The photos can be of nature, large-scale to microscopic; of objects, familiar or not. They can be about human endeavors, light-hearted or serious. But they need to be *your* photos that help you remember the real world. Drawings can be simple or more involved and need to communicate your enjoyment of the world. For *Present Time* covers, photos need to be in a vertical (portrait) format. For all photos, please indicate what is in the picture, where it was taken, and when.

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Please do send us your photographs and artwork. We would love to let other people see them.

Hopefully,
Tim Jackins



ALAN EPSTEIN



CESARIANI, ATHENS, GREECE • MARGIE DOYLE PAPADOPOULOU



SWEDEN • WYTSKE VISSER

Claiming and Discharging on an African Heritage Identity

Dear R—,

I understand that you wish to attend the Black Liberation and Community Development (BLCD) Workshop, and work on your identity as a raised-white person who is discharging on claiming an African heritage identity.

Thanks for this opportunity to reflect with you on how to create a safe place for people who are raised white to discharge on claiming an African heritage identity. While BLCD is not that place, I do believe we need to put our minds toward the creation of such a place. The attached notes share some of my thinking about where we are at present with this. I look forward to thinking more about it with you, and others who might be interested.



*Love and liberation,
Barbara Love
International Liberation Reference
Person for African Heritage People
Amherst, Massachusetts, USA*

The Black Liberation and Community Development Workshop is designed for people who share the lived experience of growing up as a black person. It is not designed for people who were raised white and are currently claiming an African heritage identity.

Some white people have recently discovered, uncovered, or for varied reasons come to claim an African heritage identity, and an important piece of work is occurring around this. Hand in hand with working as white people on eliminating racism, that work includes, among other things, discharging on learning to be white.

Racial identities are not inherent to humans. Every racial identity is constructed. Racial identities were fabricated by Europeans at a time when they were exploring the world outside of Europe, discovering people not like themselves, and colonizing those people and their resources.

For almost four centuries now, various laws and social practices have been used to make these fabricated racial identities seem real. For instance, in 1733 a certain legislature provided that “no person who is not above Three Degrees removed in a lineal Descent from the Negro Ancestor exclusive shall be allowed to vote or poll in Elections.” Such persons were also barred from inheriting property.

These laws and practices sought to insure that false racial identities would be treated as though they were real. Because of this, we learned to inhabit the false racial identities that are now used as the basis for social, economic, and political organization in contemporary society. Harvey* often reminded us that every identity is to be named, claimed, discharged, and thrown away. We learned to be white, and this must be discharged. We learned to be black, and this, too, must be discharged.

Of immediate concern is the creation of spaces where this work can be safely done.

ATTENDING BLCD

The Black Liberation and Community Development Workshops are designed to create a safe place for those of us who were raised with an African heritage identity to come together and discharge the internalized oppression that got attached to our experiences growing up, and to reclaim the truth about our essential humanness. This means identifying and discharging the attitudes and beliefs that were installed on us as a direct result of growing up surrounded by racism. It also means identifying and discharging the behavior patterns that reflect our collusion with racism in its individual, institutional, societal, and cultural forms.

We grew up in societies characterized by racism. The racism included the belief that white people were superior to black people and deserved better treatment. It also included the institutional, individual, and cultural forms that established white people in positions of domination and black people in positions of subordination.

The hierarchy of domination and subordination insured that white people would get better treatment than black people. While legal segregation has been abolished in the United States and there are laws forbidding discrimination in most aspects of public life, de facto segregation still permeates all of our lives. The attitudes and beliefs that led to legal segregation are still pervasive among many individuals with whom we interact.

Through no fault of our own, many of us black people have internalized a belief in the superiority of white people and their right to dominate. We have internalized a belief in the inferiority of black people

* Harvey Jackins

and have accepted our subordination and act out behaviors reflecting that. While each black person has had his or her own unique experiences, many of the experiences that installed internalized racism are shared in common with other black people. Further, our individual experiences share in common the corruption of our belief in our essential humanness—our goodness, our brilliance, our power, our beauty, our zest, and our loving connection with each other.

We have found that the aware, loving, caring attention of other people who have lived the experience of growing up as a black person provides an excellent contradiction to the internalized racism. Having other black Co-Counselors to counsel with provides a level of safety, not generally found in other Co-Counseling settings, to discharge the internalized oppression. Black Liberation and Community Development is not the only place where we can discharge the internalized racism and move toward liberation. However, it remains an excellent place to do that.

For this reason, BLCD is designed for people who share the lived experience of growing up as a black person. It is not designed for people who were raised white and are currently claiming an African heritage identity. This would apply to caucus groups at workshops, and other places where people meet separately in identity group meetings.

Decide To Do Everything

On your choice of jobs, I would think that you, E—, with your tremendous energy and ability, should sit back relaxedly and decide that you're going to do everything—that you're going to be well paid, that you're going to have fun, and that you're never going to become narrowed down to one field.

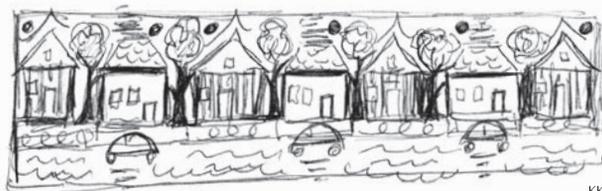
I think some of us have to be generalists, in the sense that we're going to lead the whole world—understand politics, economics, health care, biology, and all the rest of it. I was forced into being a generalist by persecution and oppression, but it was one of the best things that ever happened to me that I never got stuck in a particular rut.

Harvey Jackins
From a letter written in 1983

PLACES FOR RAISED-WHITE PEOPLE TO CLAIM AN AFRICAN HERITAGE IDENTITY

People who were raised as white and have “found” an African heritage identity need a safe place to discharge about that identity, claim being African heritage, and discharge on growing up white. They will need to discharge on growing up in a society, community, and possibly a family that taught them to hate African heritage people, the people they are now claiming as their own. They will need to discharge the enormous grief, profound loss, and incredible sense of isolation from having been separated from “their” people and having their identity hidden from them for most of their lives. This is much needed work, and it requires a safe place.

It may be possible that at workshops for white people on eliminating racism, caucus groups could meet and discharge on claiming an African heritage identity. It is also possible that in the near future we might be able to hold small gatherings of raised-white people who want to discharge on claiming an African heritage identity. However it is organized, having a safe place in which to discharge our assigned as well as our chosen identities will move all our liberation forward.



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Thanksgiving, and Being Allies to Natives

The U.S. Thanksgiving holiday¹ can be a time for us allies to reach out to our Native friends and Co-Counselors in thoughtful ways.

It will be helpful to get some Co-Counseling sessions on our earliest memories of “Indians,” in particular as associated with the Thanksgiving story, a powerful myth in U.S. culture.

Our schoolrooms are decorated with pictures of “Indian” children in some generic Native outfit (actually the hundreds of different Indigenous peoples dress in a variety of ways specific to their cultures and ecosystems). Children are taught about foods “native” to North America—thousands of varieties that Indigenous agronomists cultivated, among them corn, potatoes, and squash in addition to the North American turkey. At our holiday celebrations we eat these “gifts” of the land and of Native agronomists,

who were mostly women. In school we learn about the “Pilgrims”² who came seeking religious freedom in a “New World.” Cold and hungry and ignorant, and afraid of the local foods, the “Pilgrims” were starving until neighboring “Indians” brought food and drink to share and taught them how to grow the crops of the “new” land. In memory of this history, the U.S. government officially created, in 1898, the holiday of Thanksgiving. It has become our form of harvest celebration at which we share food and companionship with friends and loved ones.

Many Native people in the United States share in this celebration and enjoy the picture of their ancestors as generous, prosperous, and wise. There are others, however, for whom the holiday is a day of mourning. The tale ends badly for the Native people, with loss of land and life—genocide.

It is likely that the first Thanksgiving feast was a diplomatic effort on the part of the Wampanoag, that they offered the newcomers a place in the Wampanoag homeland in exchange for a promise to respect Wampanoag sovereignty and obey natural law, in other words, to practice reciprocal care and respect for the “environment”—all the relatives: the plants, animals, wind, rain, soil, and so on. Throughout North America, when the Native nations were still powerful enough to negotiate from a position of strength, this was the basic form of most treaties between the Indigenous nations and settlers’ representatives. It is these treaties that continue to be violated every day. In negotiating them, Indian nations hoped to avoid ecological calamity and continue their way of life, but that is never part of the story because it requires that we think of Indians as people with a history and strategy, as fully human adults.

What the Thanksgiving story always leaves out is that by 1620, when the “Pilgrims” arrived, eastern North American Indian nations had already had over a hundred years of encounters with Spanish and English raiders, who stole resources and kidnapped Native people for involuntary servitude (slavery). Only six years prior to the Thanksgiving feast, an English raider captured twenty-seven Natives from Wampanoag territory, including a Pawtuxet man known in the Thanksgiving story as Squanto. Squanto was removed to the Caribbean and forced to work on a sugar cane plantation, where he somehow befriended a British “gentleman” who took him to England, where he found someone who agreed to take him on a ship back home. It was thus that Squanto and others could speak English

¹ Thanksgiving is a U.S. holiday celebrated in late November of each year. See the following paragraphs for more details.

² The “Pilgrims” were a group of English colonists who arrived in eastern North America in 1620.



LANCE CABLK

when they taught the Pilgrims how and what to eat.

The Thanksgiving story ends only a decade or so later with horrific genocide, with Indigenous leaders being poisoned and the people being trapped in their villages while they burned to the ground. That genocide, whether we want to face it or not, remains at the base of our nation, our institutions, and our way of life. We didn't choose this history, but it is ours. It is alive in our minds. When we have no idea (true pictures to replace the nonsense) of what life is like for contemporary Native people, we refer to the images in our minds of mythic Indians of long ago.

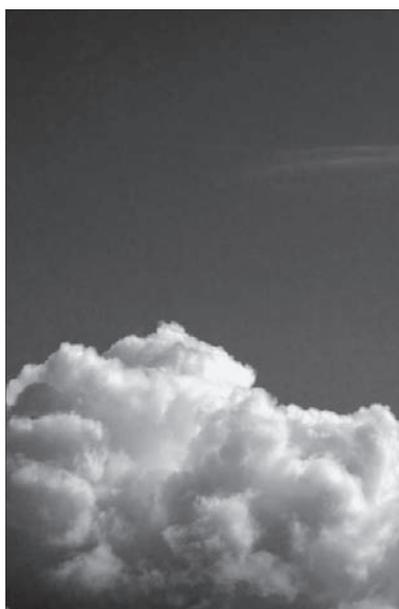
It's important that we follow Marcie Rendon's³ suggestion to counsel on how we have benefited from the genocide of Native peoples. And what better time than now? It's also important that we educate ourselves about what happened and how it continues to affect the lives of Native people. This is not just a history lesson. The genocide is not over. And it is difficult to counsel effectively on it if we don't know what it entails and that it continues in our minds, our courts, our prisons, and our neighborhoods.

Marcie makes a distinction between racism, the dehumanization of people whose labor and bodies have been coveted and valued as property and whose dehumanization has "justified" their abduction and forced labor, and the genocide of Native peoples, for whom it was their land and resources that were coveted, and were most valuable with the original inhabitants (and "owners") gone—removed in forced marches or simply slaughtered.

³ Marcie Rendon is the International Liberation Reference Person for Native Americans.

Our minds are cluttered with stereotypes and mascots associated with Indians. This is how we carry the genocide in our minds. As a Catholic boy growing up in central New York State (USA), I learned about the "martyrdom" of Jesuit priests who were killed while trying to convert Mohawks. I visited their shrine near where I lived. The images in my mind are terrifying.

Our Area "white people eliminating racism" support group met this week. The leader, Cindy Squillace, encouraged us to work on our early memories of "Indians." Many of us in the United States (and I think those who grew up in Europe) carry images of "Indians" that are associated with times of playfulness, such as walking quietly through the woods to sneak up on game animals, or making fires, or dancing in a circle, or learning woods crafts. We cherish such times as being about a childhood freedom and connection with the natural world and often feel regret and grief about their loss. This is distress that is waiting to discharge. It has nothing to do with Native Americans or other Indigenous peoples. We connect childhood with



ALAN SPRUNG

Indians because we were taught that Indian-ness is a form of childishness and, like our own childhoods, is something that was left behind when the U.S. grew up.

The Native people were expected to disappear. *Peter Pan*, an English story many USers love, is about a boy who refused to grow up and had a life of fairies, pirates, and Indians. The Indians danced and sang, carried harmless tomahawks, and spoke an infantile form of English. Our minds are full of Indian horsemen, Indian raiders, Indian women who fall for⁴ white heroes, and on and on. What they all have in common is that they live in our minds in the past, often as our childlike fantasies.

This is the internalization of the perpetrator side of the genocide. Indians have never been seen by us as competent adults, and in our mental images they are in the past—dead, no longer relevant to modern industrial society. The images of them that we hold in our minds have to do with our own grief about what we lost in childhood. Even the violence in the cowboy and Indian stories of the Western expansion of U.S. domination is associated with entertainment and memories of backyard "shoot 'em up"⁵ fun. These memories have nothing to do with Indigenous people and never did. They can be discharged in the classic way that we deal with identities: claim them, clean them up, and throw them out. This, too, is working on how we have benefited from the genocide of Native people.

Most of my Native friends use humor to discharge on the impressions white people have of them. Most white people are astonished that Native people even

continued . . .

⁴ Fall for means fall in love with.

⁵ "Shoot 'em up" means pretend to shoot them with a gun.



ROB VENDERBOS

... continued

exist. If they think about them at all, they sometimes think they live in tee-pees (in fact, all the Indigenous people in my part of the world lived in large collective houses; many still do, though the houses are modern). There is much laughter in Native circles about what we white people have in our minds about them. One of my teachers, an Onondaga Chief, has a whole routine about it titled, "Who Are These People, Anyway?"

Most of us "white people" in the United States are descendants of people who lost their European homelands and communities when their land was taken or controlled by feudal and then capitalist elites. Without land, water, or community they had to learn a new life based on the demands of capitalist production. Knowledge of plants and animals and climate and soil became secondary, because now food and shelter came from working, if one was lucky. Some among the new "surplus populations" got wages in horrid conditions, and others got a chance to go off to a "new" land.

Our people hated to leave the land they cherished, the food they loved and trusted, their families, the languages that communicated their intelligence. My father's parents came from Sicily. They tried to reproduce the land they had known. Ironically, in their new land they grew corn and beans and squash (the Three Sisters of Native North American agriculture).

The vast majority of our people sought a decent future for their children. They were frightened and without discharge, but they harbored no hatred of the people on whose land they sought a new life.

In that "new world" they knew little about the land and waters and forests. They had little or no contact with the land unless they were farmers adopting new modes of (often polluting, energy-intensive) agriculture; or loggers stripping the forests, miners digging the earth, or homeowners killing native grasses to grow suburban lawns. Our people made a pact with industrial capitalism: "security" in exchange for labor. They had to.

Of course, they never truly lost their connection with the land and the natural world, but they gradually lost their awareness of it. It was likely too painful, without discharge, to really take in what was happening to the earth and to the people for whom this land had been a homeland. The land became a stranger, and often they treated it with little regard.

Many people did see what was happening and called attention to it. Many of them became the founders of the environmental movement and allies against the oppression of Native peoples. They associated care of the environment with Native liberation. Even though this, too, is

full of stereotypes and mascots that we need to discharge about, one of the ways we can be effective allies to Native people is to be completely committed to the recovery of the land and ecosystems where we live. This will require getting to know what those lands used to be like and who the people were who learned to live in close relationship with the abundance indigenous to those lands. It will mean insisting that the treaties be honored and that contemporary Native people have a significant say in what happens on their ancestral homelands. It will require putting attention on the natural world with a fullness that seems impossible for many of us now. But what else is RC for but reclaiming our full human capacity to pay attention to and think freshly about the world around us?

To do this we have to discharge about our current place and our relationship to it, which means making a commitment to it. This will go right up against our white distress—the longing to remain free of commitment, to be able to move on when things get hard. Decision is necessary. We have to choose some place—big or small, naturally spectacular or common—and make a commitment that for the rest of our lives we will make certain that things go well there. In other words, we will take leadership. We will commit to the people, the land, the water, the animals, the ecosystem. We will learn who the original inhabitants were and how they lived and what happened to them. We will live with awareness, integrity, and respect for the life of that place. After making this commitment, we can discharge on whatever comes up from making it. Just imagine how strong our RC Communities would become if they were peopled by those who had made this kind of commitment to the area in which they live.

I would like to see all RC Communities working on this in relation to Goal 3—our goal to discharge the distresses that have caused environmental destruction.⁶ The distresses that get in the way of our making commitments are a big part of this. I would like every RC workshop to begin with an introduction to the land and waters and history of the place where it is located, followed by a mini-session on what the participants know or don't know about that place and its history and people. Someone from the workshop should be assigned this task. I have helped make this happen at workshops in our Region.⁷

⁶ Goal 3 of the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities, as adopted by the 2001 World Conference of the RC Communities and reaffirmed by subsequent World Conferences: That members of the Re-evaluation Counseling Community put increased attention on discharging the distresses that have led to the continued degradation of the environment of the world and to discouragement about taking the actions necessary for its restoration.

⁷ A Region is a subdivision of the International Re-evaluation Counseling Community, usually consisting of several Areas (local RC Communities).

I want to end with one more thought about Thanksgiving. For many Indigenous peoples, giving thanks is central to their culture. In my area, the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois, People of the Longhouse) begin every important meeting and social gathering with an address given on behalf of everyone present. The name of it translates into English as “The Words That Come Before All Else.” It is also known as the “Thanksgiving Address.” The speaker calls everyone’s attention to all the elements of Creation, beginning with the people; Mother Earth; the waters, plants, animals, winds, sun, moon, stars; and the teachers who have reminded us of who we are and what it means to be a human being. I can imagine what a difference it would make if every time we made important decisions, we started with such a thanksgiving. I also highly recommend regular Co-Counseling sessions on what we are grateful for. A friend of mine says that gratitude is revolutionary. With it we learn to recognize what really matters, and then we are willing to fight for it.

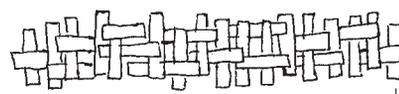
Tomorrow a group of Onondaga people and allies will, as we do every year on Thanksgiving, make a circle on the shore of Onondaga Lake and each say something about what we are grateful for that day. It is often for each other that we give thanks. There is always some discharge.

I would love to keep this conversation going. What have you seen work for discharging in this area? What have you learned as client? Counselor?

Jack Manno

Syracuse, New York, USA

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



From Marcie Rendon:

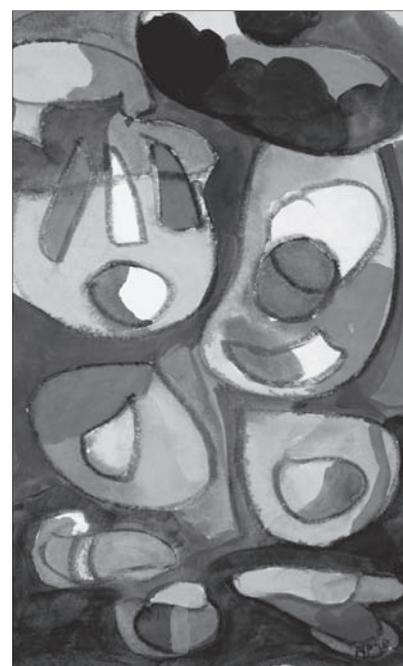
Jack, thank you for taking the time to write this out. To date it is one of the most clear statements from an ally of what non-Native people need to discharge to become better allies to Indigenous people and the earth.

Being Friends with Men

I would guess that the best way to talk to the men who seek your company is to just very frankly say that you're not looking for boyfriends or husbands yet, that you have a few goals you want to achieve in your life before you get into that kind of a thing, but that you would be pleased to have male friends and people to spend time with and talk to. Most men I know, if they could hear you at all, would be reassured by such a possibility. Most men feel horribly burdened by the chore of always acting like a man in a sexual way around women they like.

Harvey Jackins

From a letter written in 1980



© MONNIE PAASHUIS

Appreciating the U.S. Thanksgiving Holiday

Many of us occupy mixtures of oppressed and oppressor roles. It is good to work toward a picture of history that reflects the reality of both influences on our lives, and also the ways that our humanness has survived these oppressions. I write as a person with Native heritage who was raised white.

I appreciate all that has been shared here* about the true nature of relationships between the first white settlers on this continent and the Native people, especially related to the holiday of Thanksgiving. Added to all of that, I will say that when I was growing up, Thanksgiving was my favorite holiday.

I liked that it was not commercialized like Christmas. Nor did it have confusing and what seemed to me hypocritical religious messages. We sat together at a big meal with the elders, appreciating in a real way that we had enough to eat and that we were all alive.

My family (the branch with the most clearly Native heritage) almost did not survive the Great Depression. My great uncle was supporting three families. My mother's father had gone to prison, leaving his wife with four young children, and they moved in with my great uncle and aunt. The story that was told over and over, particularly at Thanksgiving, was that the uncle went upstairs the day after Christmas with pneumonia and did not come down until April. He was then able to go back to lobster fishing, and the family survived.

There were no antibiotics then, and the two women cared for him around the clock, putting hot plasters on his chest to comfort him.

This all was in the "whitest" state (Maine) in the United States. I believe these relatives lived in a Native community that had assimilated except in terms of class. It was where the poorest folk, particularly people targeted by racism, lived; where my mother was born; and where I spent much time as a youth.

* See article on page 76.



SWAZILAND • TIM JACKINS

Part of the story above was that in the midst of the family's despair, an African-heritage woman, in an ice storm, crawled on her hands and knees down the icy road to give them some help. She told the women to go to bed while she cooked and did laundry and tended the uncle overnight so that the family could get some rest.

There is more to this story of survival that I will not tell now. I'll just say that it was at Thanksgiving when we heard the stories of poverty from both sides of the family. It was when I learned about generosity and not to take anything for granted. Our dinner was at the house of my great uncle and aunt. They are the people who most inspire my work as a liberation leader. I feel so fortunate to have had in my life models of generosity, kindness, and disregard for ambition.

Thanksgiving is still, by far, my favorite holiday.

Last Thanksgiving I cooked a big meal for my mom and my sister. They brought things as well. I had leftover pies and creamed onions that they brought. I sent them home with turkey for sandwiches. I dug carrots from the garden and cut brussels sprouts for them to take home. You always make sure that people have food when they leave the house.

In my opinion, Thanksgiving is the major holiday in the United States that is the least corrupted by commercialism. It is the only time that poverty is acknowledged officially and the lives of those who are poor are honored in some way. The rest of the time poor people are blamed for their difficulties, and everyone else's.

This discussion reminds me that all of our relationships are mixed with good human things as well as all of the tracks of the oppressed and oppressor roles that have been forced on us.

It is good to keep telling history as it truly was, to talk about all of the oppression, and to also notice all of the humanness that we have been able to hold on to in the midst of the oppressive forces.

Many of us are uncomfortable blends of many heritages and class backgrounds. It is good to discharge the distresses and remember the human parts of our experience.

Dan Nickerson
Freeport, Maine, USA
Reprinted from the e-mail discussion
list for RC Community members



Immigrants and Migrants

From the Northern California, USA, Teachers' and Leaders' Workshop, January 2011



My name is Maria Franco.¹ I'm going to talk about those of us who have lived in lots of different places, and now live here. I have to cry. This is a time to look at where we are, that we are in this part of the world. We also get to notice that we came from somewhere—that we left a place, and that we left people we were connected to. So it is about us as people (*crying*).

I think it's something important that we can't skip. A lot of things happened where we were, and some of us weren't personally there. For some of us it was our ancestors. A lot of things happened to them—lots of invasions, to the extent that some of us can't tell² where our lands were. That is something to cry about, but it's not the most significant thing. Most significant is that we were connected to a group of people and that we continue to be connected. That's it.

Tim Jackins: May I add some more? As Maria said, we all came from somewhere. In the past, people stayed in one place for long periods of time. They developed connections and understood certain things because of that. They developed cultures in those places, and because communication and transportation were minimal, they developed unique cultures. Each of our peoples figured out their own solutions to their problems, which were different from those of others. Then they were driven out—by famine, invasion, civil war. Some of these things were caused by the world itself, but most were due to distress patterns being acted out. Then our peoples went other places. Some of them invaded other lands; they did to others what had been done to them—with the same urgency, thoughtlessness, and feeling of necessity.

We are here now as a result of that process, which was not an intelligent one. We are at the point Maria described. We are facing all these things so that we can discharge, resolve them, and see that they don't go on³ happening forever. We get to see that people are considered, that solutions are found that don't involve people being forced to leave or invading others.

There is no one to blame for it, and it has to end. The only way to end it is to go back and work on the distresses it left with us, to talk about the people we left behind. We can talk about the places we left, but it's really the people that matter. It's the connections with those minds and cultures. As Maria said, some of us don't know all the places our people left, but it's useful to try to look at it, counsel on it, and understand it. Part of that is recognizing that we're here now as a result of that process. This is clearer in some parts of the world, but it is true almost everywhere.

¹ Maria Franco is an RC leader in Oakland, California, USA.

² Tell means determine.

³ Go on means continue.

A Current Project in Artists' Liberation

I have been visiting some of the RC Communities on the East Coast (USA) this past year and gathering artists to think and discharge about our key issues and next steps. With the continued support and backing of Tim,¹ our goal is to help build and strengthen artists' liberation in the RC Communities. The Regional² gatherings are an opportunity for people to meet one another, get a picture of and perspective on the work, see what is happening locally, and discharge and think about next steps. For the East Coast, the plan is to hold a weekend workshop combining those Regions I have already

met with that cannot sustain an independent workshop. Leaders from surrounding Areas would be invited as well.

I am excited about being part of a team that continues to develop a collective base in RC that understands and takes on³ artists' issues. I very much look forward to meeting many of you artists in this next period, as John⁴ and I reach more of the local Communities.

Emily Feinstein
Brooklyn, New York, USA

¹ Tim Jackins

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

³ Takes on means takes responsibility for doing something about.

⁴ John Fehring, the International Liberation Reference Person for Visual Artists

A Bigger Picture of Life than Weight Loss

Like a lot of fat women, I have been different sizes at different times in my life. At one point, when I was at my largest, I was doing no exercise, eating a lot of sugary foods, and working at a job in which I felt tired and stressed a lot of the time. Having Co-Counselling sessions about being on the receiving end of fat oppression meant that I never gave up completely on finding physical activities that I enjoyed. I began to try different things, such as going to a gym and hill walking, which I loved. Then during the course of one of my walks, something happened that had a big impact on my life.

Whilst I was out in the countryside, I fell from a substantial height and smashed my lower leg and ankle to pieces. I was told that I might not walk again and that my leg and ankle would need reconstructive surgery. I had the surgery, without a general anaesthetic, and decided to heal—in the face of medical opinion that was constantly pessimistic. This meant discharging about the prospect that I might be disabled for the rest of my life.

I spent the year after my accident literally learning to walk again, and

discharging the pain and oppression I had internalised as a working-class fat woman, which had stopped me from seeing that my body was precious and worth treasuring. I spent many Co-Counselling sessions just focusing on my body, being soft and gentle with it, and getting to cry bucketloads. I also discharged on childhood memories of seeing the women around me working so hard, without any value being put on their bodies. As a fat woman, I had internalised the messages that I was disgusting, my body ugly and worthless.

A year later I had another operation (again without general anaesthesia) because I had recovered so well that the metal put in my leg during the first surgery was hindering my recovery. Today my leg is eighty-five percent better, and I don't have to think about it in terms of physical constraints. I have continued where I left off—riding a bike and starting to walk everywhere, instead of taking a bus or car.

Although I would rather the injury hadn't happened, and that it hadn't taken the injury to get me discharging so deeply about oppression, the

work I did put me forward in my re-emergence. I began having sessions on a sometimes-daily basis. Changing my body size was not my primary goal. Instead, for the first time, I was taking charge of my health and my body.

As I was exercising more and enjoying it, I began to slowly lose weight. When I was younger, because of fat oppression, I was obsessed with losing weight and with the calorie content of every piece of food that passed my lips. That was a miserable time. Deciding to take charge of my body meant not focusing on an end goal of losing weight but on eating well, exercising, valuing my body, and hopefully coming to the body size that made sense and fit with all of these things. I am not saying that I don't still struggle with old addictions of overeating and eating chocolate and sugary things—I do. Some days the addiction gets a grip and I feel completely out of control, but I am going in a forward direction, and continuing to decide to not feel bad about myself when I've had a chocolate day.

One of the elements of fat oppression is that we fat people are blamed for “being fat, lazy, having no motivation,” and so on. And when we do exercise, what we get is the oppression. There are reasons why fat people find it hard to exercise that aren't just about self-motivation. There weren't many days when I was out on my bike that abuse wasn't hurled at me. I also noticed that the being shouted at lessened as I lost weight.

FAT OPPRESSION AND SEXISM

I am committed to ending the vicious, cruel oppression of fat people and the effects of it on everyone. For me this is a crucial part of ending sexism. The oppression of fat women is hugely tied up with sexism and



AMANDA MARTINEZ

male domination. The only acceptable body shape and size held out to women in the West, and increasingly the rest of the world, is thin, with certain requirements for breasts, bums,¹ and so on. And for those who fall outside the sexist standards of what is acceptable, the oppression is harsh. Increasingly this issue dominates women's lives, as, not surprisingly, few if any women meet the unrealistic criteria.

The struggle against fat oppression has become hijacked by corporations that pretend to be concerned about women but are actually only concerned with selling their products. For instance, one multinational company has started a "campaign for real beauty," which looks like it has a positive message but that actually goes no further than (supposedly) making women feel better about themselves by getting them to buy the company's products. That same company, under another name, has a different advertising campaign featuring stereotyped images that manipulate women into feeling bad about themselves in order to sell a different product.

The fight against sexism needs to be at the heart of fat liberation, and vice versa. We fat women get seen as ugly, disgusting, and unattractive. More recently we have also become incorporated into the market of sexually objectifying women. There are many Internet sites catering to men who have sexual distresses focused on fat women.

Fat women's web sites have also sprung up, many of them featuring page after page of fat women posing in lovely clothes, looking defiantly pleased with themselves. Because a huge component of fat women's oppression is about the way we look, it is no surprise that we have

I don't want to fight for the right for fat women to be equally sexually objectified.

deep undischarged longings to be appreciated for the way we look (and we definitely are beautiful women). I wouldn't want to take away anyone's opportunity to experience pleasure in being photographed, but we have to look wider than this. Fat women need to get back the whole range of human activities, which include all sorts of things that don't have us looking glamorous. We shouldn't put the fight against the oppression of fat women purely in the arena of looks. I don't want to fight for the right for fat women to be equally sexually objectified.

One thing that leads women to desperately want to lose weight, I think, is their hope that by managing to conform to the sexist images they will escape fat oppression and the constant barrage of pressure about their bodies and appearance. As someone who has lost some weight, I can say that the day-to-day harsh oppression and the constant in-your-face abuse do lessen. That makes a difference. People do respond to me differently, and I get a lot of positive comments about my weight loss. However, it is made clear that this appreciation depends on my continuing to lose weight, and keep it off.

I am having to learn how to handle a different aspect of sexism. I get more "positive" attention from men now than I ever have in my life. I put this down² to my having discharged internalised oppression (getting rid of that always makes people look more attractive), but it's also because my body is now thinner than before.

² Put this down means attribute this.

More men now find me attractive, and let me know about it. At first, after a lifetime of fat oppression, I found this flattering—men showing me sexual attention—but I soon realised I was dealing with patterns that might come with a smile now but that are equally rigid. They are not about relating to me as a human being but rather on the basis of sexual distress.

I have also noticed that men from different nationalities and cultures have different ideas about what constitutes "attractive." For example, the ideal woman in many African and Middle Eastern cultures has traditionally been larger than what is considered attractive in the West. I used to think that being in such a culture would be heaven—men considering me attractive and not pressuring me to lose weight. However, sexism is sexism, meaning that whatever body size men prefer, they are not seeing women as themselves and valuing their intelligence. They are deciding to get to know women, or not, based on their distresses about women's bodies and whether or not parts of women's bodies fit their idea of what is sexy. Either way, women get sexism, and it is limiting.

LEADING AT THE GYM

Most women who go to the gym are trying to lose weight and achieve a certain body shape; health and fitness are secondary issues. I am a member of a local gym and see my time there as part of my political activism. It is a good challenge for me, as previously I found gyms intimidating places.

I spend my time at the gym enjoying reclaiming my physical power and health. I am making as many friends as possible, with both women and men and with people of different ages, races, and nationalities. Gyms can be quite isolating places, and for me it makes a lot of difference having

continued . . .

¹ Bums means buttocks.

LIBERATION

... continued

friends with whom to exercise, join in the classes, and have fun.

Gyms seem to have high drop-off rates. I notice that fat people, particularly, come for about a month and work hard; then hopelessness and discouragement come up and they leave. I make sure that I make contact with as many people as I can—particularly fat women, who are often working class. I encourage them and remind them of their worth and beauty.

Men dominate certain areas of the gym and have been rude to me about using the weights area. I set up a group of women to lift weights together. We have fun and laugh a lot but also go for heavy weights. A lot of people comment on our presence; it is having quite an effect. I smile when I think about it—me, a fat woman, playing a central role in a gym.

People look to me for leadership, which is an interesting position for a fat woman. Not-fat women have often looked to me for a “session.” They’ve come to me for reassurance about their size and expected me to help them feel better about themselves, without thinking about me or the oppression I face. However, the fact is that in many ways I have some attention, and when I give it awfully, I enjoy that. I give people directions and remind them of the directions every time I see them. For instance, I have made friends with a young thin woman who gets upset about not losing weight and is always telling me how horrible and fat she is. She

spends time crying with me. I gave her the direction that she is all right. She laughs a lot. Now every time I see her, even if it’s only for a few minutes, she says the direction and laughs. I also encourage friends to come with me on walks, bike rides, and so on.

Recently I had to deal with some men in the sauna insulting and laughing at me because I am fat. I stood up for myself, and other fat women, and also had useful conversations about fat oppression with the gym management, which led to their having useful conversations with one of the men concerned.

FOCUSING ON LIBERATION AND HEALTH

I choose not to put my attention on my hurts about my body. (Partly I don’t want to go around thinking about or dramatising how bad I feel about myself, and partly I know that most people carry so much oppressor material³ that they would “agree.”) This means that as a fat woman I look good to other people and offer some hope. But the fact that I rarely tell anyone, even in Co-Counselling sessions, about the oppression I experience can leave me very much on my own.⁴ I find few fat women who want to engage with me about fat oppression as a liberation issue; instead they come as client, telling me how bad they feel about themselves. It is important for fat women to talk and discharge with each other about

³ Material means distress.

⁴ On my own means alone, by myself.

the oppression, because it is confusing and not generally acknowledged as an oppression. It can feel like we are on our own with it or “going mad.”

Admitting I have distress about food can feel like I’m giving people an excuse to treat me badly. Then if they do, it becomes even tougher for me to make decisions about food. A lot of people who aren’t fat believe that they have attention around food, which they usually don’t. If those who want to be allies would put their minds on fighting fat oppression, it would give us fat people some space to look at our struggles.

For me, key places to discharge have been fat oppression and internalised oppression, early sexual memories, and frozen needs.⁵ Letting myself actually experience hunger has been terrifying and useful. As a child I was given lots of sugary things. I was raised by two parents who were brought up⁶ in the Second World War when food was rationed, and both of them came from poor families. Going hungry was scary for them and not something they were going to allow their children to experience.

Taking charge of my own re-emergence and health by focusing on valuing myself and living a long, healthy, exciting, energetic life, not on weight loss, has been important. I have to keep coming back to this, because as I lose weight and people start to express their approval, it is hard not to get hooked into focusing on that. I have to keep holding out for myself a bigger picture of life than weight loss.

Melissa Colwell

Nottingham, Nottinghamshire, England



SUE EDWARDS

⁵ Frozen need is a term used in RC for a hurt that results when a rational need is not met in childhood. The hurt compels a person to keep trying to fill the need in the present, but the frozen need cannot be filled; it can only be discharged.

⁶ Brought up means raised.

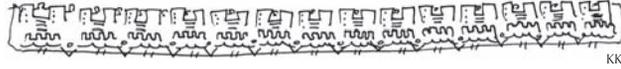
Appreciating PRESENT TIME

Last night several of us read the articles about Japan in the last PRESENT TIME.* I think it was good for people to see how much everyone around the world has been thinking about them. Thank you.



Emma Parker
Tokyo, Japan

* See pages 47 to 66 of the July 2011 PRESENT TIME.



I read an article from PRESENT TIME each night when I go to bed. It reminds me that people and the world are soooooo good. In the contents are the names of many Co-Counselors I know who have given me life-changing sessions and are still a source of encouragement to me. Tim,¹ Diane,² and the other contributors all give me enriching information and inspiration. A thousand thanks for the quarterly transfusion.

Pat Miller
Sussex, Wisconsin, USA

¹ Tim Jackins

² Diane Shisk



Living far from the epicenter of RC, it sometimes feels like PRESENT TIME is a cookbook. After I read "Set Up a Structure for Working on Racism" in the latest PRESENT TIME,¹ I took Tim's² "recipe" and asked two of the RC teachers in the leaders' class I teach to join me for such a group. I asked them to commit to six months, every two weeks, each time for an hour. (Two of us are long-time activists.) I told them I wanted to see what Israelis could do with this format.

We did the first session on Skype.³ I can't describe how moving and hopeful it was for me, how much I learned about the other two (one I've known for decades), and how much good discharge there was. Thanks!

Lisa Blum
Tel Aviv, Israel

¹ See page 3 of the July 2011 PRESENT TIME.

² Tim Jackins'

³ Skype is a computer program that allows people to make voice or video calls to each other via their computers.

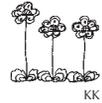


I like the themes, and the articles and pics* are beautifully laid out. I learn a lot about how to write clearly from reading PRESENT TIME. I appreciate the footnotes, too, which explain vernacular or who people are. It's very inclusive.



Tony Smith
Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

* Pictures



Thanks for making PRESENT TIME such a wonderful publication.

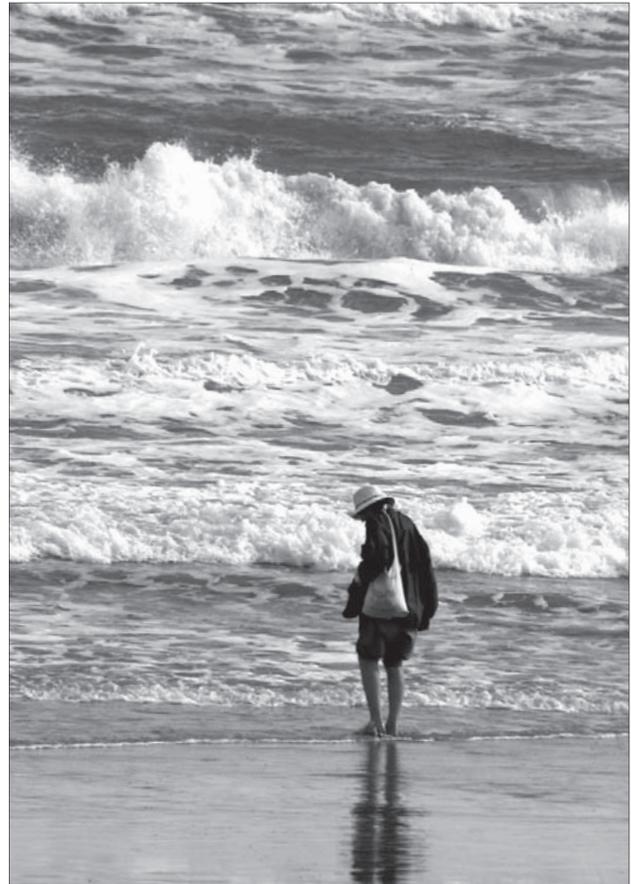
Rose K. Murphy
Jackson Heights, New York, USA



I love RC literature. It rocks my world.



Eleanor Traubman
Brooklyn, New York, USA



HELEN PARKIN

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Re-evaluation Counseling

Re-evaluation Counseling is a process whereby people of all ages and of all backgrounds can learn how to exchange effective help with each other in order to free themselves from the effects of past distress experiences.

Re-evaluation Counseling theory provides a model of what a human being can be like in the area of his/her interaction with other human beings and his/her environment. The theory assumes that everyone is born with tremendous intellectual potential, natural zest, and lovingness, but that these qualities have become blocked and obscured in adults as the result of accumulated distress experiences (fear, hurt, loss, pain, anger, embarrassment, etc.) which begin early in our lives.

Any young person would recover from such distress spontaneously by use of the natural process of emotional discharge (crying, trembling, raging, laughing, etc.). However, this natural process is usually interfered with by well-meaning people ("Don't cry," "Be a big boy," etc.) who erroneously equate the emotional discharge (the healing of the hurt) with the hurt itself.

When adequate emotional discharge can take place, the person is freed from the rigid pattern of behavior and feeling left by the hurt. The basic loving, cooperative, intelligent, and zestful nature is then free to operate. Such a person will tend to be more effective in looking out for his or her own interests and the interests of others, and will be more capable of acting successfully against injustice.

In recovering and using the natural discharge process, two people take turns counseling and being counseled. The one acting as the counselor listens, draws the other out, and permits, encourages, and assists emotional discharge. The one acting as client talks and discharges and re-evaluates. With experience and increased confidence and trust in each other, the process works better and better.

For more information, you can go to the web site: <http://www.rc.org/>.



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