

Over and over, the high points in human existence are when one has struggled to the limits of one's ability and still not won and then the upward trend appears and provides the additional support that turns imminent defeat into victory.

Harvey Jackins

Present Time

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This *Present Time* provides another glimpse into how Co-Counselors are finding their thinking, and applying it, in so many areas of life—from disability liberation to parenting, from an “economy of caring” to recovering from everything.

For the October issue, please send us articles and poems by Monday, August 17, and changes to the back-pages lists by Monday, August 24.



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We Have the Resources to Recover from Everything

From a talk by Tim Jackins¹ at the East Coast North America
Leaders' Workshop, in Warwick, New York, USA, December 2014

Society's collapse continues, accelerates, and is out in the open enough that there are fewer and fewer loud arguments about it. There is lots of defensiveness, and lots of denial in different forms, but nobody can really argue against it.

Having it out in the open gives us opportunities to help people focus on the issues rather than their distresses about the issues. But for us to do that effectively, we have to keep going back to our own early distresses. These are two sides of the work we do in RC—going out into the world and helping people see that there are things we all can do to move the situation forward according to everyone's best thinking, and continuing to work to get all of us in better shape² to do that.

RECOVERING FROM EARLY DEFEATS

We have to go back and discharge the distresses that we have not had the resource to work on before now. It turns out³ that we each have a large collection of early hurtful incidents that defeated us and from which we didn't get a chance to recover.

Our past defeats are not the problem. Defeat is not a problem. We can recover from defeat. We can get back all our thinking ability, gain more information about how to go on, and try again in a sharper, more effective way. It's when we don't get to discharge the defeat that we live defeated.

We have seldom had the circumstances in which to challenge our defeats, so they have piled up. Over and over again, good, adventurous revolutionary minds slowly get frozen in undischarged distress and turn reactionary.

We have to be pleased but not satisfied with what we have been able to do. It appears to be the most that any

large group of people has ever managed to do in the area of freeing human minds. If we never move past this point, we will have pushed things forward a significant amount.

But our distresses pull us to stay here, to stay at this level and not push for more.

Also, so much clearly needs to be done out in the world that it can feel like what's called for is putting ourselves aside. But I think there

are very few circumstances in which a sacrifice of ourselves is the best move. Not that sacrificing oneself hasn't made good things happen, but I doubt that it is the best move very often. The best move is our going forward more clearly, more forcefully, more fully, and more alive. People seeing us function better and better has more of an effect than any memory they have of our making extreme efforts. Somebody continuing to flourish and push forward is what we all look for. We admire those who pushed forward in the past, but seeing somebody in the present who hasn't given up on continuing forward is what wakes us up to all the possibilities.

And so I want us to look at those early defeats that we simply live with, that we feel we can't go past, that we resign ourselves to ("I am doing well enough"), that feel unbearable to face. They feel unbearable because we suffered them alone in some profound sense. We had no chance to communicate about them or discharge them. There was no one else to understand them. They happened to us in a very private, personal way, over and over again, until a big part of life got sucked out of us. We figured out how to go on with what we had left; it seemed like we couldn't ever fully recover everything.

I recovered an early memory of when a distress went chronic. Up until that point, no matter what happened, if I could play hard enough or get a good night's sleep the feeling of distress would leave me. I would get back some slack. And then that didn't happen. I was stuck there. It's

continued . . .

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

² "Shape" means condition.

³ "It turns out" means it has been shown to be true.

COUNSELING PRACTICE

...continued

those things that build up to the point where we lose perspective, where we believe the defeat is final, that we need to go back and challenge.

I think the perspective has to be that nothing is out of our reach, that everything that ever happened to us can be discharged and resolved in the sense that the distress can be entirely drained from it and we can make sense of what happened and not suffer from it. We can now gain back what we could have regained, if the conditions had been right, at the moment the hurt happened.

We all carry these defeats. That we have them is not the result of a personal error, or an accident of our condition, or a mistake of our family, or some odd cosmic ray hitting us at the wrong angle. The conditions were such that they had to happen to all of us. No one had the conditions in which it could have been any other way. We all wouldn't be living with these defeats if there had been a chance. Somebody would have seized the chance. But the conditions for that didn't exist then.

NEW CONDITIONS

It still feels as bad as it did back then, but we have changed the conditions. We have changed them. There is a high probability now that we have the resources to undo

any damage that happened to us. This includes any damage that happened to our families and our peoples and was passed on to us. No generation has had a chance to escape.

I think the assumption has to be that everything is within our grasp, every single thing. Whether we ever get the time to take care of everything is a different question. I don't think it's the important question. The important thing is that we do not accept a limitation on what we can do. I don't think there is a theoretical limitation. There are always limitations in practice, in what we have the resource to do at any particular time. We get to make choices about that—about what we go after,⁴ how consistently we work on early distresses, and how we organize our minds and our counseling resources to work on them. We may not get through everything, but that isn't what's important. What's important is that we have the ability to get through anything we choose to.

My standard answer to pessimism—you know, “you can't do that”—is simply, “We'll see.” The future will tell us, not the past. We get to make efforts and see what we can do. It doesn't have to be decided by anybody's recording⁵ now. We have the chance now that didn't exist before. That means that we have to suffer. (*laughter*) In a sense it does. It means that we have to go back and grieve about what we didn't get to grieve about when it happened—not just take a direction against it.

There are some perspectives to develop: How do we work on early heavy things that stopped our mind and not forget that it is different in the present? How do we draw the distinction evermore clearly? I suspect that we can work on the worst things that happened to us, and that we didn't get to discharge, and not lose track of the present.

This is about fighting for what we think is true. We think it is true because of the evidence we all have gathered. In this room there are thousands of years of experience with RC. We have learned a tremendous amount because of the work we have done. What we



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⁴ “Go after” means pursue.

⁵ Distress recording

have done has built this possibility. It is a real thing that did not exist when we got hurt. It has changed the world in a very significant way. We are still timid about saying this and counting on it. What will happen if we stake our life on it?⁶

A CHANCE TO PRACTICE

At some point, as society collapses, there will be big decisions to make about committing our lives to making something happen. We need some practice. The things that would stop us are the things that we haven't been able to face, the distresses that have seemed like too much. They were too much. We need to say that over and over again. They were too much. And when our clients say, "It's horrible, I can't bear it," what we can say is, "Yes, that's the way it was. That's exactly what happened to you. It was that bad. And maybe it's not like that now." We don't have to argue too heavily. We have to state the possibility. Their mind needs to entertain the possibility that conditions have changed, and we can find a thousand different ways to make that happen without screaming at them (though sometimes screaming at them works). They need someone to hold the position that they can't yet hold by themselves. We will have to do that as their counselor, until they dare to try.

DISCHARGING, AND COMMITTING OURSELVES

Okay, just a bit more repetition. The conditions under which we came into existence as humans were such that we had to be defeated. There wasn't another possibility then and there. No mind gives up prematurely. People keep a shred of hope alive for a long time. But the conditions have consistently been such that at some point it was too much. It was finally just too much, and we got frozen in distress because we didn't get the chance to recover. We were defeated by the conditions of an oppressive society, and that same society didn't allow us to recover. So there are places where we have all given up and figured out the best way to simply go on, undischarged, with our lives.

We have been successful. We have great lives. Even having to build on top of the defeats, we have made great lives. So it's hard to go back and face things that feel unbearable, to imagine that we could have more of life if we could fight those battles. Still, we must go back and look at where we gave up, stopped fighting, adapted to that set of recordings, and just went on. It happened to all of us, in many different ways. We don't remember a lot of it. It was just the way life always was.



ROB VENDERBOS

We get to go back now and look at where we gave up, talk about it, and talk about how unimaginable it is to think of challenging it. It's unimaginable even when we have decided to do it. There's a strange way that we can intellectually make decisions but not act on them. I think we have a lot of grief to discharge about having lived hurt for all these years. And I think we need to discharge it before our mind can get back in full control of those places where we gave up. There is a kind of discharging that has to happen, and as it happens we will get more of our mind functioning again in those areas and begin to make up our mind⁷ not just in an intellectual way.

We have the idea intellectually, but we are not committed to it. And without making the commitment, we run when we are in battle. We begin to face the defeats, but then we take off.⁸ The distress has locked our mind so heavily in those areas that we can't quite force it open.

Some amount of discharge has to happen, and some amount of seeing the possibility of changing things by getting the discharge, before we can commit ourselves to what we know is true. "I know it's true, I know it's true, and I won't do it." That sounds contradictory, but I think there is a way to understand it.

I want us to do what we have never been able to do before. That's what I want us to do everywhere. This is not a small exception. I want us to do things that we have never been able to do before, that nobody has been able to do. It's part of the whole package of getting back what we think is being human: doing new, fresh things forever, including finishing old battles that have never been finished. It's part of us to be able to do these things. And now we have to do it.

⁷ "Make up our mind" means decide.

⁸ "Take off" means leave.

⁶ "Stake our life on it" means risk our life in believing it.

A “Revolutionary” Parent

In the past couple of months I didn't have good attention for my daughter. Our living situation (my partner and I and a six-year-old daughter) was quite isolated. I was distracted and restimulated. I would read RC literature when I couldn't have a Co-Counselling session, and love what I was reading, but I couldn't put it in the context of my poor attention, my sounding angry, my acting irritated with my daughter.

Then one day I read Karl Lam's excellent article on oppression in the January 2015 *Present Time*.¹ He outlined ways we can tell² that we are being oppressive: getting irritated with someone, adopting a strange tone of voice, being distant or aloof, feeling more important than or superior to someone, and so on.

I realized I was being oppressive with my daughter.

That night, after a hot shower and thinking about how I could change things, I came out, saw her cuddled in bed ready for sleep, and apologised to her. I told her that I was sorry I hadn't been talking very nicely to her in the past couple of months. I explained that maybe I was distracted by what had happened (she knew about the restimulating issues) but that I shouldn't let that get in the way of how I am with her. I told her that she was wonderful and that none of it was her fault, that it is always my problem when I get like that. I told her that even when she is complaining and having trouble, it's still not her fault—that I need to have better attention for her.

Her face lit up. She soaked in the connection and the “real talk” and asked for more. I told her about some wonderful things coming up in the next six months and that I was work-

¹ “Working on Oppressor Material,” on pages 47 to 49

² “Tell” means notice.

ing on how to have more people in our lives and do more fun things. She loved it and went to sleep quickly.

The next morning things had shifted for me. I was more relaxed. I was able to say, “Why not?” (in my head) when she asked for a playful activity that normally I would have had no attention for.

I want to re-evaluate some more on being oppressive to my daughter. Of course my mother showed all those signs of oppressing me. But I've never used the word *oppression* to describe it before. Usually I think of it as poor parenting. I say that my mother was a “bad” mother or that I'm “failing” as a mother with my daughter. It feels hopeless somehow when I frame it as a parenting issue. But when I reframe it as an oppression issue, something shifts. It makes me think of my daughter as my equal (which she is). I do not want to be oppressive to young people, or to anyone.

I know the RC approach to parenting is pioneering work and goes a long way toward raising a revolutionary. I am a pioneer, a revolutionary myself, for parenting my daughter in this way. But it doesn't *feel* like it. It doesn't *feel* like important work. It feels like the important work is what I do in my free time—wide-world activism. That's internalised parents' oppression, of course. So I need to reframe it and tell myself a different story, which happens to be reality: My interactions with my daughter can be one of my wide-world projects. I can analyse each interaction, figure out where it's coming from, discharge, and change my ways. And write about it.

Staying in a resentful, irritated state is a way to “prove” how hard things were for me when I was little. *Look at me, this is how hurt I was!* I am trying to get a session in an interaction

in which it's not rational to look for one. I need to take those feelings to Co-Counselling sessions and not let them get in the way of my being with another human being.

The other day I was in a tight, non-relaxed state with my daughter. She didn't want to do what I wanted to do and was asking for something else. There was no good reason to do what I wanted right then, but I didn't want to “give in” to her. I didn't want to be the “wrong” one. I wanted my daughter to be “in the wrong,”³ to realise that I was right and that what I wanted was more important than what she wanted (reading a book for ten minutes).

My mother has acted this way with my daughter. Maybe my mother also didn't “give in” to me, and her mother didn't “give in” to her, and so on. The resentful feelings have nothing to do with the child.⁴ They have to do with the lack of support and connection we experienced when we were young. The contagion goes on. But it stops with me. I'm figuring out how. Yay!

Heather Luna

Alford, Lincolnshire, England

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

³ “In the wrong” means incorrect in what she wanted to do.

⁴ “Have nothing to do with the child” means are not about the child in any way.



TRICIA CLARKE

The following three articles are from a discussion on the RC e-mail discussion list for leaders of parents.

Children Refusing Food

My six-year-old is refusing more and more foods—not liking things this week that she liked last week and complaining about being offered the same foods, such as oatmeal for breakfast.

I know that moving in physically with affection is a great response. What should I do when there isn't time? What about her not eating much during the school day?

It's challenging putting together lunches. Her favorite items are packaged things and we try to limit these, yet she sees her friends bringing in loads of plastic-wrapped junk food. I try to hold out for¹ two vegetable servings a day and give choices for those. I've been thinking that per-

haps I've given her too many choices and she just needs to cry when faced with "this is what's for dinner, and there's nothing else."

I have two nieces who developed serious eating disorders at older ages, and I'm concerned about seeing food issues start so soon.

Thanks for any insights on the subject of children being picky eaters,² girls and eating disorders, countering the plastic-wrapped school-lunch catastrophe, or anything else related.

"Anne"

¹ "Hold out for" means continue to insist on.

² "Picky eaters" means fussy, particular eaters.

"Pirate Dinner"

My husband and I ended up setting pretty¹ firm limits about food, without my realizing it at the time. He is Italian heritage, and food and mealtime are really important to him. He was clear from the beginning that he wasn't going to make two separate meals. I worked to get him to be a little more flexible, but it was actually a good bottom line² to establish.

My daughter (age eight) eats eagerly and happily, stops when she's full, and notices if she overeats sugar and remembers why it doesn't make sense. She complains about soup and vegetables intermittently but generally is quite relaxed about food.

It has been helpful to explain the need for protein, liquids, fruits and vegetables, and the problems caused by sugar for our bodies and minds. We talk about what is on the plate and what has protein and what doesn't. If she really hates the protein in the meal, we help her figure out some other form of protein to eat. We expect her to try a bite of everything. (My husband says, "Take a bite, chew, swallow, and then tell me what you think.") If she doesn't like the main vegetable, she can eat the salad instead. We take her preferences into account; if she hates soup, we don't have soup as much as we'd like. We talk about listening to our bellies and how some foods distract us from listening to them.

For her lunches, I use brightly colored, reusable decorated containers. I also include some packaged food that meets my definition of healthy (mostly crackers or unsweetened nut and fruit bars), which has helped with the comparisons to other children's lunches.

At one point my husband was getting strict about table manners and I thought we needed to lighten things up. I created a special-occasion "pirate dinner" in which we dress up like pirates and growl and eat off the table with no plates, using our hands only. My daughter has started inviting friends over for "pirate dinner" and they pick the menu. I thought it would be a push³ for my husband, but it turns out that⁴ I'm the one who has to discharge in order to pour gravy straight onto the dining room table!

"Susannah Foxworthy"

¹ "Pretty" means quite.

² "Bottom line" means final expectation.

³ "Push" means challenge.

⁴ "It turns out that" means in fact.

A Successful Vegetable Experiment

Our youngest daughter, who is eight, until recently lived on a very limited number of foods. I would joke that she was an experiment to see if human beings could survive on peanut butter and jelly sandwiches and apples.

I did some homework. I discovered that peanut butter is a primary ingredient in products being used to treat malnutrition worldwide. This was reassuring. I also read studies showing that children left to decide whether to eat or not will not starve themselves. They will eat enough to sustain themselves—but often at irregular intervals, sometimes over days rather than hours, and rarely in the form of “meals.” These facts gave me some perspective on my fears about my daughter’s lack of balance in her diet. But I also decided that there was reason to start thinking about getting more green stuff into it. So when we next had a vegetable for dinner, I said, “I want to talk to you about the relationship between what we like to eat and what our bodies need to stay healthy. Can we talk about that?” She agreed to.

I explained that when we’re younger, we can eat pretty much¹ anything we want and be okay, but that as we get older, our bodies need other things to continue to stay healthy and strong. I told her that different foods have different nutrients—different things our bodies need—and that eventually we have to have those things or we can become unhealthy. I said that some of them come from plants, which I’d noticed she didn’t eat. Then I asked her if she wanted to make a project out of adding vegetables to her diet.

She took this in and asked what making it a project would mean. I said that it would mean working on *eating* vegetables—not just trying them, or see-

¹ “Pretty much” means almost.

ing if she liked them, but *eating* them. I said it was possible to decide to do things—like eat vegetables—because they made sense but that we had to work at it. I proposed we try it.

She protested. I met each protest by playfully insisting what a great idea it was. We sat at the dinner table having this funny argument, both laughing a lot, about the merits of such a “project.” She argued that she didn’t want to eat vegetables, that she didn’t like them, and I enthusiastically repeated that it wasn’t about *liking*, it was about *eating*!

I had in my mind that this might be a long-term thing, one that could take many efforts over an extended period of time. I knew that it would go best if I didn’t focus on actually resolving anything but instead think of it as a chance to be together in a way that she could feel my mind pushing to partner with hers. I also wanted it to be her decision, and a chance to consider what it means to take on² something challenging, even if she never ate a vegetable in her life. I figured my “job” was to stay light, be unconcerned with progress, and watch that I didn’t say the same thing too often.

We had cauliflower that night and played at “eating” it for forty-five minutes, with a lot of laughter. At some point I had the thought that we could make a movie about our “project.” She liked that, so we used my phone to start recording our efforts. She would talk into the camera about what she was doing and then watch what she’d recorded while we laughed some more.

At some point she decided to try eating the cauliflower. My partner suggested that she try it with different “sauces” (catsup, vinegar, fish sauce).

² “Take on” means undertake.

She discovered that she liked it with fish sauce and ate a bowl of it, all the while narrating her efforts to the camera, including exhorting that cauliflower was good with fish sauce.

The experiment repeated itself each night at dinner for the next week. I spent somewhere between forty and sixty minutes each night hanging out³ with her as she worked on “eating” a different vegetable, using my attention and recording her efforts on my phone’s camera.

After five or six nights, we’d run through most of the vegetables we regularly cook—she’d eaten them all—at which point the project died out, because I’d sit down to dinner and she’d already be eating whatever vegetable was there, without anything more being said. Her attention had gone on to other things.

This project was a reminder of what a difference attention can make in what someone can consider and try. Also, thinking of it as a project about decision and challenges, instead of food and survival, made a difference in how relaxed and attentive I could be.

“Mr. Peanut Butter”

³ “Hanging out” means spending relaxed, unstructured time.



CAROL FONTEIN

Not Settling for Small Gains

*From a talk by Tim Jackins at the East Coast
North America Leaders' Workshop,
in Warwick, New York, USA, December 2014*

We work to make things better, but often we are working to make small gains. We fight to make the world around us livable, but when we were small we wanted gigantic gains. We wanted to change everything, and we thought we could. We tried to see if we could, but as the oppressive society around us came in, we lost battles and we weren't able to discharge on the defeats. We made small, good changes, but the distresses we acquired turned us in a reformist direction. We were pushing in a good direction, but it got harder and harder for us to think about a major change in the way we do everything.

We get fond of the small gains we've made, of the small protections from the worst of society, from the worst of our distresses. These become very important to us, and they are important in the sense that they are gains that we have fought for and won. But they can also confuse our perspective. They can become too dear. It can get hard for us to think of larger, more revolutionary change. Some limitation on change gets frozen in our distresses.

Could we change everything? What would we have to face and discharge to be able to change everything? We can work to make oppression less harsh, more survivable, but ultimately we need to end oppression completely. This will involve facing large challenges and changing our lives in large ways.

To do this, I think we must first take on¹ those of our distresses that have seemed too large and difficult to go after,² that we have lived with until now. We have conquered many distresses and made our lives much better and more livable. But deciding and agreeing to not accept any distress, no matter how unfaceable it seems, may be the necessary step for liberation.

¹ "Take on" means confront and do something about.

² "Go after" means pursue.

A Late-Winter Day (in 2015)

I lost a piece of my soul today.

I lost it.

And I think that only peace

Might help me find it.

Peace.

But where do I find peace?

Probably not among

The crumbled ruins

Of shortsightedness.

And probably not in the aftermath

Of those who outright refused

To look and see.

But I will find it.

I will find peace.

It's a combination

Of remembering love

And figuring out

What I truly believe.

It's a great and mighty thing, you know,

That I am in charge

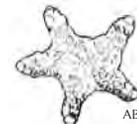
Of my own reality.

It will harbor the hope

That will guide my mind

To where my lost piece of soul

Might be.



Lori Leifer
New York, New York, USA



ROB VENDERBOS

“I Will End Generations of Cruelty”

After a year with liver cancer, my dad is going to die soon. I want to go see him. I want to tell him I love him. To thank him for raising me. To tell him I know he loves me. So I call, intent on forcing him to let me come visit.

“Dad, I want to come visit.”

He says, “No, come later, when I’m stronger. We’re too busy. Too much going on.”¹

I ignore being pushed away repeatedly, make light of² hours of travel, make him laugh. Finally I succeed, and he agrees to my first visit in twenty years.

The next morning the phone rings. It is one of my dad’s oldest friends, Peter. I knew him when I was a child. He tells me my dad has been given one week to live.

Three days later I arrive in my hometown. My husband, daughter, and I go to Peter’s house as instructed. I’ve been told this is the easiest way. That my father’s wife is too busy and too sad. Peter tells me it is a good time to visit and drives me there. I go upstairs to where my dad lies in bed. He is sleeping on and off. He has the energy to speak about one sentence before he drifts off again.

He says, “I’m glad you came.”

“Of course,” I say. “I’m so glad to be here with you. I love you. I’ve always loved you.”

“Why didn’t you come more often?”

“Dad, we’ve had so many struggles. But I love you, always have.”³

“You should have come, you were thoughtless . . .” He falls asleep before he can call me selfish, lacking in integrity, a failure of a daughter. When he wakes he has forgotten his train of thought.⁴ I sit with him for thirty minutes and then leave with Peter, who is waiting downstairs.

I’m upset about leaving my dad alone and want to wait for his wife’s return. With prodding I’m told she is waiting for me to leave. She left for my visit and will not come home until she is sure not to see me. I’m told that

my father’s wife will not see or speak to me. Everything must go through Peter. So I wait in the car around the corner. Peter calls to tell her I’m gone and waits in the house until she arrives. I never see her.

I spend some time with Peter and his wife, ask about his now grown children whom I knew when I was young. He seems puzzled by me. I don’t match what he has been told about me. He expected someone selfish, uncaring, I think. I ask to see my dad again the next day, and Peter kindly arranges for this.

There will be no funeral. No service of any kind. Dad and Martha don’t believe in them, Peter tells me.

I see my dad the next day. That night he dies, six hours before my brother arrives. With Peter’s further assistance we are admitted to the funeral parlor to see his body. We say a final goodbye and sit on the steps of the funeral home, talking about our childhood. Some things for the first time ever. My brother wants to see Martha and our half siblings. Though I have never met them, he has and feels fondly toward them. But she doesn’t answer his calls or e-mails. He calls and says he is coming. The house is empty, though clearly just.⁵ It appears they left to avoid seeing him. He is devastated.

So there we are, home together for the first time in twenty years. We visit the parents of our childhood best friends. We visit one of my best friends who still lives there. We go on a tour of all the houses we lived in. We notice what a nice town it really is. We are free of a tyranny that has been hanging over us. And we are desolate having lost our father. How do we grieve?

We were raised largely by our dad. He loved us deeply. I could see it in his eyes, hear it in his voice, every time we met. When our parents divorced and our mom left, he didn’t hesitate to raise his two young children. He came on all the school trips, played tickle monster with us, took us cross-country skiing and to the beach. He bought beautiful birthday presents and made me seven birthday cakes one year—one for each letter in my name. He cooked and cleaned. He loved to cook us meals of German sausage that I hated but he loved and so we would laugh. One time he learned to make fresh pasta. He made sure we ate something green at every dinner. Then we had ice cream. My dad loved ice cream.

¹ “Going on” means happening.

² “Make light of” means treat in a light way.

³ “Always have” means I always have.

⁴ “His train of thought” means what he was thinking about.

⁵ “Just” means just recently empty.

At the same time he was calculating, cruel, distant, controlling.

He was never mean in public, and he never yelled at or hit us. To the world we were the perfect happy family. At home it was different. When we were hurt, he accused us of lying to get attention. To teach me to throw a baseball, he berated me for an hour not to throw like a girl, gave up, and went inside. Each night at dinner he grilled⁶ us on horticulture (his love) or the times tables.⁷ When we didn't know the answers, he accused us of being lazy, unobservant, weak of character. For fun he would dare my brother and me to do dangerous things like balance on high narrow structures. If we were tired or upset, we were simply left behind.

As I matured physically, he became more cruel and his cruelty became more focused on me than my brother. I was endlessly grounded⁸ for such infractions as losing a hat. If I told him I loved him, I was insincere and plotting. If I agreed with a friend, I couldn't think for myself. If I went first in anything, I was selfish. Minute details of my life were stored up and later used in hours-long lectures on my lack of character and moral fiber.

I went through many phases of healing from and then reclaiming my dad. I cried and raged for many, many hours. First I avoided him; I couldn't stand to see him.⁹ Then I tried to talk to him, wanted him to heal with me. We would have one good talk, then the cruelty would resurface. Eventually I figured out that if I saw or spoke to him no more than once every six months, he could show love. I would, of course, become hopeful and call too soon. Then he was accusing, lecturing; I had no integrity or moral fiber. He blamed me for our distance, for the distance from his son as well. He knew, I think,

that he had hurt me too badly. He couldn't face his own cruelty, so he blamed me. How else could he go on, raise more children? He married a woman who agreed to blame me. They got married and didn't invite us. Had two children and didn't tell me. I was not allowed to meet them. All my requests for visits were avoided, ignored, or turned down on some false pretext of bad timing. When I had a child, he wanted to know her, so he would visit us alone and deflect all questions about his other family—like we were one of his affairs.

And then he got sick, and I knew it had to end.

My dad lived in a world of lies and obfuscation.¹⁰ When we were little, the only thing he taught us about World War II was that Germans in America were treated horribly. That his dad lost his job because he was German. That he himself never learned German because when they spoke German in public in New York City, people threw things at them. He was politically progressive, a self-proclaimed feminist. Yet I learned about the Holocaust when I was six from my best friend who was Jewish. I learned what a swastika was from another Jewish friend at thirteen. When one of my dad's girlfriends stormed from our house because she realized she wasn't his only girlfriend, he never spoke of it. By the time I was fifteen I could tell¹¹ when he was with a woman, having an affair. When I asked him to go to Germany to learn about family, he came home with pictures of uncles still devastated by their time in the "German Army." He never said the words Holocaust or Nazi.

And so I went to say good-bye. In our German family I will end it. His life will end with kindness and truth. I will be human. I will be female. I will show love. In this family line I will end generations of *cruelty* that made Nazis.

On my final visit my dad is much weaker. I sit with him, hold his hand.

I say, "I love you. Good-bye."

He says, "I'll have you in my mind as I go."

It's all I needed to say and to hear. Tears run down my cheeks. He can't speak more. His breath is loud and deep. A death-rattle breath. His face drawn and yellow with jaundice. I would stay, but sitting with him is not my vigil, and as long as I am there his wife and younger children stay away. So I go. I thank Peter.

Anonymous

⁶ "Grilled" means intensely questioned.

⁷ "Times tables" are tables used as an aid in memorization that list the products of certain numbers multiplied together.

⁸ "Grounded" means restricted to staying in the house.

⁹ "Couldn't stand to see him" means couldn't tolerate seeing him.



LYNDALL KATZ

¹⁰ "Obfuscation" means hiding of the truth.

¹¹ "Tell" means perceive.

Claiming Our Full, Common Humanity

The Family Life Workshop, led by Louisa Flander,¹ in Melbourne (Victoria, Australia), gave me more appreciation for my decision not to have children. The allies' class helped me see that society pits parents and non-parents against one another. We are all good. And it's good to have a place to say, in detail, how we are treated differently. My mind really engaged with the idea that if I claim my whole humanity and my full capacity to love, then I am taking a stand against the oppressive society.

Vicky Grosser
Geelong, Victoria, Australia



"People are not their patterns." What does that mean to me? It means that all the patterns I struggle with I can escape from. Some of them have come from individual hurts and some from oppression. It doesn't matter where they've come from; I am not beholden to them. For example, I could give up being defensive!

Dennis Wollersheim
Rosanna, Victoria, Australia



We were reminded, in the context of male domination and sexism, that men are not bad and women are not bad. We are not our distresses. The problem is with the oppressive society. My highlight was the flash of

¹ Louisa Flander is the Area Reference Person for the Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, RC Community.



VILLASANA DE MENA, BURGOS, BASQUE COUNTRY • JUAN MANUEL FEITO

understanding that, equally, Gentiles are not bad and Jews are not bad; white people are not bad and people of the global majority are not bad. In that moment I could see how much I still believe that we are to blame in each of our roles. Suddenly, in a flash, the whole world looked different and I could see our common humanity. How relaxing, joyous, and easeful.

Karen Rosauer
Melbourne, Victoria, Australia



The workshop gave me a chance to learn anew the basic and beautiful idea that is Co-Counseling. As client I can put my mind on the person who is with me paying attention to me. I can use my intelligence to discharge on my early life, with the clear knowledge that I have a rich and interesting present and, despite the hurts, a rich and interesting past. Many people were available to me in the past. I can discharge by remembering that, and noticing my own power and connection over time despite the oppressive society. I want my brain, my flexible thinking. I can get it by showing up² in my sessions and noticing I am not

² "Showing up" means really being present.

alone now. As counselor, I can show up and be with my clients.

Victoria Kemp
Thornbury, Victoria, Australia



Now that I know that I am not my patterns, and that I have a group of people who know me deeply and remember that I am not my patterns, I can love myself

with more abandon; I can be completely forgiven for my difficulties; I can discharge my distresses with something like the spontaneity and resilience of a young baby; and I have the freedom to be part of the human party, with renewed joy and compassion.

Giving special time³ has always been a useful reminder of the goodness and blamelessness of people. Providing intelligent attention gives people the space to play their way free of the distresses they carry. Young people who grow in an environment in which they get this kind of attention can be unburdened of the guilt and the habit of blaming that has retarded my own progress.

Stephen Costello
Thornbury, Victoria, Australia

³ "Special time" is an activity, developed in RC family work, during which an adult puts a young person in full charge of their mutual relationship, as far as the young person can think. For a specific period of time, the adult lets the young person know that he or she is willing to do anything the young person wants to do. The adult focuses his or her entire attention on the young person and follows his or her lead, whether the young person tells, or simply shows, the adult what she or he wants to do. Adults can also give "special time" to each other, following these general guidelines.

Two ideas stand out:

- It's important to take a stand of seeing the complete humanity, intelligence, and lovingness of every person of every identity. Re-evaluation Counseling theory is clear that identities are not basic reality, but if everyone agrees with the oppressive society that they are, then they get seen that way. If we insist on the humanity within every person of every identity, it changes everything and we are using our whole minds. What an awesome and fun way to push back against oppression.

- The role of grandparents around grandchildren is to be the person with whom they get to have fun (This idea came from Dottie Curry.⁴) I do not have children, so I will not get to be a grandparent. But I do get to hang out⁵ with young people, and the idea that my role is to be the person they get to have fun with is an exciting shift. It will push me out of the "job" of being an

⁴ Dottie Curry was an International Liberation Reference Person for Elders. She died on March 10, 2012.

⁵ "Hang out" means spend relaxed, unstructured time.

ally into being completely human with every young person in my life.

Anne Barton
Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

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



ALAN SPRUNG

To Act Logically

To act logically requires assuming full responsibility; seizing and keeping the initiative at all times; playing an active, leading role; and accepting that the rewards of a rational effort are usually proportional to the difficulty of that effort.

All human beings need to follow their own logic in all their actions *all* the time. Feelings will be felt, but need not ever be used as guides to action. If our "feelings" happen to concur with our logic, fine. If they happen to oppose it and we act on our logic, then we will certainly feel our feelings but we will just as certainly discharge them and be free of them, without letting them guide us in the process.

*Harvey Jackins**
From pages 81 to 84
of *The Human Situation*

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



INDIA • DIANE SHISK

Mailing Address for Rational Island Publishers

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

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Thank you in advance for your kind cooperation!

Rational Island Publishers



I just returned from the second Sunrise Center¹ workshop, excited and hopeful about what we can do together as a group of smart, loving, cooperative humans.

Janet Foner² led us brilliantly, relaxedly, confidently, and with good humor. She talked about the history of the Sunrise Center, and those of us on the board spoke about how working on this project has been re-emergent. It has made me feel more hopeful about having a future society in which people actively care about each other. I've also enjoyed using my mind and working together on something that is so important and challenging, in part because it has never been done before.

For the first time, two people came who were in the process of getting off psychiatric drugs. They were each assigned one of the Sunrise Center board members or fundraisers as a buddy to support them and their support team. The teams met together several times, including with Janet. And a class about building support and getting help was good for all of us.

Everyone has a drug story and needs to discharge about it. We have all been numbed and emotionally shut down as part of living in an oppressive society. Our drug stories can be about psychiatric drugs, street drugs, anesthesia or other medical drugs, nicotine, alcohol, caffeine. At the workshop I had many sessions on my drug history. I was motivated to do so in spite of feeling scared and embarrassed. I think this work will help me be more visible and connected.

There is never anything wrong with people who are on psychiatric drugs, and they are never to blame for the choices they have made. Many of us were forced to take psychiatric drugs, or were in circumstances in which we had no other choice.

¹ The Sunrise Center will be a residential drug-free recovery center based on Re-evaluation Counseling theory and practice. It will help people to free themselves from psychiatric drugs and will teach others to assist in this. Residents will be active partners in their recovery, in collaboration with the staff. It is expected that residents, after discontinuing the drugs, will go on to reclaim full use of the tools of RC and to lead rewarding lives. Before the center is established, the project is offering a series of workshops open to RCers who want to stop using psychiatric drugs or help others to do the same.

² Janet Foner is the International Liberation Reference Person for "Mental Health" Liberation.

We live in a world in which we are taught the myth that some people are okay and others "need to be fixed." It is a lie that people need psychiatric drugs. (Many have successfully gotten off them, including people who have been taking them for over twenty years.) They don't "fix" us, because we don't need to be "fixed." They only slow down or stop discharge. And they don't create resource. Resource is being connected to others, receiving attention, and being able to discharge our hurts.

We get to say, "You can stop using psychiatric drugs. It can be done. It may be a big struggle, but it is completely possible to succeed. If you have been on drugs for a while, you can't know what your mind will be like off of them until you stop taking them." However, people get to make their own choices. We can back³ them whatever they decide and keep holding out, without any pressure, the possibility of their getting off the drugs.

People can discharge about the events that happened just before taking the drugs that led to their taking them. What was happening then? When did they feel like they "needed to be fixed"? They can discharge on any early hurts that made them feel like they needed the drugs. All this is the material⁴ that will come back up when they stop taking them. People can also work on any fears about what might happen when they stop the drugs.

People who support people to stop taking psychiatric drugs are often excited to help, because it is good for them, too. They get to feel more powerful by helping someone. They get to have lots of sessions about their own drug stories and re-emerge in that area. They get to connect with other people who are excited and hopeful about this powerful revolution we are making. We are not just creating a specific place (the Sunrise Center), we are also building a community—and it is starting out so well!

Joan MacKenzie

Asheville, North Carolina, USA

Reprinted from the RC e-mail discussion list
for leaders of "mental health" liberation

³ "Back" means support.

⁴ "Material" means distress.



Flexible Application of Theory

We stress at every turn¹ that there is no rigidity to the application of theory,² that the basic principles have to be applied flexibly and differently in every session.

Harvey Jackins

From page 178 of
The Human Situation

¹ "At every turn" means continually.

² RC theory



CARLA HINOJOSA

If you move . . .

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

Thank you!

Rational Island Publishers

Taking a Stand Against Psychiatric Drugs

Recently I attended the second Sunrise Center¹ project workshop.

I'm a physician who has been working for many years in an urban setting with young people from low-income households. When I started practicing as a young adult, I decided that I wouldn't prescribe psychiatric drugs to any of my patients. About thirty physicians who have worked with me over the ensuing twenty-five years have followed my lead, making the same decision. We have done this quietly, passing under the radar.² It is not considered "standard of care" in the present medical environment.

At the workshop I worked on being an agent of oppression who is trying to reform the system instead of revolutionizing it. "Mental health" oppression contributes to keeping me "in line" with the system.

I've been trained to not show any feelings. In the rare instance when I have, reprisal from the administration has been quick. I've been threatened with the idea that perhaps I'm unable to perform my duties in the professional manner that my position calls for. My struggle at work has always been for people to see me as a human being and not a machine.

I work under impossible conditions—seeing sixteen to twenty-four patients daily, listening to difficult stories without getting any discharge, having minimal time for lunch and bathroom and water breaks. I'm expected to provide the best possible medical care in the least amount of time, in the most cost-effective way for the system, staying within the boundaries of the "standard of care" so I don't get sued by a patient or have my license revoked by the corresponding authorities. I'm chronically overwhelmed, exhausted, and scared.

At this workshop I decided to make "mental health" liberation a key issue in my RC Community, in which there are many other Co-Counselors in middle-agent roles (teachers, social workers, and other health-care providers). I'm taking a more visible stand against "mental health" oppression and the use of psychiatric drugs, and discharging the terror that comes up as I do so.

Anonymous

Reprinted from the RC e-mail discussion list for leaders of "mental health" liberation

¹ The Sunrise Center will be a residential drug-free recovery center based on Re-evaluation Counseling theory and practice. It will assist people to free themselves from psychiatric drugs and to teach others to do the same. Through the intensive use of RC, residents will get help with the symptoms of withdrawal as well as the emotional feelings that resurface as the drugs leave their system. They will be active partners in this endeavor, in collaboration with the staff. The goal will be for residents to get off the drugs safely, to return home in charge of their emotions and able to use the tools of RC, and to have a support system waiting for them.

² "Passing under the radar" means not being detected.

Hearing Assistive Devices

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

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

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

Can also be used for interpreting:

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

Organizers of events may rent Hearing Helpers for \$60 (U.S.). A standard set includes a microphone and transmitter, and receivers with headsets to serve four to eight people. For an additional fee and depending on availability, additional receivers with headsets may be added to accommodate more people.

Due to increased demand, we encourage organizers who wish to rent this equipment to notify us at RCCR a minimum of three weeks before the event (earlier requests are given priority). The equipment must be returned to RCCR the day after your event so that it will be available to others.

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

Re-evaluation Counseling Community Resources



DAVID WALLACE

A Great Way to Use Our Hearts and Minds

Seventeen years ago, before I was a parent myself, I decided to back¹ a young person for life.² My best friend, Lisa, was pregnant with a girl, Raina. I asked her if I could be at the birth and if she would let me be this young person's ally for the rest of my life. My best friend knew some Co-Counseling and was eager to have another adult back her second child.

I was there for Raina's birth. It remains a highlight of my life. And immediately after she was born I started giving her weekly sessions. Nothing formal. When she was really little and her mom was gone, I would let her wail in my arms.

Later when she was two and couldn't get her trike up the stair and begged me to do it for her, I watched and waited and let her cry as she pushed the trike up the stair herself. As the years passed by, we did many things together. We made messes. We did art. We played games. But mostly I was there for her and put my mind in her direction. Today that little girl is a high school senior who will be off³ to college soon.

The whole time Raina was a young person, I would attend RC family workshops as an ally and get huge sessions about how much I loved her and what hanging out⁴ with her did for me. Hanging out with a little girl and deciding to back her also hauled up huge places where I'd gotten stopped as a female. So the relationship I had with her was moving my own re-emergence forward.

She also provoked material for my art. By backing a young person, I started to want more—more for myself,

more for everyone, and more for the world. This transferred directly into what I wrote and created. I really wanted the future to be right. I also started caring more about the natural world.

So often people feel that when they are with a little person, they are doing it for the young person or his or her family. As Co-Counselors we often think that we should do it because it is the right thing to do. However, backing a young person will also high-speed our own re-emergence. As we grow up, we bury our childhood hurts. We try to bring them up in Co-Counseling sessions, but when we are around a little one this happens automatically. It is also different than being a parent, because we don't have the parents' oppression.

I couldn't be consistent weekly with Raina for all of her first seventeen years. Life happened. I had to tour and move around for my work. She started to have soccer practice. I had twins and was suddenly in charge of backing my two little children as Mom.

But I was always there at least once a season and took her out for her birthday every year. What I realized as we both aged was that it wasn't the quantity of time I spent with her, it was the quality of it. I also realized that even if she didn't see me for a month or two, she still had the expectation that I would be there, that I was thinking about her, that I would back her. So she could truly be herself around me, even when the male domination started to come at her. And again, when I saw some of the places she struggled as a teen, I got to have huge sessions myself.



FRED KELLER

During our time together I also created a book. I wrote about her development—the day of her birth, her first-grade performance, the times we went to get burgers and hung out in the backyard—and about her mom and dad. I filled it with poems, photos, and her finger paintings. Later I included liberation poems.

Before I gave her the book, on the night of her Catholic confirmation,⁵ I started to cry. I had thought that the gift was for her. And it was. But as I looked over the pages and pages of our time together, I realized that this project was mostly for me. I thought about the sessions I got to have, the closeness I got to feel, and the joy of knowing someone over time who wasn't a child of my own.

I also don't think I could be as good of a mom right now if I hadn't had that experience of being an ally to Raina. Because I was an ally, I knew how to give sessions to young folks and not take things so personally. Being an ally before being a mom also made me realize that yes, I did want the job of a parent.

I think that if we fall in love with a child and decide to back family work and young people, something happens with our own life much faster and more fiercely. How could we not want all newly born humans to see the same beaches that we did? How could we not want to eliminate sexism? How could we not want everything for their future and for ourselves? We don't all want the job of a parent. That's fine. But backing a young person and seeing it through is a great way to use our hearts and minds.

Jennifer Berry
Glendale, California, USA

⁵ A Catholic confirmation is a rite in which a baptized person's Christian faith is confirmed.

¹ "Back" means support.

² "For life" means for my whole life.

³ "Off" means going.

⁴ "Hanging out" means spending relaxed, unstructured time.

Response to a Suicide

A young adult woman who had participated in RC classes and a support group in my Region* for several years, but had stopped her participation about two years ago, recently committed suicide. I was asked to share some thoughts toward an RC perspective on the situation, and I wrote the following. I'd be interested to hear how others of you have dealt with suicide, and any thoughts you have about useful perspectives.

When someone we know dies, it is always a loss. It is both real in present time and restimulates other deaths and losses. We get to remember good times with the person, our love for him or her, what we treasured about him or her; and we get to grieve the loss. We don't actually lose any of the good times, connection, and memories. Those are ours forever. What we lose is any additional connecting, sharing, and being together.

It can be even more restimulating and confusing when someone ends his or her own life. We live in an oppressive society—one that hurts people deeply and then keeps the hurts constantly restimulated—and this is always the cause of suicide. Suicide is never the fault of the person who ends his or her life, or of the person's family, friends, counselors, or associates.

Those of us who knew the person may feel pulled to blame ourselves or to think that if we had only done more, maybe he or she would still be alive. We may need to discharge on that, but we shouldn't accept such a perspective as appropriate or accurate. It is a mistake for any of us to take responsibility for the completed actions of others. Doing so colludes with the forces of oppression that want us to feel bad about ourselves. Liberation, for ourselves and others, lies in the opposite direction.

Some of us may feel pulled to think that the person who committed suicide was always deeply unhappy; that any love we expressed to or received from him or her wasn't real; that there was something lacking in the good times or closeness we had. This is not the case. Suicide is a big mistake someone makes in the midst of distress at a moment in time. It does not invalidate the joy, the closeness, the love that we and that person experienced together. We get to trust what we felt during the good times, treasure the connection we had, and be grateful that we got to bring some light into each other's lives, no matter how great the person's struggles were.

Russ Vernon-Jones
Amherst, Massachusetts, USA
Reprinted from the e-mail
discussion list for RC teachers

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

Shaking— the Best Way to Keep Thinking

It's occurred to me many times that the best way to keep thinking is to shake. I saw it in a demonstration with Harvey¹ recently on a DVD and was pleasantly reminded.

Since I woke up this morning at 4:00, I've been trying it. It's been fun! It reminds me of the way Harvey talked about understatement²—that people can discharge on their own and think through things and skip through their day with their attention off distress by reciting an understatement to themselves. I've been continually shaking for the past half an hour and just feeling lighter and lighter. I'm pleased to have my sense of humor back. I'm getting closer and closer to feeling safe. Shaking really does remove terror, whether it *seems* useful to me or not.

I suppose the terror will guard itself from being discharged and trick me into thinking that shaking is not helpful. But ha ha! Who has the last laugh?! Not terror. Ha ha!

Benjamin Altman
Flushing, New York, USA

¹ Harvey Jackins

² An understatement is a subtle way of contradicting distress that often works better than a more direct approach. For example, instead of saying, "I'm liked," or "People like me," someone could say, "It sometimes happens that someone likes somebody."

The Key Job in Promoting Learning

A human being functioning in a human manner is continuously eager for new information, new insights, new experiences, new skills. Permitting this inherent attitude to operate is the key job in the promotion of learning.

Harvey Jackins
From page 115 of *The Human Situation*

Working on Early Sexual Memories

The following are some reflections on a recent *Early Sexual Memories*¹ Workshop, led by Tony Smith, in Melbourne, Victoria, Australia.

With this topic, it may not work to charge into things head-on.² I found it worked best to sneak up on them from various angles. And some things that seemed tiny and unrelated to begin with opened up to memories with lots to discharge about.

In a lunchtime topic group for Catholics, we thought about what was good about being raised Catholic in relation to sex and sexuality. Things I learned from being Catholic that I think are useful are that it is important to have absolute respect for other people (exploitation is definitely not okay) and that self-control and abstinence (even though they can be too rigidly applied) are useful in this area. We are not just driven by instinct; we can use our minds to decide.

Damien Cook
Fryers Town, Victoria, Australia

¹ "Early sexual memories" refers to the first memories that come to a client's mind when he or she is asked, "What is your earliest memory connected to sex in any way at all?" The memories are often not about sex, and discharging on them not only clears up distresses related to sex but also improves other aspects of a person's life, such as his or her ability to be connected and close in non-sexual ways.

² "Head-on" means in a very direct way.

Because these hurts went in before our adult sexuality developed, they can get attached to our ability to connect with another human in all manner of ways.

Yehudit Koadlow
Caulfield, Victoria, Australia

Not saying very much and then putting my mind just to the edge of the memories was all I needed to do to bring lots of discharge.

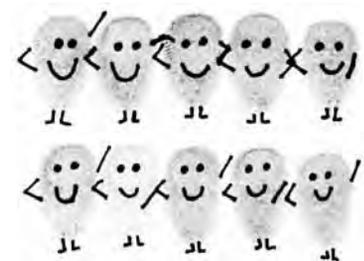
Simon
Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

For me, this workshop was a chance to discharge early terror and isolation. I could also see how sexism and male domination have determined my identity.

Victoria Kemp
Thornbury, Victoria, Australia

Amid play and laughter, we all moved, and things happened. Quotes on the walls of the meeting room were a sweet and loving course correction every time I noticed and read them. There was a sweet and loving tone to the whole weekend. It was a powerful contradiction to any sense that our discharge had to be hard work or harsh in any way. The pureness of the theory, applied to practice, made giant strides possible.

Anne Barton
Melbourne, Victoria, Australia



ROB VENDERBOS

If we systematically clean up our early hurts and confusions related to physical closeness, we can stay really close and connected, powerful and human. If we aren't able to keep close and connected, we are vulnerable to being exploited or exploiting others in a system that continues to profit from distress.

Christine Marnane
Kew, Victoria, Australia

A male Co-Counselor said that he'd noticed how hard it was for women to decide to go to the workshop. I thought, "Yes, of course!"—in this male-dominated society in which sexual distress is hyped up, directed at us women, and used to exploit humans and support an oppressive system.

"Sex is not important." What a contradiction!³ I know this but have felt alone with the perspective and especially separated from men. It was a relief to hear it said by a man.

Rachel Steinmann
Brunswick, Victoria, Australia

Early sexual memories aren't a special or separate issue. They are connected to everything in my world. When we discharged on the RC goal for care of the environment, on white racism, and in the early morning women's groups, I could tell⁴ how strongly all our

continued . . .



SORRENTO, ITALY • RACHEL KIEFFER

³ Contradiction to distress

⁴ "Tell" means see.



VARANASI, INDIA • LYNNE SHIVERS

... continued

early distress is interconnected. I now feel more able to look around me and face the persistent ways that society is trying to distract me by restimulating my early sexual hurts. With continued discharge, I can instead keep developing closer and more powerful relationships in all areas of my life.

Vicky Grosser
Geelong, Victoria, Australia

Human closeness is a real need of mine, and of all humans. As a very young person, I didn't get some of the closeness or discharge I needed when I felt isolated. Then the undischarged feelings attached to me, along with feelings of urgency and desperation.

In the past I thought that working on early sexual memories was about sex. I learned that it is about human connection and closeness.

Cynthia Johnston
Frankston, Victoria, Australia

This weekend I was reminded of the joys of having a go at⁵ leadership. I experienced how helpful it can be to put my hand up to lead something when asked. Whatever the size of the job, just stepping up and doing it sheds light on how I function in the world and helps me to develop and expand my thinking in an area.

Another side to saying yes to leading is supporting other leaders. Much about late capitalism has us approaching others only as people we agree with or want to fight with. In supporting others, I can enjoy seeing them step up, too; change and develop their

⁵ "Having a go at" means trying.

thinking; and shine their own light on all things.

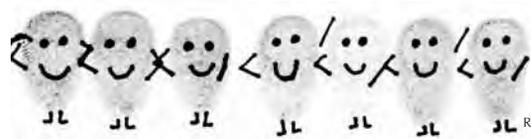
Lisa Rasmussen
Northcote, Victoria, Australia

What became clear to me during the workshop was how literal recordings are. Pretty much⁶ everything I thought and felt was directly related to my early sexual memory. This included feelings of being trapped, wanting to go home, wanting to go to sleep, and not believing that anyone was there for me. Physical symptoms were also part of the recording.

Jo Perry
Sydney, New South Wales, Australia

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

⁶ "Pretty much" means almost.



A Victorious Teaching Moment

The following is a victorious teaching moment with a fifth grader (whom I will call Bobby and who generally has a few challenges):

After I described how to hold a floor-hockey stick:

Bobby: "Ms. Green, that has 'impossible' written all over it."

Me: "Well, Bobby, you have, 'I can do the impossible' written all over you." (It worked—he was off¹ with the stick.)

Then, the next challenge with stick handling—introducing a ball to the handle:

Bobby: "Ms. Green, that has 'hard' written all over it."

Me: "Bobby, you have 'I can do something really hard' written all over you."

And he was off. He had a blast.²



Laurel Green
(Physical education teacher
for fourth and fifth grades)
Windsor, California, USA

¹ "Was off" means went away.

² "A blast" means a lot of fun.

Considering Separation

Dear Mothers,

I am struggling in my relationship with my daughter's father (my husband) and considering separating and perhaps heading toward divorce. I would like to hear from any of you who have separated or divorced about how you told your children about the struggles and how you decided what was most re-emergent for you and your children.

If you ended up divorced, how did you help your children through that? What did you notice about the impacts on them as compared to the impacts you saw while you were still married but in conflict, unhappy, not modeling close, loving, connected partnership?

How did you battle the sexism and male domination in your marriage? What determined whether you stayed or left?

Do you have any thoughts on what is appropriate to tell children at different ages?

Thanks so much.

U.S. White Mom

Reprinted from the RC e-mail discussion lists
for leaders of parents and for leaders of women

Discharge

Discharge seems to occur well and profoundly only in the company of another human, and the differences in ability to discharge depend on how much that human is really present.

Harvey Jackins
From page 26 of
The Human Situation



New from Rational Island Publishers



נוסח עברי להנחיות 2013

התרגום לעברית של ההנחיות החדשות לקהילות הייעוץ ההדדי להערכה מחדש יצא לאור!

תרגום ההנחיות לעברית הוא פרי עבודתם, סבלנותם וכישוריהם של יועצים רבים שהשקיעו בכך מאמץ, זמן, מחשבה ופורקן. זה היה פרוייקט מרגש ומתגמל.

קובץ ההנחיות מנחה את עבודת קהילות הייעוץ. זוהי קריאת חובה לכל יועצת ויועץ המבקשים להבין לעומק את הפרוייקט המופלא שלנו.

לרכישת הקובץ, שמחירו 30 ₪ (לא כולל הוצאות משלוח) נא לפנות לנעמי רז בדוא"ל naomi@reform.org.il או naomi@razei-habruit.com

The Hebrew Guidelines

The Hebrew 2013 *Guidelines for the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities* are here! They were created through the efforts, time, thinking, discharge, and patience of many Co-Counselors and have been an exciting and satisfying project.

The *Guidelines* guide the work of the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities. They are a must-read for all Co-Counselors who would like to fully understand our wonderful project.

You can order the Hebrew *Guidelines* from Rational Island Publishers (see page 110).

You can also order them from Naomi Raz, in Israel, at [<naomi@reform.org.il>](mailto:naomi@reform.org.il) or [<naomi@razei-habruit.com>](mailto:naomi@razei-habruit.com).

\$7.00 U.S., or NIS* 30, plus postage and handling

*NIS stands for New Israel Shekel, the currency of the State of Israel.

A new pamphlet! *The Owing Class*

We must end class oppression if we are to achieve a rational society and a livable planet. Jo Saunders, the International Liberation Reference Person for Owing-Class People, expands our perspective in her new pamphlet, *The Owing Class*.

She describes the damage inflicted by the owning class, how owning-class people were hurt into playing a destructive role, how they can recover their full humanness using Re-evaluation Counseling, and more.

"All humans without the accrued effects of past unhealed distresses have a strong desire to set things right. The owning class is no exception."

As for the future, "It will be the working class, reclaiming its power, that will bring about real change. The role of the owning class needs to be divestiture, reparation, and restitution. These two forces will spell the end of capitalism."

Available now from Rational Island Publishers

\$3.00 (plus postage and handling)

Ordering information on page 110



DIANE SHISK

Area Reference Persons of the Global Majority

In March of this year, twenty-four RC leaders of the global majority, from all over the United States, gathered in Chicago (Illinois, USA). We were led by Alysia Tate, the Regional Reference Person for Illinois, and hosted by the Chicago and Suburbs #2 Area,¹ which most of us were familiar with either directly or by having read Alysia's *Present Time* article "Building an RC Community with People of Color at the Center."² We met in a building that had once belonged to an insurance company and had been repurposed to a community center based on principles of social, ecological, and economic sustainability. It was a twenty-minute walk from Lake Michigan.

That we were in such a rational use of space, hosted by a strong RC Community that had figured out to put people of the global majority at the center, led by a strong woman of the global majority, surrounded by views of Lake Michigan, in a room with walls covered with beautiful African fabrics was among the many contradictions³ that allowed us to discharge our early hurts, joyfully and persistently, as well as work on the nuts and bolts⁴ of leading in RC as people of the global majority.

Alysia had us begin by noticing that our goodness has nothing to do with⁵ what we do. She reminded us

that noticing that we are good and precious challenges the messages of racism and all the oppressions that make us doubt our thinking and not put ourselves in the center. She also reminded us of the goodness of our white allies, that we all need people outside of our distress, and that we get to keep fighting to build authentic relationships with our allies.

She had us work on our feelings about assimilating to white middle-class U.S. patterns. To lead as people of the global majority, we need to discharge the hurts of assimilation. She challenged us to show as much of ourselves as we could during the workshop, to work on our most unbearable material,⁶ and to not consider anything trivial or jump over⁷ anything. We need to know and show our real selves and face feelings of terror and humiliation so that we can do our own thinking.

Alysia talked about the difference between the state of capitalism when RC was first built and the state of it now, and how the harshness of current conditions affects people of the global majority, and leading as people of the global majority. To build an RC Community with people of the global majority at the center, we need to discharge the effects of the current state of capitalism on us as leaders.

Maritza Arrastia

Brooklyn, New York, USA

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

¹ An Area is a local RC Community.

² See the April 2007 *Present Time*.

³ Contradictions to distress

⁴ "Nuts and bolts" means practical aspects.

⁵ "Nothing to do with" means no relationship to.

⁶ "Material" means distress.

⁷ "Jump over" means ignore, omit.

The Effort That Has Gone the Farthest

Through accidental good fortune to begin with and through determined persistence after that, there is now an ongoing effort, under the name of Re-evaluation Counseling, to clear out the unreality and get ourselves together on the basis of a better and better approximation of the real reality underneath the (pseudo-reality) clutter.

Re-evaluation Counseling isn't the only effort in this direction. Every intelligent writer tries to say something toward this end. If you look at almost any religion, you'll see some kind of effort being made in this direction. But the effort that has gone the farthest, and that involves more different kinds of people, is the one we call Re-evaluation Counseling. We started with nothing but the accidental revelation that people thought better after they cried a lot. We've learned a great deal beyond that by now.

Harvey Jackins

From page 13 of *A Better World*

We Get to Have This Project, and Lead as Ourselves

I want to report on the first-ever Area Reference Persons (ARPs) of the (racial) Global Majority Workshop.¹

One thing that resonated with me was the extent to which all of us were able to take up space, assume centrality, lead each other, and put out our thinking. It seemed clear that without racism as a distraction, a lot was possible. Folks whom I'd never seen do it at mixed workshops were calling groups and leading discussions and being talkative.

We were evenly split into three groups: experienced ARPs, new ARPs, and folks on track to become ARPs in the next period. Each of these groups did a panel and shared what it had been like so far, challenges, and so on.

¹ A workshop led by Alysia Tate, in Chicago, Illinois, USA, in March of this year

I got a picture of how different RC Communities are in different sections of the United States and thus how different the racism and internalized racism look. It means something different to be a person of color referencing in a majority-white RC Community in one part of the United States versus in a more mixed RC Community somewhere else versus in a very small Community.

Alysia was honest about what we get to figure out in working with white people who have patterns of racism while also being some of our most important allies. She talked about openly caring in those relationships and having fights.

She had us notice and discharge on just how good we each are and how that has to be the basis that we operate from. I could see that all of our

experiences—good and hard—of using RC are important in deepening our understanding of the tool and thus being able to lead.

It was clear that Alysia had built relationships, long-term and deep, with many people at the workshop, and there was a way she could be herself that seemed to feel accessible for everyone. My biggest takeaway² was that we get to really have this project and lead authentically as ourselves.

On the new ARPs panel, I worked on how much I like being the one in charge. I could laugh a lot about that—probably because under racism white people are always in charge. As a black female, I have had to pretend that I don't want to be big and use my mind. So far I have liked getting to push my mind and reference my new Area. I have been blown away³ by the early material⁴ I can access by really being in charge.

We Need Them and They Need Us

I recently attended the first-ever Area Reference Persons of the Global Majority Workshop.¹ I was pleased by the diversity not only of backgrounds but also of experience—some of us being very experienced and others new to the role.

One thing I came away with was a renewed appreciation for the role of allies. Our leader, Alysia Tate,² talked about her Co-Counselor Jim Oleson and how he backed³ her as her closest ally. No matter how hard things got for Alysia as a leader of African-heritage Co-Counselors, he never gave up in offering counseling and support and never believed her discouragement. There seemed to be no limits when it came to Jim backing her leadership. I was reminded of the role that allies have played in my leadership and how much our commitment to each other's re-emergence has meant to me. In summary, we need them and they need us as well.



Bob Gomez
Area Reference Person for
Northeast Berkeley, California, USA
Berkeley, California, USA
Reprinted from the e-mail discussion
list for RC Community members

¹ A workshop held in Chicago, Illinois, USA, in March of this year

² Alysia Tate is the Regional Reference Person for Illinois, USA.

³ "Backed" means supported.

I feel lucky that the workshop happened so close to when I took on⁵ the role of ARP. We picked three-way groups—that included one person in each stage of being an ARP (experienced, up-and-coming,⁶ and new)—to be in touch with after the workshop. It is nice to have that group, and the whole workshop, in my mind moving forward.

Tokumbo Bodunde
Area Reference Person for the
Crown Heights-Lefferts Gardens,
New York, USA, RC Community
Brooklyn, New York, USA

Reprinted from the RC e-mail discussion
list for leaders of African-heritage people

² "Takeaway" means thing I took home with me.

³ "Blown away" means amazed.

⁴ "Material" means distress.

⁵ "Took on" means assumed.

⁶ "Up-and-coming" means becoming.

A Group Moving Forward Together

What a wonderfully mixed group of twenty-four people attended the recent Area Reference Persons of the Global Majority Workshop.¹ We were African heritage, Asian heritage, Chicana/o, Indigenous heritage, and all kinds of mixed heritage. We were from different class backgrounds and religious heritages. We were Gay and straight. We ranged in age from our thirties to our sixties. Some of us were from large urban RC Communities; others of us were from smaller, more rural Communities. We came from the northern, southern, western, and eastern parts of the United States.

It was wonderful to notice how visible, vocal, and central people could be at this workshop compared to at other workshops we have attended together. This was partly because of the absence of white people. But the fact that many key experienced leaders of the global majority were *not* at this workshop also seemed to create the conditions for people to take up much more space than they normally would.

Because of people's level of attention and experience, we were able to do a lot of things as a whole group. We could talk together about the role of an Area² Reference Person (ARP)—what it is, and what it is not—and the role of a Regional³ Reference Person. We could very openly raise topics that we have wrestled with, for example, Trans⁴ people, referencing white people, and the new initiative on classism.⁵ People seemed to learn a lot from each other's experiences.

We built a lovely sense of community. No one was left on his or her own. One person, who was also facing major health issues, had had his house burn down

¹ A workshop led by the author of this article, Alysia Tate, in Chicago, Illinois, USA, in March of this year

² An Area is a local RC Community.

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

⁴ Transgender

⁵ See "A New Initiative on Ending Classism," by Dan Nickerson, the International Liberation Reference Person for Working-Class People, on pages 8 to 9 of the July 2014 *Present Time*.

the day before the workshop. We all pulled together to offer lots of resource and support, including making sure he had clothes to wear and take home.

It was nice that the workshop ended up being one-third experienced ARPs, one-third new ARPs, and one-third up-and-coming ARPs. They all enjoyed being reference points for each other from these different perspectives.

Everything seemed to be an important contradiction to the isolation that people, particularly people of the global majority, can feel in the role of ARP. Even those from Communities with lots of other global majority people found it useful to be in communication with others facing similar challenges and to get out of their home Communities to do this. I think everyone left with a sense that they could—that they must—totally be themselves in this job, that this is the only way it will work, that they must follow their own minds.

My regular Co-Counselor and key white ally, Jim Oleson, nearly died the weekend of the workshop (he died the following weekend), and I knew I couldn't lead without acknowledging him. I talked and cried about letting ourselves love white people, and letting them love and reference us, too.

We could see that we are the product of a particular era in which the RC Communities were built and that new things are needed now to build RC in the next period. It seemed useful to work on capitalism and money. We will have much more work to do on those issues to keep thinking and building RC for the foreseeable future.

I think this workshop was the beginning of a group that really wants to move forward together. It is exciting to see.



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

Do at Least as Much as I Have Done

I would propose to each of you that you do at least as much as I have done so far. Beginning as an individual, without financial resources or outside approval, I have enlisted enough people in re-emergence to clear the pseudo-reality away from a lot of the reality of the world.

Harvey Jackins
From pages 218 to 219
of *The Reclaiming of Power*



RIVER CLEDDAU, WALES • ELENA MOSES

Using RC Literature

The following song is based on the Beatles' song "Yesterday." It uses the same tune and has some lyrics in common. I wrote it at an RC workshop, and a group of us sang it during the creativity time.

Life Today

Yesterday,
I thought my sorrows were all here
to stay.

Now I'm living for today.
Oh, I believe in Life Today.

Suddenly,
Distress ain't half of what it used to be.
No more shadow hanging over me.
Clearing skies came suddenly.

Why the tears now flow,
Now I know,
Now I can say.
I feel I've grown strong,
No need to long
For yesterday.

Yesterday,
Love just seemed to stay away.
Now I'm feeling love every day.
Oh, I believe in Life Today.

Steve Cloud Morse
Oakland, California, USA

I am responding to Diane Shisk's¹ e-mail asking us to think and discharge about making RC literature available and accessible to our students.

Last fall my Area² Reference Person asked me to lead an ongoing class. The Area has supported his proposal to focus on two things as an Area: (1) connection, and (2) completely discharging oppressor material.³ I decided that those would be good themes to plan the class around.

The literature that everyone in my class gets as part of their class fee is the *Fundamentals Teaching Guide and Class Outline (Liberation)—Part II*,⁴ the *Guidelines*,⁵ and a one-year subscription to *Present Time*. As part of my effort to help the class members get better connected and be able to counsel each other, every other week we give one person in the class a twenty-minute session in front of the class and then forty minutes of one-way time, in the form of two twenty-minute sessions with class members. During that forty minutes, I counsel the rest of the class.

The week before someone's long turn, I ask people to read a *Fundamentals Teaching Guide* article about one of that person's identities. We use the suggestions in the article to discharge in class. I also bring copies of the relevant RC journal to class to sell. We have done two of these so far this year—reading and discharging about African-heritage liberation and artists' liberation. This week we will discharge about Native and Indigenous liberation in preparation for next week's long turn, and I will bring copies of *Heritage*⁶ to sell. So far I have sold one copy of *Black Re-emergence*⁷ this way. It's a start!

Mary Ruth Gross
Regional Reference Person for Albany
and inland Northern California,
and part of Berkeley, California, USA
Richmond, California, USA
Reprinted from the e-mail
discussion list for RC teachers

¹ Diane Shisk is the Alternate International Reference Person.

² An Area is a local RC Community.

³ "Material" means distress recordings.

⁴ An RC publication about how to teach the liberation theory of forty-one different constituencies

⁵ The *Guidelines for the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities*, the policies for the RC Communities

⁶ The RC journal about the liberation of Native peoples

⁷ The RC journal about Black liberation

We Need to Regain Our Connection

In February this year, I attended the Care of the Environment Workshop led by Wytske Visser¹ in the Basque Country. One of my highlights was becoming much more aware of how important it is to be connected with each other and with our earth. It was good to experience this in close connection to so many Basque Co-Counselors in their homeland; with the Ekain cave with its prehistoric drawings (more than thirty thousand years old) only a hundred meters from our workshop site; and surrounded by beautiful trees, a small mountain stream, clear air, wildlife, mountains, and quietness. I realized that I want to do more Co-Counseling sessions on getting reconnected with my own home ground in Aalsmeer (the Netherlands). I think that I get a bit closer to my own roots when I spend time in my vegetable garden.

Wytske encouraged us to be more physically close, which makes it more safe for all of us. We can learn this from little children. With more safety we can discharge more deeply.

She also shared her thinking about leadership. Most RC leaders lead on top of their fear. It is crucial to discharge our fears, including about leadership. And it is crucial that we learn how to be good counselors for each other as leaders and to support each other to better contradict our chronics.² We need to get closer to each other so that the patterns can be discharged. It is also important to get encouragement for our leadership. We can phone or mail someone to say how

¹ Wytske Visser is the International Commonality Reference Person for the Care of the Environment.

² Chronic patterns

wonderful and great a leader she or he is. Then later we can ask how it was to be encouraged. We can learn how to better encourage each other. We still find it difficult to do this well, and there is not only one way of doing it.

We are trained to function without discharge, which makes us disconnected from each other. The biggest fear of those who have the power is that we will regain our humanness and stand together. Yet internalised oppression makes it hard for us to do this. We need to regain connection.

Another learning: If we come back to our senses as humankind, Mother Earth is ready to find balance very quickly. But now too many of us are unthoughtful. We know what is going on,³ but we do not change our behaviour.

We are too discouraged to stand up for ourselves, and we forget the power that we have as human beings. We are also made to believe that the more material things we have, the better person we are. The answer to this is to be con-

³ "Going on" means happening.



How Do We Organize?

How do we organize? We ask people for help with small jobs that they are easily able to do without becoming intimidated, without feeling oppressed or exploited. And ask everyone's opinion. There is no one whose opinion is not worth hearing.

Harvey Jackins
From pages 235 to 236 of
The Reclaiming of Power

nected and to stand together. The best things in life are not for sale. When we have each other, we do not need consumer goods.

We need silence, thinking together, encouraging each other, and discharge. I liked it that during the one-minute silence after the change of interpreters⁴ the light in the workshop room was switched off. It made me feel more quiet and peaceful.

Deep-down inside we have never lost our connection. Deep-down inside we know how intelligent we are and how deeply we care about everything that is alive. I feel happy to be better aware of the world around me.

Thanks, Wytske, for being such an inspiring, connected, and intelligent leader.

Goof Buijs
Broek in Waterland, the Netherlands
Reprinted from the RC e-mail
discussion list for leaders in
the care of the environment

⁴When there is interpreting at an RC workshop, it is customary to have a minute of silence after each interpreter finishes his or her turn interpreting. This gives both the interpreter and the people being interpreted to a chance to rest or discharge.



I Am Very Hopeful

I have wanted to write to this list¹ ever since the Care of the Environment Workshop in the Basque Country in February. Writing and publicly displaying my thoughts is a big step for me. It feels like I have to discharge for years to do so. But now I've decided to stretch myself and do it anyway. I won't wait until my report is five years old, so here it is:

¹ The RC e-mail discussion list for leaders in the care of the environment



J. EISENHEIM

I loved every minute of Wytske Visser's² leading. She modelled being connected to herself, her feelings, and nature. In the village where I grew up, nobody had higher education, nor do I. Wytske's down-to-earth, non-academic way of leading was a model and an inspiration to me.

I enjoyed how the ideas were given to us in an organic way. When we introduced ourselves, we were asked to tell about a smell we liked. After we had shared our favorite smells, from flowers to newly baked bread to horse manure, Wytske reminded us that smells are the result of complicated organic processes and that our noses are wonderful instruments to experience them with. Right at the heart of our topic, nature.

Even before we were born, our brains were tuned to the sounds surrounding us. What a marvel it must have been when we first discovered that spoken sounds were words that meant something! I loved the way Wytske insisted that using our first language makes us more connected to ourselves.

To be in the Basque Country, with its nature and Native people, was an experience in itself. The organizer of the workshop, Itziar Larraña, had sent out information in Basque, which was translated into English. The nearby cave with signs of our ancestors thousands of years back gave a significant perspective.

² Wytske Visser is the International Commonality Reference Person for the Care of the Environment and was the leader of the workshop.

A panel of people of the global majority was important to me. I learned how oppressive forces react when people stand up for their land. It showed clearly what we all are up against.

Our new goal³ is brilliant, and I am very hopeful. I am looking forward to people working hard, shoulder to shoulder, to restore the environment, end war and oppression, and create good conditions for all life. I think people are becoming more aware that we have a choice: together we must change the living conditions on Earth into something like a garden of Eden, or life will be extinct.

Being together with such a wonderful gang of people, learning about their wide world projects, and discharging what has limited us made me excited that I am alive in exactly this period in history.

Anne Helgedagsrud
Raadal, Norway

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

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

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

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

Sharing What I Gained from a Care of the Environment Workshop

In February I attended the Care of the Environment Workshop led by Wytke Visser¹ in the Basque Country. Afterward I led a class meeting of our Area² community class in which I reported on the workshop.

I said what an uplifting experience it had been to make my way across Europe by train and receive such a warm welcome from the members of the Basque RC Community, our hosts.

I said that Wytke had talked about class and how the capitalist drive for profit coming before people's health had affected her own family. She had also referred to the article "All for One and One for All,"³ which I read (it is on the RC website). The article says that working-class people have, by necessity, a better understanding of what it means to support other people and campaign together and that people from other classes can learn from this. My experience as a middle-class white woman has been that people of my background do not ask or expect anyone from outside the family to support them, that people outside the family are not to know about personal matters. This has to change if we middle-class people are to be effective world changers. We need each other. In the class, I got people of the same class identity into pairs to discharge about getting close.

I also told the group how Wytke had asked people at the workshop to share their fears about climate change and how everyone had had a different fear. She had said that this is useful, that we can say to our clients, "Oh, you are scared about that? Well, I'm not!"

I talked about how capitalism makes us feel inadequate and how we are forever striving for more and more. We work harder and harder. We are occupied with striving so that we can buy more and look more "beautiful."

We worked with the new RC goal on the environment.⁴ It reminded me how everyone can use this goal to discharge whatever they need to and how it is old distress that keeps us fearful and rigid.

I will lead another class soon. I have asked everyone to research one good fact and one bad fact about the environmental situation and bring them to the class (part of the goal on the environment is to inform ourselves). I am looking forward to it!

Kathy Taylor
London, England

¹ Wytke Visser is the International Commonality Reference Person for the Care of the Environment.

² An Area is a local RC Community.

³ An article by Harvey Jackins on pages 3 to 4 of the April 1990 *Present Time*

⁴ A goal adopted by the 2013 World Conference of the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities:

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THE THINKER, SCULPTURE BY RODIN, RODIN MUSEUM, PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA, USA • JOSHUA FEYEN

High Expectations, Unreasonable Expectations

We need to encourage people's high expectations. That's a part of good counseling, to have high expectations of people.

Yet we need to explain to each other continually about having unreasonable expectations, or confusing theoretical ideals with present practice. They are two different things. Each one is perfectly valid and all right, but we get into trouble if we confuse the two.

Harvey Jackins
From page 259 of
The Reclaiming of Power

RC Environmental Goal Posters!

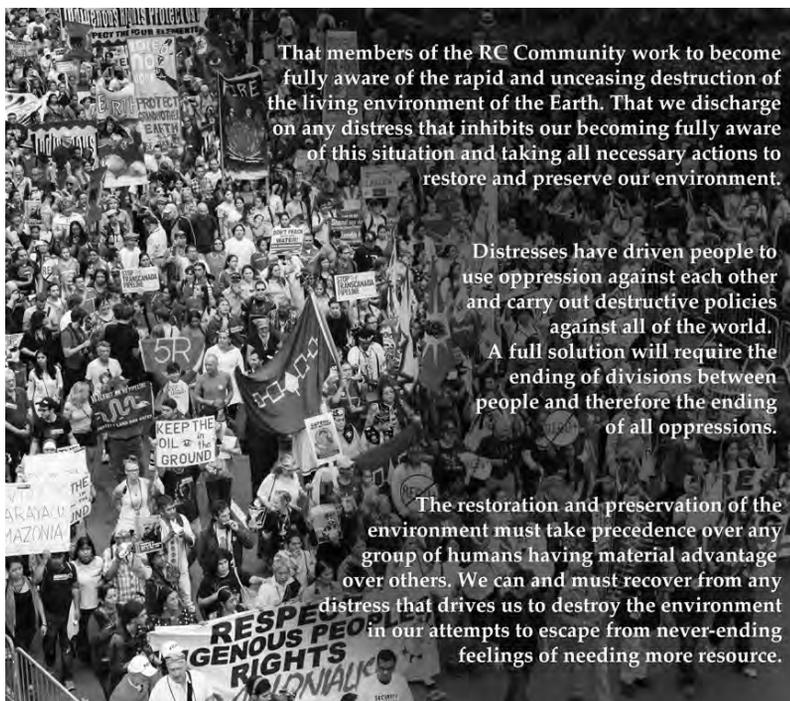
¡Los afiches sobre las metas para el medio ambiente!

Rational Island Publishers has produced two lovely 20-inch by 27-inch color posters with our RC goal on the environment* on them. I would like us all to have them in our daily lives as a reminder of our commitment to changing our economic system and our relationship to the environment. The poster below is also available in Spanish: <www.rc.org/publication/environment/goal>.

Please consider ordering one (or more) for yourself. The price is \$8.00, plus postage and handling. (Not eligible for quantity discounts.) For ordering information, see page 110.

Thank you,
Tim Jackins

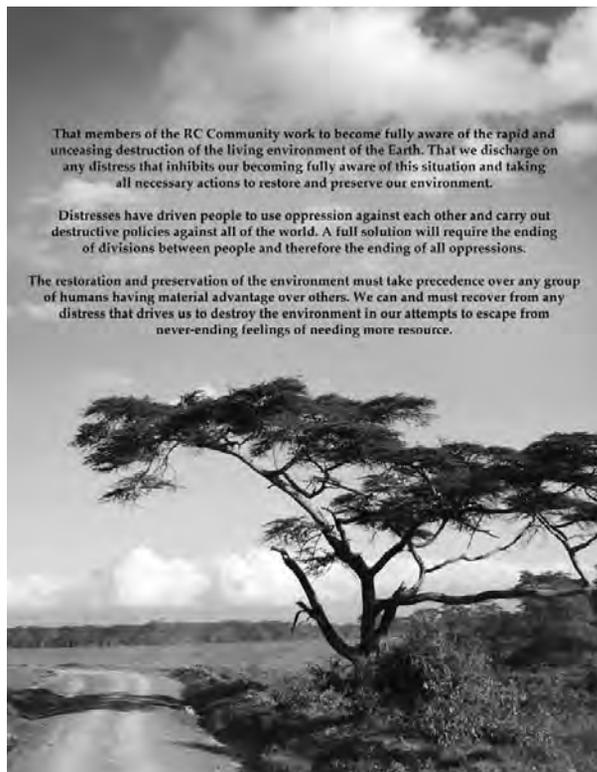
* A goal adopted by the 2013 World Conference of the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities. See page 44 for a poster with a wide-world version of this goal on it.



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

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

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

Se han publicado por Editorial Rational Island (Rational Island Publishers) dos afiches bonitos (que son producidos en color) en los cuales se incluye el texto de la meta RC sobre el medio ambiente.* La medida es 20 x 27 pulgadas (53 x 69 cm). Me gustaría si todos tuviéramos estos afiches en la vida diaria para recordarnos de nuestro compromiso de transformar el sistema económico en lo cual vivimos, y nuestra relación al medio ambiente. El afiche a la izquierda está disponible también en español: <www.rc.org/publication/environment/goal>.

Por favor piensen en comprar uno (o más) para ti misma. El precio es \$8.00, más gastos de franqueo y tramitación. (Los descuentos no son aplicables en gran consumo para los afiches.) Para poder comprarlo, hay información en la página 110.

Gracias,
Tim Jackins
Anuncio traducido por María Franco

* Una meta adoptada por la conferencia mundial de 2013 de las comunidades RC (Re-evaluación - Coescucha)

An Economy of Caring

As a raised-poor, working-class woman of color living in this advanced stage of capitalism, I have lots of feelings about not being able to think. I have been told all my life that I am stupid and that what I think isn't important. I have thought that I could not understand the economy or any terminology related to the stock market, banks, and so on.



SUE PEDLEY

Thanks to Harvey¹ and his clarity, plus Dan Nickerson,² Gwen Brown,³ and scores of others who have done the work on classism, I now know that I actually grew up with a well-informed understanding of how the capitalist system works: my family and I, and other working people, produce the goods, and a small group of people reap the benefits of this labor and hoard and consume the resources we produce. Turns out⁴ we haven't been stupid. We may not have learned fancy words to describe the system, but it has been clear to us how things operate.

I have been thinking about the economic events and terminology of this advanced stage of capitalism: bailouts, banks collapsing, unemployment, consumer price indexes, stock markets and trading, the World Bank, gross national product (GNP), governments going bankrupt, and so on. It has gotten me thinking about production, me, and RC.

According to the capitalist oppressive society, I haven't done much: I

¹ Harvey Jackins

² Dan Nickerson is the International Liberation Reference Person for Working-Class People.

³ Gwen Brown is the International Liberation Reference Person for Raised-Poor People.

⁴ "Turns out" means it turns out that, what is shown to be true is that.

don't earn a lot of money, or own a house or have a lot of degrees or titles. I don't have a lot "to show" for my working life. I have spent much of my adult life (since my early young adult years) involved in Re-evaluation Counseling. I have benefited immeasurably from being part of this project. I wouldn't trade it for anything. The relationships I have, the way I have grown, what I have gotten to do and think about regarding re-emergence, liberation, and the world are far beyond what I hoped for as a young girl targeted by racism, sexism, and classism. I wanted the world to be different, and decided I would work to make that happen, but had no idea that it would come to fruition as it has.

In many ways my "career" choice, and the primary focus of my life, has been my re-emergence and the re-emergence of others. I decided long ago that I wanted to be as fully human as I could be and to assist others in doing the same. I wanted a world in which humans caring about each other and all living things was the basis for how the world was set up.

So what have I "produced" over all of these years—spending countless hours in sessions, at workshops, using the tools of RC in connection with other humans (in and out of RC)? I recently started putting my "productive" RC life into economic terms.

What are we as Co-Counselors "producing," and what could be a currency of exchange based on what we know about humans? An economy

can be defined as the wealth and resources of a group of people (of a country, a region, the world). What if the economy we are building has as its wealth our flex-

ible intelligence, our caring, and our connections? We have been working consistently to build (or uncover) a resource—intelligence, based on caring—that is key to the thriving of human existence. The currency we exchange is attention, respect, and love. I have begun to think of the economy we are creating as an Economy of Caring.

There is a tremendous need in our "market" for thoughtful human interaction and connection, and flexible intelligence that will take on⁵ and solve the problems that exist due to the oppressive society. The demand for human intelligence is high, and always will be.

What we are producing includes the following:

- A growing connection among us as humans and with the world around us; relationships that are forever, solid, and based on the security of human-to-human contact
- Greater and greater access to the pool of flexible human intelligence, our innate zestfulness for life, and the inherent cooperativeness and power we have as humans
- The removal of distress (a waste product of oppression)

We are creating a Gross (Inter)National Product (GIP). In each session, the discharging we do produces and adds to a growing "supply" of aware

continued . . .

⁵ "Take on" means take responsibility for.

WIDE WORLD CHANGING

... continued

free attention and flexible human intelligence. As we all do this, there is more possibility for us as a society.

The GIP we're creating includes permanent shifts in our ability to think and to show our caring and zest. With each session, and with each of our encounters that is pro-human, sustaining of all life, and contradicting distress, we are contributing to a GIP for human survival and transformation.

As more people "contribute to this pool," the supply will grow more rapidly. At some point, the amount of attention will outstrip the inflexible waste products (distresses) caused by the oppressive society. The balance will tip toward the transformation to a more human structure of society—one based on an economy of caring.

Our "World Bank" receives a "deposit" of currency every time I do something in a human way—whether it is thinking about other people, stepping out of my internalized oppression, challenging my oppressor patterns, or reaching for other people based on my full intelligence—in RC, at the store, at the gas station, or in my family. We have created a new World Bank of Caring, which each person,

regardless of age, ability, race, ethnicity, gender, and so on, can contribute to and withdraw from. And there is never a waste of production, there is always movement forward, when our attention is put toward contributing to this World Bank of Caring.

Most important, the wealth of an Economy of Caring is immeasurable and of benefit to everyone. There can be no have-nots, and no one is better or more important than anyone else.

This is an economy that we don't have to wait for. It is in the making. We have already been building it. As we move ahead, it will be the infrastructure on which society is based. How society handles food distribution, medical care, housing, work, the environment will come from the caring human connection that we create. This will be the basis for our interaction with other humans and with the world around us. We are building a revolution that will permanently transform our society into one that is based on caring relationships first.

So, if you are going to "buy stock" in any market, I would make it the Free Market of Re-emergence. It is the market of permanent true security. No

one will buy low and sell high. There won't be any collapse of the market in the short or the long term (although it may feel like it at times). The only thing you will lose is your distress. The gains will be permanent and real.

You can't outsource the work, and there won't be any government (or other) bailouts for you. We each have to do the work. No one can do it for us. One of the things Harvey used to say is that in the absence of oppression, we would all enjoy work. Work is part of being human. It is one of the pleasures of life—going to work and taking charge of our part of the production line.

So, I better get to it⁶ now—have a session, give a session, play with my nieces and nephews, or reach for someone on the basis of my intelligence, love, and caring—so I can make a deposit in that World Bank of Caring. Let me add to the GIP!

Have fun getting in your "production quota" for the day! Enjoy!

Teresa Enrico
Seattle, Washington, USA

⁶ "Get to it" means start doing it.



KANGAROO ISLAND, SOUTH AUSTRALIA, AUSTRALIA • BARBARA MOLANUS

Examples of Splendid Survival and Enjoyment

Humans today need *examples* of splendid survival and enjoyment. As the band of such rational people grows in numbers, it will grow by recruiting to its ranks the liberated prisoners of the rigid society, who no longer conform through fear nor rebel through resentment or despair.

Harvey Jackins
From page 104 of
The Human Situation

El sistema capitalista

Gracias Julián¹ por tus preguntas sobre como estamos desahogando y pensando sobre el sistema capitalista y por tus pensamientos acerca de la importancia y necesidad de re-emplazarlo con una sociedad humana, inclusiva, equitativa para mujeres y hombres en todo el mundo.

Soy una mujer crecida en un hogar de clase trabajadora. Mi madre y mi padre nacieron y crecieron en una área rural. Llegaron a la capital cuando eran jóvenes para continuar sus estudios porque en el campo no había opciones.

Yo tenía alrededor de 5 o 6 años cuando tuve mi primera experiencia (que recuerdo) de vivir en una sociedad injusta. Una niña de mi edad tocó la puerta de mi casa en la noche cuando cenábamos en familia. Ella llegó a pedir comida. Estaba descalza, sus ropas estaban sucias y denotaba una delgadez extrema. (Después, con los años, entendí, que esta es la situación de desnutrición de las niñas y niños en mi país.) Yo recuerdo que esta experiencia me impresionó muchísimo. Después de verla, corrí angustiada hacia mi padre y le dije lo que había visto en la puerta de nuestra casa.

Mi padre me respondió: "Sigue comiendo hijita. No te preocupes. Ella es una niña pobre. En este mundo siempre habrán ricos y pobres. Mejor termina tu comida, porque como ya has visto, hay mucha gente en este mundo que no tiene que comer. Dale gracias a Dios que tú, sí tienes comida todos los días y tienes una familia."

Cada vez que recuerdo las palabras de mi padre y el rostro de aquella niña, puedo llorar profundamente por largo rato. Jamás no he olvidado esta experiencia.

A mis 15 años viajé a los Estados Unidos como regalo de quinceañera que me dio mi padre. Cuando regresé de aquel viaje, comprendí muy claramente que yo vivía en un país pobre, desigual, injusto e inhumano. Entendí también que habían países con muchos recursos y países como el mío, muy pobres. A partir de entonces, me sentí comprometida a conocer y estudiar más sobre estas realidades, la raíz de estas situaciones de desigualdad y tomar el compromiso de cambiarlo. No podía quedarme sin hacer nada. No era posible. La pobreza de mi país, de los niños y las niñas, me dolía en lo más profundo de mi alma y aún me sigue doliendo.

Como mujer católica, me incorporé a la Iglesia Popular de Liberación y decidí unirme a la lucha para cambiar este

¹ Julián Weissglass, Persona de Referencia Comunalidad Internacional para el Cambio Social

sistema. Tengo 45 años de estar en esta lucha y 18 años de hacer co-escucha. Co-escucha me ha ayudado a desahogar mi impaciencia, mis decepciones, frustraciones, y los sentimientos de desesperanza que me hacen perder la perspectiva y la certeza de que un mundo sin opresiones es posible. Co-escucha me ha ayudado a entender, que la revolución es un proceso que se construye día a día, con las pequeñas victorias de transformaciones personales y colectivas. Entender también, que cada sesión, cada desahogo, cada decisión de cambiar el mundo, después de la re-evaluación es un acto revolucionario que ayuda a la transformación del mundo.

Anónimo

Publicación originaria en la lista de correo electrónico RC de líderes para el cambio mundial



CASCO BAY, PORTLAND, MAINE, USA • MARTY POTTENGER

English translation of the above:

The Capitalist System

Thanks, Julian,² for asking how we are discharging and thinking about the capitalist system, and for your thoughts about how important and necessary it is to replace it with a society that is humane, inclusive, and equitable for all women and men in the world.

I am a woman raised in a working-class home. My mother and father were born and raised in a rural area. They came to the capital city when they were young, to keep up their schooling because in the countryside there were no options.

I was about five or six years old when I had my first experience (that I can remember) of realizing I was living in an unjust society. A little girl my age knocked on our

continued . . .

² Julian Weissglass, the International Commonality Reference Person for Wide World Change

WIDE WORLD CHANGING

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door at night while my family was having dinner. She had come to beg for food. She was barefoot, her clothes were dirty, and she was noticeably thin. (Later, as the years went by, I understood that she exemplified the state of malnutrition of children in my country.) I remember being very affected by this experience. After seeing her, I ran anxiously to my father and told him what I had seen at our door.

My father's response was, "Go back to your meal, my dear. Don't worry. She's a poor little girl. In this world there will always be rich people and poor people. Best³ to finish your food, because there are a lot of people like her in this world who don't have enough to eat. Be grateful to God that you do have food every day and have a family."

Every time I remember my father's words and that little girl's face, I cry deeply for long periods of time. I've never forgotten that event.

At the age of fifteen I visited the United States, as a *quinceañera*⁴ birthday gift from my father. When I returned, I understood clearly that I lived in a country that was poor, inequitable, unjust, and inhumane. I also understood that there were countries with lots of resources

³ "Best" means it is best.

⁴ A *quinceañera* is a celebration of a girl's fifteenth birthday and her transition from childhood to adulthood.

and others, like my country, that were very poor. Since then I have been committed to studying about the reality and roots of this inequality and to changing it. I couldn't sit back and do nothing. It was not possible. The poverty of my people, of the children, hurt me deep in my soul, and I am still hurting.

I joined the Iglesia Popular de Liberación (The Catholic Liberation Church) and the struggle to change the system. I have been in this struggle for forty-five years and in RC for eighteen years.

Re-evaluation Counseling has helped me discharge my impatience, letdowns,⁵ and frustrations and the feelings that sometimes make me lose perspective and my hope that a world free of oppressions is possible. It has helped me understand that revolution is a process built day by day, with small victories of personal and collective transformations. It has also helped me understand that each session, each bit of discharge, each decision I make, after a re-evaluation, to change the world is a revolutionary act that helps transform the world.

Anonymous

Translated by Pamela Shepard García

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

⁵ "Letdowns" means disappointments.

Our Natural Attitude Is One of Confidence

In general, people in the world have no confidence operating. The oppression has driven almost everyone's confidence underground. Within the main society there is no confidence. Anywhere. There is pseudo-confidence. The oppressors, the people in oppressive positions, continually *sound* confident. The people who write the newspaper headlines *sound* confident. They say, "It's obvious that nothing progressive will ever work. Once again it has been proved that the progressives are wrong about everything." This is pseudo-confidence. The only people who even *sound* confident, in general, are the oppressors, and, of course, they feel terrible and go out and get drunk afterward.

We are in a position to get the timidity patterns, the unconfident patterns, off of ourselves. I would like to raise this issue sharply before you, for you to make it a key project to get the timidity patterns off of ourselves. They're just patterns. Our natural attitude is one of confidence. Those of you who've seen happy very young children know that they are confident. So we must possess that confidence. It must only be covered over with distress. If we dig out our confidence—simply discharge the fear occluding it, or do whatever else it takes—we'll be in a position to just keep sounding positive notes. I think we will lead large numbers of people very quickly.

Harvey Jackins
From pages 86 to 87
of *A Better World*

No Limits, at Beijing+20

The following are some reports on the No Limits for Women project at the non-governmental-organization Women's Forum held in conjunction with the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women Beijing+20, in New York, New York, USA, March 2015. The project was led by Diane Balser, the RC International Liberation Reference Person for Women.

Susanne Langer, Copenhagen, Denmark (delegate): Our No Limits delegation consisted of thirty-nine women and men—from India, El Salvador, Iran, Canada, England, Sweden, Denmark, and the United States. Some of the people from the United States were born and raised in Pakistan or Kenya, and some had Japanese heritage. We were ages twenty to seventy-one, people of African heritage, Asians, Jews, Muslims, Gentiles, and white people. We offered five workshops, all with ending sexism and male domination central.

We were at the forum to learn and also to share our invaluable tool of discharge, so that people could know how to actually free themselves from the hurts caused by sexism. We were reminded of how the world is so much bigger than the limited version we get in Western mostly white societies. The struggle for freedom is global; what happens to one can happen to all.

Esteniolla Maitre, Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania, USA (delegate): A highlight for me was the No Limits men's panel on ending sexism. As a young Haitian Black woman, I had never seen men be so vulnerable and honest about where male domination had left them hurt, confused, isolated, and unable to think

Hearing them clearly articulate the ways it had hurt them, and seeing the ways they leaned on each other to address the hurts, shifted something in my mind. For the first time I began to fully believe that it was not my job to be on the receiving end of men's hurt and to fix it. I was reminded of the goodness of men, apart from the caretaking patterns that got installed on me as a little girl. I could think about where I get hooked and act like it's my job to remind men that they are good, even in the moments when I don't truly believe it. I have decided that the fight against sexism will remain central in my life and that a primary focus on being female is significant to my re-emergence.

Caryn Davis, New York, New York, USA (volunteer): I teach language immersion and college preparation to young adult immigrants from around the world. My spring semester curriculum was about women's liberation and male allies and was based on RC theory and practice. It included two days of field trips to the forum. The students and I attended the Young Women Eliminating Sexism panel. The students probably understood less than fifty percent of what was said, but the RCers on the panel communicated kindness in their faces and tone of voice (one of the students noted that). And Emily Bloch, the moderator, and others on the panel told the workshop that they were nervous and why. That made a big impression on the students. They feel frightened to speak in English, and the fact that the panelists, native English speakers, were nervous to speak was

an eye opener for them. Five of the students stayed after the panel for the support groups.

Joanne Bray, Stamford, Connecticut, USA (delegate): I loved being part of a worldwide movement on a foundation of *females first*. At the beginning of the No Limits Women and Leadership panel, every female introduced herself as a "female first." I don't think anything can turn us back if we hold that in our minds.

I loved the mini-sessions with women I might never see again. Almost every woman I was with teared up or laughed while eagerly sharing stories. I remembered my first life-changing five-minute mini-session (forty years ago). Looking into the face of a female from somewhere around the world whom I had met for the first time, I thought that that session might be exactly the right ingredient for her to remember what's possible. I'm proud of RC and what we held out for all women. Every woman activist deserves the tools we have to make her work and personal life better.

Suvan Geer, Santa Ana, California, USA: Fundraising for the project made me discharge repeatedly and put myself forward as a leader. I worked on a fundraiser that created a change in our local RC Community. I saw a new kind of trust and closeness between the women and men who participated and a spark of welcome pride in the men after they'd publicly demonstrated their commitment to being allies to women. What we did was simple: the men joined me

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in baking cookies and selling them at my church. In the United States, women have traditionally baked cookies to raise money for civic projects, band uniforms, schools. I asked fourteen men, from both inside and outside the RC Community, to bake cookies to sell to help pay for sending RC delegates to the forum. We baked them on International Women's Day, the same day the forum started. Then we sold them all the next day at my church, making over \$600 from cookie-sales and donations. When the men arrived at the sale, they wrote on their nametag the name of a woman they admired or were there to honor. It was good to see them talking to each other about these women. The labels on the cookie bags proudly proclaimed that these were "Great Guy Cookies" that were earning money for the forum delegates. Also on the label was "Nothin' says lovin' like somethin' from the oven."¹

Billy Yalowitz, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA (delegate): Six of us were on the panel at the Men Ending Sexism and Male Domination Workshop, led by Rudy Nickens.² I could sense how useful it was for people to see us openly show our struggles with the sexism we carry. Within the context of stating men's goodness, we spoke directly about our individual battles with our conditioned denial and unawareness of the daily reality of sexism faced by the women we are close to. We talked about how taking full responsibility as fathers for the day-to-day details of parenting can help lift the

¹ A slogan from a 1950s advertisement for a U.S. company's ready-to-bake biscuit dough

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

additional burden of sexism for women in their work as parents; how our isolation as men and early hurts as boys set us up³ to pressure our female partners for sex; how we struggle within the institution of marriage against our conditioned sexist behaviors of disrespecting our wives and belittling their work, their concerns, their thinking; how men's oppression sets us up to disregard our own lives; how it is useful to notice even small victories in eliminating the sexism we carry. Each of us described how crucial RC and our close relationships with other men have been in allowing us to become aware of the oppression of women and personally move against it. I am pleased that we could show aspects of the oppressor role without getting lost in apologizing for our maleness or feeling bad about ourselves. Our individual and collective work over many years—to reclaim the discharge process, build close and trusting counseling relationships with one another as men, and work more

³ "Set us up" means predisposed us.



DVORA SLAVIN

directly on sexist recordings⁴—was apparent. We are learning to offer a fuller picture of how ending our role as oppressors is at the core of fighting for our liberation as men. We are making this work understandable and hopeful in the wide world and are increasingly able to follow women's leadership and work together with them as partners.

Lotahn Raz, Israel: I am honored, proud, and happy to be a part of this movement. I am in awe of and excited by the work the delegation did. It was easy to see the effects of the years of discharging about, thinking about, and acting toward women's liberation and ending sexism and male domination. We in RC have a unique and important contribution to bring, and the effects of our work have resonated all the way to my computer in Israel! I am honored to be a part of an organization that has taken on⁵ this work and done so well. I even opened up a Twitter⁶ account to follow things more closely. (There is no other organization in the world that could make me join Twitter!)

Jeannette Armentano, Portland, Oregon, USA (volunteer): I got to march with the delegation through the streets of Manhattan (a borough of New York City). It was my first time marching as part of a women's liberation movement. I loved walking through the streets of the city I grew up in and taking up space as women and girls. I also loved being reminded in our RC meeting that sexism and male domination make it hard to keep the word *sexism* at the center of the battle. That was part of what we

⁴ Distress recordings

⁵ "Taken on" means undertaken.

⁶ Twitter is a free social-networking service on the Internet.

got to do—keep it in the center, so we could clearly state what we are facing, in order to understand the battle. I had never before been in a place where women's liberation was front and center. The contradiction was amazing. It looked like every person was there with the same goal: to eliminate sexism. We didn't have to argue over the existence of the oppression or its devastating effects on our minds, bodies, and hearts.

No Limits was the only organization that had translation available, which was a *huge* contradiction. We were so human it was hard not to love us.

Many of us could say things like, "At this point we don't believe that this process is a luxury; we believe it is a necessity in order to make the world the human place we want it to be. How else will we get the hurts out of our minds so we do not keep repeating the same irrational behaviors that we have repeated over and over?"

I met an African-heritage woman who lives in Portland and asked her how her days were going and told her about mine. I asked her if she wanted to meet again while we were in New York instead of waiting until we were back in Portland. She was eager to, so we met for breakfast and listened to each other's life stories. She is now in my RC fundamentals class.

Diane Balser, Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts, USA (delegation leader): I woke up this morning exhausted and pleased. We did something that I was not sure was possible. We contributed a whole new dimension to the wide world women's movement and to our RC work on sexism and male domination. To hear over and over again "No Limits, an organization of

Re-evaluation Counseling committed to the ending of sexism and male domination," said to wide world female liberation activists, was a dream come true. Having a group of men alongside us who had worked on sexism and male domination, and were for us and backing⁷ us, was another dream come true.

Fiona Clark, Seattle, Washington, USA: I am twenty-two, and I followed the No Limits group on Twitter. It was so inspiring to see RCers doing big things out in the world, not just in RC. Seeing No Limits for Women on Twitter made me excited for a future time when everyone will know about RC and will be posting on Facebook⁸ about great sessions they've had and new directions they're trying.

Tresa Elguera, Brooklyn, New York, USA (volunteer): I spent the march with my seven-year-old son and an eight-year-old female friend of ours. When we weren't chanting, I was answering questions: "What do 'upheld,' 'respected,' 'society,' and 'priority' mean?" "What do 'united' and 'defeated' mean?" "Why aren't women paid the same as men?" "What does 'no limits' mean?" "Why are there climate banners at a march for women?"

I'd been at women's marches before, but never with my son. I found it moving to hear Tim Jackins and the other male members of the No Limits delegation chanting, "This is what a feminist looks like." Not only were men from our delegation at the march, but many other men were there

as well, and lots of young men, too. That was not true in Beijing⁹ twenty years ago, and it was sweet to see, especially since I was there with my son.

Chuck Esser, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA (delegate): Our workshops were one of the only places in the larger forum where everyone got a chance to talk. Our understandings about racism, men being good, and oppression needing to be ended resonated with people I talked to. Many other groups were interested in how we'd gotten men to see eliminating sexism and male domination as part of men's liberation.

Our group has grown to be more reflective of society as a whole: young, old, multiracial, from different countries and cultures and many religious backgrounds. This was the first project we had done in which a solid group of young people and young adults took major leadership. People seeing us wanted to join this kind of organization.

Mari Piggott, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada; and Alana Eichner, Washington, D.C., USA (delegates): We attended the World YWCA's Young Women and Girls panel. In the mingling time, we got our first practice at talking about the work of No Limits. The women were interested and asked questions about the peer-counseling process and the reach of the RC Communities. We also got a chance to listen to them about their activism and why they had come to the forum. We connected with women from Malawi, England, Nigeria, and Canada.

Nyaradzayi Gumbonzvanda, the General Secretary of the World

continued . . .

⁷ "Backing" means supporting.

⁸ Facebook is a free social-networking service on the Internet.

⁹ The Fourth United Nations World Conference on Women, in Beijing, China, in 1995

...continued

YWCA from Kenya, talked about being a twenty-year-old at the 1995 Beijing conference and what a powerful experience that had been for her. She enthusiastically told all of us young women, "If someone says to you, 'You're the leaders of tomorrow,' you tell them back that you're the leaders of today!"

It was powerful and inspiring to be in a room with over a hundred female activists in which young women were completely in charge.

K Webster, New York, New York, USA (organizer): I attended the (non-RC) panel Prostitution, Sex-Trafficking, and the Human Rights Abuse Inherent to the Sex Trade. At one point the moderator asked, "What can men do?" When the audience was asked for comments, a man (whom I'd seen at our panels and with whom many of our delegates had had contact) stood up and said, "There is only one group at this conference that is talking about what men need to do, and that is No Limits for Women."

Karim Lopez, Brooklyn, New York, USA (delegate): I attended the No Limits panel Young Women Ending Sexism and Male Domination with Young Men as Allies. The panelists did a beautiful job of showing themselves; setting a light, honest tone; and putting out clear ideas about what it means to fight sexism and eliminate it on a person-to-person level. The young men were honest and brave in talking about what they'd learned and figured out about becoming better allies and eliminating sexism. People seemed interested, engaged, and inspired. My heart was full and proud and hopeful.

Tamara Damon, New York, New York, USA (volunteer): One of my highlights was our team of volunteers and delegates. Unaware sexism and classism generally distort people's ability to fully function as peers, even when they intend to, and women's work is often the invisible, behind-the-scenes support work. However, it was clear that we were all peers and a team. It didn't matter whether our job was to stand on a street corner holding a sign or to moderate a panel.

Ellie Hidalgo, Los Angeles, California, USA (delegate): A challenging but moving part of the event was the keynote address by Ruchira Gupta, the Indian woman who made the Emmy-winning documentary *The Selling of Innocents*. The film looks at the lives of young women and girls from villages in India who were sold into prostitution to be raped by men in the brothels of Mumbai (India). She called these girls "the last girls," because they were so forgotten and abandoned by society, often dying in their twenties. Ruchira challenged the more than 1,500 attendees to view prostitution as commercial rape. She said that the words "sex work" sterilize the exploitation of girls and women. She said that if we normalize the sexual exploitation of some girls, we normalize the exploitation of all girls. She said to the women and men making policies for their countries that we can only effectively end the exploitation of girls and women around the world when we stand for the "last girl" and create policies that can be accessed by the "last girl."

Nat Lippert, Portland, Maine, USA (delegate): From the moment I received the invitation, the contradiction¹⁰ of someone believing I could think about and act rationally on the topic was so great that my mind quickly sought out new information about sexism and male domination—talks, articles, and books about pornography, sex trafficking, and so on. I found myself initiating conversations about these topics in the restaurant where I work. My coworkers (mostly working-class young adults) were eager to share their thoughts.

Being part of an organized group in which the goal was to form loving, respectful relationships with new people (which seems to be our way of communicating our ideas) was probably the best-possible approximation of who I'd like to be in the world. I found myself reaching for people more on the subway, in the line at the store, everywhere I went. I didn't always do it, but I could try a little more, and this has stayed with me since returning home.

This No Limits project was the first time I'd seen humility applied so intelligently by a group of men. I've often seen men act humbly in a patronizing or self-sacrificing way, but rarely have I seen a group of men decide that enthusiastically supporting the leadership of women is a key step in their own liberation as men. Many other groups noticed how we modeled this.

¹⁰ Contradiction to distress



Escuchar, Liderazgo, y Hermandad

Formé parte de la delegación “Sin límites para las mujeres,” en Foro de Mujeres, organización no gubernamental, este marzo conjunto con la Comisión de las Naciones Unidas sobre la Condición de Mujeres Beijing+20 en Nueva York, Nueva York, EEUU. Sigo sintiendo el entusiasmo del trabajo que juntas hicimos allí.

Me encantó distribuir los folletos informativos de nuestros talleres, conocer mujeres, y escucharlas. Una tarde realizamos un proyecto de escuchar.¹ Escribí en español en un cartel, *¿Cómo sería para ti tener un mundo sin sexismo ni dominación masculina? Queremos escucharte.* Fue mi primera experiencia en un proyecto de escuchar. Fue maravilloso.

Una experiencia inspiradora para mí, ha sido el modelaje de liderazgo y hermandad que hicieron nuestras queridas lideresas co-escuchas Diane Balser, K Webster y Diane Shisk.² Las tres fueron el grupo organizador para nuestra delegación, y Diane Balser, la lideresa principal. La forma de liderar de cada una, con su propio estilo, trabajando juntas con las demás en equipo, fue una contradicción al sexismo internalizado que llevamos dentro como mujeres.

El trabajo realizado por nuestra delegación “Sin límites para las mujeres,” es el resultado del proceso de desahogo y pensamiento, que las personas han logrado bajo el liderazgo y la visión estratégica de Diane Balser, quien durante muchos años ha liderado los talleres sobre asuntos contemporáneos para la liberación de las mujeres. Estos talleres han hecho posible conocer más claramente lo que sucede con la opresión y la liberación de las mujeres en todo el mundo.



María Lorena Cuéllar Barandiarán
San Salvador, El Salvador
Publicación originaria en la
lista de correo electrónico RC
para líderes del cambio mundial

¹ En un proyecto RC de escuchar, varias co-escuchas se reúnen en un lugar público y ofrecen escuchar los transeúntes sobre algún asunto social importante. Pueden utilizar carteles que invitan a las personas a compartir sus pensamientos sobre el tema.

² Diane Balser es la Persona de Referencia Internacional de Liberación para mujeres; K Webster es una de las Personas de Referencia Regional para la ciudad de Nueva York, Nueva York, EEUU; y Diane Shisk es la Persona de Referencia Internacional Alternativa para las comunidades de RC.

English translation of the preceding article:

Listening, Leadership, and Sisterhood

I was a member of the No Limits for Women delegation at the non-governmental-organization Women's Forum held this March in conjunction with the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women Beijing+20, in New York, New York, USA. I still feel the excitement of the work we did together there.

I loved distributing flyers about our workshops, and meeting women and listening to them. One afternoon we did a listening project.³ I wrote on a sign in Spanish, *¿Cómo sería para ti tener un mundo sin sexismo ni dominación masculina? Queremos escucharte.* (What would it be like for you to have a world without sexism and male domination? We would love to listen to you.) It was my first experience doing a listening project. It was great.

Inspiring for me was the leadership and sisterhood modeled by our beloved Co-Counselors and leaders Diane Balser, K Webster, and Diane Shisk.⁴ The three of them were the organizing group for our delegation, and Diane Balser was the overall leader. The way that each of them, with her own leadership style, worked together with the others as a team was a contradiction to the internalized sexism we carry within us as women.

The work we did as the No Limits delegation was the result of the discharging and thinking people have done under the leadership and strategic vision of Diane Balser, who for many years has been leading the RC Contemporary Women's Issues Workshops. These workshops have made it possible to understand with more clarity what is happening with women's oppression and liberation all over the world.

María Lorena Cuéllar Barandiarán
San Salvador, El Salvador
Translated by the author and Pamela Shepard García
Reprinted from the RC e-mail discussion
list for leaders of wide world change

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

⁴ Diane Balser is the International Liberation Reference Person for Women; K Webster is the Regional Reference Person for five boroughs of New York City, New York, USA; and Diane Shisk is the Alternate International Reference Person for the RC Communities.

A No-Limits Mother

I had the wonderful experience of working as a No Limits for Women volunteer this past March at the non-governmental-organization Women's Forum held in conjunction with the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women Beijing+20, in New York, New York, USA. It was an opportunity and a huge gift to see what it was like to make the work of ending sexism *the* top priority for an entire week. As restimulations bubbled up—and they did—I needed to decide and re-decide on a daily basis to stick to the goal. I learned a ton (a lot) and have a clearer-than-ever perspective on what it means to fully take on¹ the work of ending sexism and male domination—for myself personally and as a part of a larger movement.

I prioritized the work of the No Limits project while mothering an eight-year-old son, whom I came home to at night and woke up with in the morning. The No Limits work was on top of the mothering work I do every day. Because the project happened in my home city, I could feel and take note of what we mothers are up against all the time as we try to take on² sexism and male domination in the midst of our daily lives. A few reflections follow.

THE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY MARCH

I invited my son and my husband to join me on the International Women's Day March for Gender Equality and Women's Rights on the Sunday before the No Limits workshops began. My son was eager to come. We'd had several conversations about the No Limits project and sexism, and the march was a concrete way for him to participate. We stuck together as a family. My son took great pleasure in chanting, "No Limits for Women, No Limits for Girls." It made a difference—for me and for them—to have both my husband and my son there as allies.

Before the march, my son wanted to make a sign for us to carry. I suggested a few ideas—"Boys and girls united," "Boys ending sexism." He rejected both, and it looked like he was feeling bad about himself as a boy. We pulled in my husband—another male ally who might have had similar experiences and feelings as my son—to see if he had thoughts. After consultation, my son chose one word: "Equality." I flashed back to³ Diane Balser's⁴ comment that it is not soley equality we are fighting for, and that "gender equality" does not describe what we mean by equality between women and men—that the real and basic issue is sexism and male domination. In that moment with my son, I went back and forth about which should come first—backing⁵ his mind and his thinking, or trying to convey to him the particulars of my/our perspective on ending sexism. I went along with his thinking and felt and still feel pleased with my choice. But the story illustrates a way that we mothers are constantly pushed to weigh different issues and fight for our minds as we move through the world.

¹ In this context, "take on" means undertake.

² In this context, "take on" means confront and do something about.

³ "Flashed back to" means suddenly remembered.

⁴ Diane Balser is the International Liberation Reference Person for Women and was the overall leader of the No Limits delegation at Beijing+20.

⁵ "Backing" means supporting.



ALONG THE NILE RIVER, EGYPT • AURORA PALM

JUGGLING WORK AND CHILDCARE

Deciding that I would be at as many No Limits workshops and meetings as possible, and arranging my life around that, was a big deal. It meant using the relationships I had with other mothers to figure out more childcare for my son. It meant expecting that my male partner would take on⁶ more childcare and everything else around the house. It meant deciding to let things be left undone and untidy at home. Having another mother in my apartment building do childcare for my son meant talking about the project I was doing. When I came to pick up my son, it meant listening to her about her day and what it had been like being female. She and I grew closer.

GIVING OR NOT GIVING SESSIONS

I came home after a long day, and my son asked me for a session at bedtime. I didn't have the attention to give a session; it felt like the last thing I wanted to do. I decided that I wasn't going to give him one and that that was okay. I got him to laugh for a few minutes and then told him we needed to go to sleep. The next evening, as we were cleaning up the Monopoly⁷ game we had been playing, he started taking a session—a big one. I'd had another long day and was sitting on a lot of feelings, but I decided to "go for it" (try) with him this time. I was able to push myself to stay in there with him, stay close, and take the session as far as I could. I didn't hesitate, I didn't question myself; I just went in "to get him" (to not leave him on his own). When he was done he thanked me for listening (a first!) and asked to counsel me. He sat up and held my hand and listened as I cried for several minutes about sexism and the places where I doubt myself and can't see my significance. That session with him was the highlight of my week.

A NEW PICTURE

During the week of No Limits I got a picture of what it might mean to prioritize my life and myself. I got a picture of what it might mean to have my son as my male ally. I got a picture of what it could look like to not doubt my every decision as a mother. (Was I too permissive? Not permissive enough? Did I make the right decision? Should I have done that differently?) Moving forward, I am recommitting myself to a life of no limits, as a woman and as a mother.

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

⁶ In this context, "take on" means take responsibility for.

⁷ Monopoly is a board game that originated in the United States in the early 1900s.

A video on the RC website!

Women and Men in Partnership to End Sexism and Male Domination

The first video on the RC website! Twenty-eight-minutes of highlights from one of the No Limits for Women workshops at Beijing+20.¹ Presentations by Diane Balser and Rudy Nickens,² followed by short talks from panel members. Great to view in classes, support groups, and topic groups.

Go to <www.rc.org/publication/foundation/nolimitsphotos/foundationnolimitsphotos> (best viewed with a Chrome browser).

¹ In March 2015, No Limits for Women (a project of the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities) sent a delegation to the NGO (non-governmental-organization) Women's Forum held in conjunction with the United Nations Commission of the Status of Women Beijing+20, in New York, New York, USA.

² Diane Balser is the International Liberation Reference Person for Women, and Rudy Nickens is the Regional Reference Person for Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska, USA.

Taking Leadership on Climate Change

Hey Tim!¹

I wanted to give you an update on some exciting things I've figured out in my life since the care-of-the-environment talk you gave at the East Coast North America Leaders' Workshop this past year. What you said about deciding to start now and challenging the places where we feel small and powerless, and particularly your direction to talk to five people about climate change, has moved me a lot.

In my sessions I've been able to discharge fear more than I typically can. I have also been spurred to work on early discouragement, so I can keep thinking about climate change.

After I got home from the workshop, one of my first climate-change conversations resulted in finding a reading buddy who could help me read Naomi Klein's *This Changes Everything*² without falling asleep or drifting off from restimulation. We read aloud to each other and stayed close, and I shook a bit. I explained a little RC theory and we exchanged some listening. (Reading this book has been a big step for me in learning more about the current situation as well as working on my material³ about reading.)

I kept having conversations and listening to people. I would start out by saying, "So what are we going to do about the climate crisis?" Often people's first response was feeling overwhelmed and discouraged. I would ask, "So if you didn't feel overwhelmed and dis-



A KIVA IN NEW MEXICO, USA • SUVAN GEER

couraged, what do you think you would do or want to see happen?" and they would be able to talk a lot about their thinking!

In my conversations I often mentioned the book I was reading. Then with encouragement from some friends, I offered to organize a climate-change discussion group with Klein's book as the text. After telling some people about it, I got scared and discouraged and didn't do anything to pursue it. But luckily, some of the people I'd spoken to asked, "So when is it happening?" and said they'd like to join. They were telling their friends, too.

So I made it happen. We were scheduled to meet three times, every other week. I encouraged people to read the book, but I also welcomed them to come to the group even if they hadn't read it. And I told them to come to the first meeting even if they couldn't commit to the rest. Ten people showed up,⁴ and consistently came to each one! The group was mostly young adults and a few parents. Most

of them had not previously taken action on climate change or even talked much about it.

At the first two meetings, I had people hang out⁵ together for half an hour or so and then I facilitated a discussion. Many of them were meeting each other for the first time, and I wanted them to have a chance to get to know each other. At the last meeting, I led a goal-setting group, partially inspired by Emma Roderick's report on her goal-setting group for young adult women (see pages 11 to 13 of the October 2014 *Present Time*). I had people trade time listening to each other, and I gave them a goal chart similar to the one in the *Fundamentals Manual*. We ran out of time, but they didn't want to stop! The pairs are going to check in with each other to see how things are going with their next steps toward their goals. People are clear about how much they like each other and how useful the connection is, especially in relation to an issue that can be so restimulating and difficult to keep one's attention on. I'm excited to see what sort of actions they are able to take with this group as a support system.

A couple of days ago I got a text message from a person I had spent a few days with while traveling in February. We'd had a conversation about climate change, and I had talked about my being hopeful about the opportunity it creates—if we can organize ourselves to act. She was extremely pessimistic about the future. I hadn't heard from her since and hadn't expected to stay in touch. But in her message she said that she had been talking about the state of the world and had thought of me

¹ Tim Jackins

² A book about the climate crisis and the central role that capitalism has played in creating it

³ "Material" means distress.

⁴ "Showed up" means came.

⁵ "Hang out" means spend relaxed, unstructured time.

and wished I was living in Detroit (Michigan, USA), because she could use a hopeful friend. I cried when I got the message—it was a helpful reminder of the impact we can make. I like seeing how holding a perspective I've gained partially through RC can make a difference in itself, even if the person I'm relating to never learns RC. I think our conversation challenged this woman's patterned discouragement enough for her to start thinking about how to take action.

Now I'm organizing a more formal book group, through an organization I'm a part of, to read *The New Jim Crow*,⁶ by Michelle Alexander, and discuss mass incarceration and racism. I've invited everyone from the climate-change group to come, and many of them are planning to. (We've had some great discussions in that group about how racism and the climate crisis intersect and are intimately linked.)

Thanks for your persistence with this issue and your clear perspective. At the last meeting of the climate-change group, I shared some of what you had said at the workshop. I talked about how we need to see if we can pry things out of being dead, flat, and unchanging; how we get to just try things; and how mistakes are okay—how they won't make things any worse than they already are. I said that no one knows exactly what the full solution will look like and that we have to make many mistakes and try a lot of things to find our way there. I also shared your direction to talk to five people and just get a conversation going. Then I read

⁶ *The New Jim Crow* is a book about how the mass incarceration of Black people in the United States has become the new Jim Crow. (Jim Crow was the name of the racial caste system that operated primarily though not exclusively in the Southern United States, between 1877 and the mid-1960s.)

aloud a great quote from Klein's book about the importance of connection and community building in facing the climate crisis. I think people were moved.

This is the first time I've led anything like this outside of Co-Counseling or my job. I'm starting to see myself as more of a leader, and more and more I'm putting my mind toward making things go well in my community and the world.

I've also been leading a series of RC classes on care of the environ-

ment. One was on fighting early battles,⁷ another was based on Xabi's article about connection and disconnection,⁸ another was on reading and learning, and this last one was on racism. Leading these classes in RC alongside my new wide-world organizing has been really useful.

Shelley Friedmann
Rosendale, New York, USA

⁷ "Fighting early battles" means proactively confronting and discharging on early hurts.

⁸ "Connection, Disconnection, Reconnection, and Liberation," by Xabi Odriozola, on pages 7 to 11 of the January 2015 *Present Time*



TAMARA DAMON

A New Factor in Human Affairs

By thoughtful organizing, we can in the future deliberately guard large numbers of new human beings from exposure to distress. If such careful protection can be carried through until these individuals are about nine or ten years old, and if their enormous inherent learning capacity can be met with access to a wide, wide range of knowledge, a completely new factor will appear in human affairs. These individuals themselves will furnish leadership to the rest of us. They will take charge of the further re-emergence of the world at a pace that will dazzle with delight those of us who have struggled so laboriously thus far.

Harvey Jackins
From page 6 of *A Better World*

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

Thanks very much!
Rational Island Publishers

Bringing RC to the United Nations Conference on Climate Change

The RC Communities will be sending a diverse, international delegation of twenty-five Co-Counselors to the United Nations Conference on Climate Change in Paris, France, November 30 to December 4, 2015. We are calling the project "Sustaining All Life" (the same name as our RC care-of-the-environment journal).

This will be the first time that an RC delegation has attended a non-RC international environmental conference. The delegation will be presenting workshops, conducting public forums, holding listening projects, and leading support groups and other events. Wytske Visser and Diane Shisk* will be leading the delegation. Goof Buijs, <bunic@ziggo.nl>, is the organizer.

Here are the goals of the project:

- To bring to this worldwide gathering the tools, policies, and theory developed from our RC practice
- To help update and re-energize the global liberation movement and the global effort to build a movement to sustain all life
- To help build a base from which everyone has an equal voice in the effort to end destructive policies

* Wyske Visser is the RC International Commonality Reference Person for Care of the Environment. Diane Shisk is the Alternate International Reference Person for the RC Communities.



- To learn a great deal from the expertise of the other participants from around the world

The climate negotiations at this conference are coming at a key moment in human history; it is vital that our governments reach a global agreement in the near future. Many, many people will be coming to Paris to show their support for the negotiations, and we hope to reach these people with our work. This is an exciting time in which to influence the world with what we've worked so hard to know, and a great opportunity to learn what we don't yet know.

We will be fundraising to help cover the expenses of the delegates. Please contact Ellie Putnam <ellieput@w-link.net> to volunteer to help with fundraising.

We are also inviting many people who have been active in RC care-of-the-environment work to come to the conference as volunteers to help organize this big undertaking. They will pay their own expenses.

And we are working on a pamphlet that will put out an RC perspective on the environment, climate change, and oppression and present basic RC theory. It will be translated into many languages, including Chinese, Dutch, French, German, Hindi, Japanese, and Spanish. If you can help with translation, please contact Anne Helgedagsrud <helgedagsrud@gmail.com>.

For more information and for updates on the progress of this project, see <www.rc.org/page/sal>.

Our environment goal is for everyone!

A Poster for the Wide World

The 2013 environment goal¹ has been rewritten to communicate the essence of the goal without using RC's vocabulary. It is a clear and concise statement of the problem facing us, and what must be done, and has now been put on a poster (*to left*). All Co-Counselors are encouraged to have one of the posters with the RC version of the goal on it² inside their home and this wide world version on their front door, at work, and anywhere else.

\$8.00 (U.S.), plus postage and handling

(Not eligible for quantity discounts)

Ordering information on page 110

¹ A goal adopted by the 2013 World Conference of the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities

² See page 30 of this *Present Time*.

Catholic Women Leading

Ash Wednesday is a significant Catholic observance that marks the beginning of Lent.¹ It is one of the few opportunities for laywomen to lead (even though they rarely make use of the opportunity).

Last week my coworker, a Salvadoran immigrant woman now living in Los Angeles (California, USA), and I took turns leading Ash Wednesday services at our church. She and I each led three services (six total) in Spanish, and a male priest led two others.

It was the second year we'd led the services. Last year we had to work through a lot of internalized sexism as Catholic women to gather enough self-confidence. I worried a lot about being criticized by both women and men for being bold enough to lead as a Catholic female. I did Co-Counseling sessions on whether or not to wear the white alb (the white robe worn by altar servers and male priests). One sweet moment was when my coworker and I were trying on albs and laughing and laughing away layers of embarrassment and fear.

Leading the services meant doing the introductory prayers, reading the Bible Gospel for Ash Wednesday, preaching, and being one of the ministers to place ashes on people's foreheads. My preaching this year focused on God's mercy and forgiveness and getting to start fresh. I talked about working through feelings of disappointment, discouragement, anger, and sadness in order to muster the confidence to change something to make our own life better and in order to support family members and others around us enough that they can make changes, too.

It was good to connect with parishioners who appreciated what I talked about. There were a few challenges. One woman told me I looked silly in an alb—right before I was to lead my first service. Even though her comment hurt my feelings, I'd had enough Co-Counseling sessions that I could decide to stay confident and believe in myself and my capacity to lead the service. It was interesting to notice I could make that decision in the face of criticism.

Our priest-pastor played an important role as a male ally. Last year he was firm enough against our distresses to state clearly that he wanted us to lead but flexible and playful enough to joke around with us as we worked through our internalized sexism. This year was easier. We still had moments of doubt after a female parishioner was critical of our plans to lead again, but we recognized her attitude as internalized sexism and are starting to think about how to give her a hand² with it.

A highlight was seeing teenage females and young adult women visibly interested in women leading in the Catholic Church. A young woman asked me to help her think about how she, too, could lead and make a meaningful difference in her community.

Ellie Hidalgo

Los Angeles, California, USA

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

¹ Lent is a solemn Christian religious observance that begins on Ash Wednesday and continues for approximately six weeks until Easter Sunday. It is a time when Christians focus on simple living, prayer, and fasting in order to grow closer to God.

² "A hand" means some help.

Full Moon

Full moon, full moon,
you're out tonight.

Full moon, full moon,
my walk you light.

Shining, shining,
you're ever so bright.

Will you be here when
geese take flight?

Pam Roby

Santa Cruz,
California, USA



TIM JACKINS

Middle-Class People Facing Reality and Changing Their Role

For over six months, Seán Ruth¹ and I have been working, and consulting widely, on a new document based on the current draft middle-class liberation policy. The working title of the document is “Changing Our Role.” We intend it to be the basis for producing a new, much shorter middle-class policy in the near future.

“Changing Our Role” describes the way the capitalist economic system works and the role of the middle class within it. It talks about the system as currently in crisis and beginning to disintegrate. Our environment has been and still is being damaged and depleted in the search for profit, and the resulting crises mean it is unlikely that global capitalism as we know it will ever recover. “Changing Our Role” says that this situation will be resolved, one way or another, during the lifetimes of many of us alive today.

The document analyses the role expectations for us as middle-class people and encourages us to be honest about what we do to help the current system. It invites us to decide to end class oppression, and to set up our lives to do this, even if at this stage we do not know exactly how.

EXPERIMENTING AT A MIDDLE-CLASS WORKSHOP

I was eager to lead a middle-class workshop for six Regions² in England that regularly come together to work on class. I wanted to experiment with ways of discharging on some of the frightening and exciting things that Seán and I had been writing about.

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

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

Thirty-six people came to the workshop. Nearly half of us were elders who had been doing middle-class liberation work for many years. We also had one young person, five young adults, four people in their early thirties, and three in their early forties,

We have a role to play that is completely different from the roles that capitalism has laid out for us as middle-class people.

as well as a few RC leaders who had been raised working class or owning class but now had middle-class jobs or lifestyles.

I started doing middle-class liberation work twenty-five years ago. For many years most of us who did it were white Protestant English Gentiles. At this workshop there were seven people targeted by racism, seven Jews, nine LGBTQ³ people (as far as I knew), and several people with disabilities. I think there are two reasons for this change: (1) the work we have done makes it safer for people from oppressed groups to decide to do the work, and (2) the work we have done makes middle-class Co-Counsellors able to show themselves more, so we can see our diversity.

English material⁴ sits heavily on all of us who live here, wherever we come from and whichever groups we belong to. It reinforces the middle-class message that we should all try to sound like Southern English people,

³ Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer

⁴ “Material” means distress.

and not express emotions loudly or emphatically, or do anything odd or non-conformist.

I decided my main aim for the workshop was to make it safe for us to speak from the heart and notice and reject our enforced assimilation.

I didn’t know whether I could do this or exactly how to do it, but I had a lot of sessions about it. Two things became obvious to me:

- I would not be able to do it on my own.

- I had to give up entirely the idea of looking good as workshop leader. If that was one of my aims, even a secondary one, I wouldn’t be able to do what I really wanted.

I began asking others for help, and I began noticing how many people cared about me personally as well as being committed to class liberation work. This had been true for a long time, but my early material and my middle-class internalised oppression had made me feel as if they only cared about me, and were willing to work with me, *on condition* that I work hard, behave well, and do what they need or want.

The workshop began with a leaders’ afternoon, and I took some time in front of the group to describe what I wanted for the workshop. I mentioned Seán’s concept of “collective leadership.” I said that I suspected it was particularly important to middle-class people, because of our tendency toward individualism, but that I didn’t think any of us yet knew exactly what it meant. Part of it must involve creating a group in which all the members are thinking about the whole. I asked the people at the leaders’ afternoon to

do this. Later at the workshop I asked everyone to think about the whole, and I believe that everyone did reach for it.

We started the workshop with a Co-Counselling session. (Middle-class people often go into a workshop, or any other situation, trying to find out and conform to the rules that apply in that particular time and place. A session can help us become more connected.) We followed the session with a rowdy game, and followed that with Shabbat.⁵ Shabbat is a time to stop everyday work and focus on the benign reality of ourselves and the world—a precious anti-capitalist legacy from the Jewish people. After Shabbat we introduced ourselves.

“Changing Our Role”—thirty pages long—had been sent out to all the participants prior to the workshop. The first thing I said at the workshop was that it was an important, valuable document and that there is an internalised oppression among RCers that often makes us underestimate the significance and power of our theory and the discharge process. I explained that we weren’t going to study the document but rather discharge about it, and that discharging denial was key to getting back our power.

I talked about assimilation. When we are born, all of us have to learn to fit into the rigidities of our particular family, culture, and society. This is our first assimilation, and it is enforced by young people’s oppression. For those of us who belong to targeted groups, a second assimilation, to the dominant culture, is demanded of us. This extra assimilation may feel (or actually be) necessary for our survival. It requires us either to “pass” as a member of the dominant group (giving up important parts of ourselves) or to accept our

status as inferior. For some people—for example, people with darker skin or visible disabilities—“passing” is impossible, though they are still supposed to conform to the rules of the dominant group. For those who can’t or won’t “pass,” the requirement is to accept their inferior status and find ways of living with it. One of the roles of the middle class is to make both sorts of assimilation work.

I invited a woman who had been born and spent a lot of her childhood in a colony to talk about colonialism. She described how confusing it had been to realise that although the English colonisers obviously knew much less and were far less competent than the natives of the country, they were still somehow considered superior. She had puzzled over the idea that an ignorant English schoolfellow was “better” than she was. She’d had to watch her middle-class father use his skills and knowledge to help the colonisers rule.



PAM ROBY

Whatever form it takes, this second assimilation is painful and harmful. Nevertheless, belonging to a non-dominant group means having some idea that other ways of being exist. The most thorough “colonization” or assimilation is for those of us raised in dominant groups. Our minds are taken over⁶ at such a young age that it is hard for us to imagine what our true selves might be. And our privilege makes the enormous human price we pay hard to take in.⁷ We are set up to be oppressors, to try to get others to join us in at least the appearance of conformity. We become the assimilation police. I did a demonstration with someone who wanted her working-class partner to assimilate so that he would be treated better.

Tim⁸ sometimes talks about RC as an experiment, and that is how I thought of this workshop. I didn’t give much theory, because it was all in “Changing Our Role.” Instead I looked for ways we could discharge, and see each other discharge, that would allow us to resist middle-class and English oppression and decide to join a collective effort to end class oppression in all its forms.

I asked Karl Lam⁹ to lead an early-morning class on oppression, and almost all the workshop came. He reminded us of how oppressor material gets laid in. When we are hurt or witness someone else being hurt, the whole situation is recorded and becomes a potential trap in our minds. When reminded of it, we may replay it from any of the recorded positions—as oppressor, as victim, or as witness. Karl distinguished between *oppression* (the systematic mistreatment of a group by another group or by society)

continued . . .

⁶ “Taken over” means taken control of.

⁷ “Take in” means grasp.

⁸ Tim Jackins

⁹ Karl Lam is the Regional Reference Person for Cambridge, Herts, Beds, Bucks, and Norfolk, in England.

⁵ It is a tradition at RC workshops to celebrate Shabbat (the Jewish Sabbath) on Friday evening, as a way to contradict anti-Jewish oppression.

WIDE WORLD CHANGING

... continued

and *oppressor material*, which we all carry and which makes us lash out, try to hurt others, become indifferent, and so on.

Karl also led part of a class on Englishness. As he had explained in his *Present Time* article,¹⁰ anyone who lives in England becomes affected by the “goodness” myth of the “English Empire” (a more accurate term than “British Empire”). To get back to our true basic goodness, we have to see through and discharge the myths about English goodness, such as the myth that we fought World War II to stop fascism. After his talk, we divided into groups to discharge on “What is your relationship to England and the English?” We did this in mixed groups, as staying together and understanding that everyone carries both oppressor and victim material allows us to see and understand how the oppression works.

We tried an experiment to get us facing and discharging our denial of the current crises. Part of “Changing Our Role” says that capitalism is already disintegrating and describes how environmental destruction is likely to affect us over the next few decades. We read some of those paragraphs aloud,

¹⁰ “English Liberation,” on pages 57 to 59 of the October 2013 *Present Time*

and after each paragraph, one member of a panel of young adults, and our one young person, took three minutes each to discharge in front of the group. We got to see the varieties of denial and glimpsed the despair lurking behind. Then we divided into groups of four to tell stories about the end of capitalism and what might follow. My thinking was that some things are so hard to look at that fantasising is the best way to discharge on them. This experiment worked well for many people, though not everyone could use it.

As you read this, you may have the impression, because of the subject matter, of overwhelming grimness. It wasn't like that at all! Although we were looking at painful and difficult aspects of reality that could take us right back to our early defeats, we were tackling them in small bursts, with lightness and often laughter. The tone of the workshop was good, and people's attention was excellent.

We looked at the nine role expectations for middle-class people described in “Changing Our Role” and worked in pairs on a version of four questions devised by Seán: (1) What are the role expectations for someone in your position? (2) How have you benefitted from your role? How have you resisted it? (3) How have you set up your life to end class oppression?

(The answer may be “I haven't.”) (4) If you were to reach for your full integrity, what would you do differently? We had a mini on each question, staying in the same pairs for all four questions.

In an early-morning group for women and men, I read aloud a passage from “Changing Our Role” that encourages women to take responsibility for the future of the world and men to show their vulnerability and outrage. Because the oppression of women and the oppression of men are systematically tied together, to take these directions contradicts both our own internalised oppression *and* that of the other gender. I counselled a woman and a man, who each discharged deeply. Because I wanted us all to see each other's struggles, for the mini-sessions that followed I asked the men to each choose a female Co-Counsellor.

By Saturday night my own efforts to face the extent of the destruction caused by capitalism had begun to depress me. I asked for help, and a couple of leaders gave me some time.¹¹ I stayed awake a lot of the night, struggling to take a perspective outside the hopelessness.

I said to the workshop on Sunday morning that we cannot know what will happen to our world in the future. The processes that will decide by how many degrees the planet heats up are happening right now. We don't know exactly how human beings will be affected. And we don't yet know whether the forces ranged against capitalist destruction will be able to stop it or limit it. Re-evaluation Counselling is one of those forces, but we don't yet know whether it can make an appreciable difference. But what an amazing time to be alive! This is a time when we each have a chance to affect what happens. Other (possibly worse) types of class society may replace capital-



ROB VENDERBOS

¹¹ “Gave me some time” means gave me some attention.

ism, or human beings may succeed in building new sorts of non-oppressive societies. We have a role to play that is completely different from the roles that capitalism has laid out for us as middle-class people.

When planning the Sunday class, I originally had the idea of our thinking aloud about what sorts of societies are possible. But then it seemed as if we could not work that out without first discharging hard on wanting something better than what exists now. I decided to do the class on *wanting*.

I did three demonstrations, and we had long minis in between. I had realised that being asked what we *want* would bring up early material but not how powerfully and immediately it would do this. It led straight to early defeats and disconnection. How can we let ourselves dare to want better societies until we discharge these things? I thought of how political rhetoric about building good societies often sounds false, and I think this must be why. Even when the person talking

is sincere, he or she is trying to think about the future without having discharged the early defeats. These early defeats have made us conclude that we have to settle for low expectations, little bits of hope, and disappointing conditional love.

**DISCHARGING ON THE
DESTRUCTIVENESS
OF CAPITALISM**

Since the workshop I have found myself discharging, in odd moments in my daily life, about capitalism's destruction of lives. I think most of us need to do this much more than we do.

We don't discharge about some things because they seem too small to bother about in comparison with the huge, terrible things we know are happening. But this morning I cried for a few moments at the cynical nonsense on a shampoo bottle, thinking of the wasted creative talents of the young adults who probably designed and wrote it.

There are other things we rarely discharge about because they are so enormous, so overwhelming, that we make ourselves numb. For instance, as I write, huge numbers of desperate people are drowning in attempts to reach Europe from North Africa. Such horrors become part of the background of our lives, so they don't really enter our thinking. Yet as climate change and the capitalist crisis get worse, the numbers of desperate fleeing people will increase. We need to find ways of un-numbing. We need to discharge about these terrible events in order to think. This is the only way that the decisions we make about how to live will be based on reality. We can still (as Tim says) dare to be happy; in fact, we will have a much better chance of happiness. Ending denial and reclaiming our integrity so as to act powerfully are central to middle-class liberation.

*Caroline New
Bristol, England*

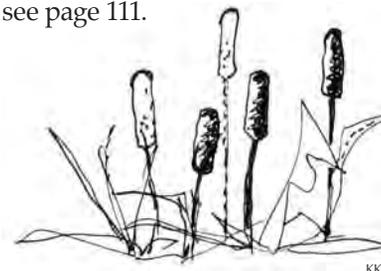
What If . . . ?

When I visited a Palestinian village on the West Bank and talked with a man there about poverty and other topics, he told me that they have no homelessness, because they all take care of each other. I can't vouch for how true that is, but I've been discharging on imagining living in a society in which we all use our material and financial resources to all take care of each other. I try to imagine being on both the giving and the receiving end of that kind of sharing. What if our commitments to and caring for each other took precedence over our greed, over our longing for security just for ourselves or our family, and over our feelings of disconnection and distrust?

Russ Vernon-Jones
Amherst, Massachusetts, USA
Reprinted from the e-mail
discussion list for RC teachers

**Five-Year Subscription
to *Present Time***

Rational Island Publishers is offering a five-year subscription to *Present Time*, at the request of many people who would like to not have to re-subscribe every one or two years. The cost is \$84 in the United States, outside of Washington State; \$92 in Washington State; and \$124 (U.S.) outside the United States. (A couple of dollars have been added to partially cover the anticipated increase in costs over the next five years.) To order a *Present Time* subscription, see page 111.



A Student Project on Climate Change

My wide-world environmental work continues to expand. I recently organized a contest in which local high school students were invited to submit videos, three to ten minutes in length, showing the seriousness of the situation humankind is facing due to climate change but also leaving viewers hopeful about working toward solutions.

We received entries from about a hundred students, ninety-seven percent of them Latinas/os. The students showed great creativity in their designs, formats, and approaches to the topic. They worked hard to grasp the science and express it clearly to a student audience, an adult audience, or both.

The videos were not polished professional pieces, but they conveyed important messages in creative formats. We are encouraging the students to edit them further. You can view the videos on my blog: <www.climatechangeaction2015.wordpress.com>. (There have been issues with public criticism, and some students have marked their videos private. I'm working on handling that.)

Here's a bit from my introduction to the contest—an attempt to hold out perspectives from our RC goal on the environment:¹ "A few years ago I learned enough about climate change to realize that it would be the most critical issue of my lifetime. I decided that I would do everything I could think of to stop climate change and build a better future for my children, and people everywhere. This contest grew out of that decision. It's one action toward my goal of



TAMMIS COFFIN

seeing to it² that everyone in our community becomes fully informed about the potential impacts of climate change and inspired to take action to secure the best possible outcome."

The Watsonville (California, USA) Public Library hosted a showcase of the videos as part of a series on climate change: *Living in a Changing World, Working Toward a Better Future: The Challenges and Opportunities of Global Warming*. For a month, a display in the library entry featured the title of the series, some inspiring quotes I'd contributed about confronting climate change, some climate-change facts and action ideas, and a list of organizations and research sites that people could take.

Here's what I said at the showcase to give a young people's liberation perspective: "Many people say that youth are tomorrow's leaders. Young people may well be leaders tomorrow, but I say

that they are leaders today! Let's hear it for³ their leadership and creativity! I want to recognize each and every student who entered the contest—it's a brave step to gather thoughts, organize them, record them, and send them out into the world for others to receive. Students: Please don't stop here; keep raising your voices and recording your thoughts. Set your minds toward solving the climate crisis. Together we can!"

During the showcase we stopped twice to encourage people to talk to others about (1) what they'd learned, what unanswered questions they had, and whom they could start a conversation with about climate change, and (2) what they could do to help solve the crisis and what was in the way of their taking action.

Students spoke at the end about how much they had learned about climate change by participating in the contest and how little they had known before.

These were my closing remarks: "We are living at an incredible point in history, with technology at our fingertips that allows communication and coordination on a global scale. We are also the last people who can potentially stop

¹ A goal adopted by the 2013 World Conference of the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities:

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

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

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

² "Seeing to it" means making certain.

³ "Let's hear it for" means let's applaud.

the worst impacts of climate change. Taking action to preserve life will not only lead to a better future, it will create a better life now for more people. The destruction of the environment is driven by social oppression and human irrationality. Addressing social inequities will improve life now and also lead us away from the path of runaway climate change. Join the Watsonville Climate Action Network! General meeting: May 3."

In addition to learning about climate change, the students learned valuable skills related to video production, interviewing, researching, and composing a message. They have offered to mentor students next year. They are also learning how to respond to negative comments posted on their Youtube videos. (I've shared a little information with them about leadership and attacks.)

The contest provided many opportunities to talk with people about climate change—librarians, restaurant workers and diners, donors, volunteers, students and their families, teachers—and will continue to provide opportunities as articles about the contest are published in the newspapers and the student videos are passed around to numerous e-mail lists and posted on social media. (I am continuing to think about where I want to send them—colleges, environmental organizations, other high schools, and so on.)

It's likely that this project brought climate change to the attention of thousands of people and that it will continue to ripple out. A City Council member whom I met doing a listening project told me that the videos were very emotional for her. She continues to introduce me to people in her circles—other Council members, retired professors who want to volunteer on my projects—and has recommended that I apply to be on the County Commission on the Environment.

Here are some of the possibilities in front of me now:

- Serving on the County Commission on the Environment
- Helping to launch an environmental show with a new youth radio station
- Teaching youth how to help with listening projects
- Leading a community meeting to release initiative on climate change (probably using the Wygelian format⁴)

⁴ A Wygelian format involves each person in a group taking a turn doing the following: (1) reporting on what he or she has been doing in the last period with regard to the issue being discussed, (2) saying what he or she thinks is the current situation regarding that issue, (3) sharing what he or she proposes to do as a leader on that issue in the next period, and (4) discharging on what is getting in the way of his or her leadership.

- Networking with even more people, such as a Council member who wants to organize group bike rides, a Native leader who is working to establish a Native American Cultural and Healing Center, people in the local Peace and Justice Coalition, big growers in the agriculture industry, politicians, and youth groups.

I now have about two hundred and fifty people on my e-mail list, to whom I send perspectives and links to articles in the news about climate change. Most of them are people of Mexican heritage, the majority population in my city. I consider our network to be part of the International People's Climate Movement.

I can't emphasize enough how significant it has been for me to start taking action. One step leads to another. I can't think of the following step until I've taken the first. I step, try something, discharge, think of something new. I have discharged more fear in the last months than I have in years and am regaining my voice in my personal life along with speaking out in public.

Love to you all—it's great to be doing this work with you!



Nancy Faulstich
Watsonville, California, USA
Reprinted from the RC e-mail discussion lists
for leaders in the care of the environment
and for leaders of wide world change

Flexible Humans, Rigid Societies

The human's essential nature is one of flexibility, but all present and past societies, even though they have been constructed by humans, have been essentially rigid.

The individual rational human *can* survive well and flexibly even within the existing rigidities of society. The more rational and flexible she or he becomes, the better she or he will survive.

The requirement for good survival in this rigid society is precisely rational thinking as we define rational thinking—that is, the calculation of brand new, exactly accurate responses to all new situations.

Harvey Jackins
From pages 87 and 98
of *The Human Situation*

Important RC Resources!

Short Talks by Tim Jackins, on CD

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

For a complete list of all the CDs produced up until now, see pages 105 and 106 of this *Present Time*.

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

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

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

If you are a certified RC teacher, the upcoming four CDs per year are available on a subscription basis, and mailed out quarterly, for \$25 a year. If you are not a certified RC teacher, you can subscribe for \$35 a year. Anyone can order up to three years at a time.

Working Together to End Racism

A pamphlet introducing RC from
the perspective of ending racism

*\$2.00 (U.S.), plus postage
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SEATTLE, WASHINGTON, USA • GUDRUN ONKELS

The 2013 *Guidelines for the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities*

New cover, updated contents, photos!

*This document guides the work of the RC Communities.
It is a must-read for all Co-Counselors who would like
to fully understand our wonderful project.*

\$3.00 (U.S.)

plus postage and handling

The full text of the *Guidelines* can also be found and searched electronically on the RC website at <www.rc.org>.

Ordering information on page 110

Disability Oppression and Liberation

I want to think about disability oppression and liberation, particularly from the perspective of a person born with a noticeable impairment in England in the early 1960s.

PRIDE

First, it sometimes surprises allies to hear that many of us who are disabled take pride in our identity. (The surprise is an aspect of oppressor material.¹) We are resilient, resourceful, and fun! Our humour can be hilarious and our relationships deep and generous. There is a thriving disability arts and culture scene. Some deaf people think of themselves as a cultural minority with a vibrant language and often define themselves as “Deaf” with a capital D. As an activist, I have been involved in many public demonstrations that have challenged disability oppression and given us pride as disabled people. I remember well a time when a small group of disabled people effectively closed down a major television channel’s Saturday night broadcast by “invading” the TV studio in protest of its portrayal of disabled people as victims.

WHAT IT WAS LIKE, AND WHAT IT’S LIKE NOW

There are many good accounts of the history of disability oppression and the lives of disabled people in different places and times. For example, Laurie Summers, assisted by Marsha Saxton, wrote a great piece for the January 2014 *Present Time*.² That *Present Time* also contained an article by Amy Anderson, with

¹ “Material” means distress.

² See “Toward a Policy on Disability,” on pages 26 to 30 of the January 2014 *Present Time*. Laurie Summers is an RC leader in Silver Spring, Maryland, USA. Marsha Saxton is the International Liberation Reference Person for People with Disabilities.

useful information and questions to discharge on.³ I will say a few things about life for me and about what I have come to understand.

Fundamentally, the core oppression of disabled people is that we are considered and treated as if we are fundamentally wrong, defective, and not fully human. Although disability oppression probably preceded capitalism, a current key aspect of it is that we are seen as not economically useful and hence of little or no value to capitalism. At worst we are deemed not worthy of living.

Some of us were rejected by our families at birth, due to confusion from the heavy oppression. (This happened to me, at least for a short time.) Some of us were sent away to remote residential schools or care homes, losing contact with family, friends, and communities. Some of us were killed. Many of us were subjected to painful and invasive medical interventions, often (as in my case) not because we were sick but because we didn’t “look” right and needed “repairing.” As a young child I had nine long hospitalisations, many with agonising treatments, during which I had not one visitor, other

than medical staff, for up to two weeks. (I now believe I was targeted for harsh mistreatment by some of the hospital staff because of being disabled.) Most of us were treated as victims to be pitied—a particularly nasty form of exclusion. Of course we internalised all of this, even those of us who were lucky enough to have family or friends who fought against the oppression and for their human connection with us.

Disabled people and their allies have challenged some of these oppressive irrationalities. In England and in many other countries there is now less segregation, and laws have been passed prohibiting discrimination. However, as capitalism causes greater difficulties, disabled people are targeted, particularly through cuts in services and support, which has usurped some of the progress made.

THE MEDICAL MODEL

The “medical model” (or “charity model”) of disability says that all of our problems as disabled people are due to our medical conditions (what we disability activists call “impairments”). It encourages a view that we are fundamentally “wrong” because of our impairments. It focuses on

continued . . .

³ See “An Introduction to Disability Liberation,” on pages 45 to 46 of the January 2014 *Present Time*. Amy Anderson is an RC leader in Madison, Wisconsin, USA.



J. EISENHEIM

LIBERATION

... continued

treatment and rehabilitation. While medical interventions and rehabilitation services are sometimes helpful, they are oppressive if they are seen as necessary for being accepted as fully human. The medical model encourages people to pity us for being disabled, which harshly excludes and dehumanizes us and discourages close connection. Finally, because the medical model treats us as “wrong,” we can sometimes die of neglect or even be killed.

THE SOCIAL MODEL

In the late 1960s some disabled people began to challenge the medical model. They were inspired by and learnt from the liberation campaigns of other oppressed people, including women, Black people, and Lesbians and Gay men. They argued that the medical model is wrong, that the problems and difficulties we disabled people face are largely caused *not* by our impairments but by oppression. For example, many of us have been lonely, unloved, unemployed, poor, or homeless not because of our impairments but because of society’s response to them—in other words, because of oppression! The “social model” of disability says that it is not cerebral palsy or epilepsy or paralysis or autism or any other impairment that causes us to be lonely, unemployed, or considered ugly, stupid, asexual, or a burden, it is the oppression. (Of course, our impairments can sometimes cause us great difficulties, but in my experience these difficulties are not nearly as hard to bear as the oppression.)

THE OPPRESSION IN DIFFERENT FORMS

Most of us who are disabled need to discharge on exclusion, not belonging, and not being valued. But depending on our particular circumstances and identities, these things have affected us in different ways.

Those of us who were born with our impairments, or acquired them at a very young age, may need to discharge on low self-esteem and low expectations for how others treat us (since we may have had little or no experience beyond being considered “defective”). If our impairments are noticeable to others, and our family and friends were not able to overcome the oppressive information about us, we may carry deep and chronic feelings of humiliation and shame about our bodies. (We may also feel the need to “look after” our allies or “protect” them from us!) This can make it hard for us to show ourselves fully. It can also mean that the closer we get to other humans, the more the humiliation and shame will show.

For those of us who acquired impairments later in life, it can be a shock to experience *both* the loss of ability arising from the impairments *and* the loss of status and access to support, love, and material things. (This can be confusing, as the latter is oppression and the former may not be.) Anything that prevents our participation may feel unbearable in a way that it might not have had we never been able to participate.

Those of us with impairments that are potentially “curable” or from which we might recover may feel confused about how to discharge toward recovery whilst not colluding with the oppression that says that we are “less worthy” if we remain sick or disabled. Also, some types of impairments may be considered by others as simply distress to be discharged. This is a form of oppression, even though discharge may also be helpful. Discharging on this confusion and complexity is important.

Accommodations (such as providing assistance or equipment or making buildings accessible) can dramat-

ically help disabled people be fully included. Equally, the failure to provide them may be part of the oppression. We will all need to discharge to understand this better.

Internalised oppression can separate disabled people from each other and make us feel like we only want to be with non-disabled people. This can be discharged. As a child, I was forcibly segregated into institutions with only disabled children. It taught me to hate myself and prefer non-disabled children. But as a young adult I got involved with other disabled people in the disability liberation movement and discovered how much I love disabled people. The experience was liberating, powerful, and transformative.

Finally, there is much work to do in understanding the hurts, patterns, and oppression arising from the intersection of identities. For example, disabled Jews often have to face their Jewish community’s internalised terror of annihilation, and a particular form of exclusion or marginalization that can come from that.

ALLIES

Our allies have also received all the oppressive messages about disabled people and may be pulled to shun, mistreat, pity, dislike, or otherwise oppress us. If they have been hurt in any way about their own bodies (which virtually everyone has, by sexism, racism, ageism, homophobia, men’s oppression, young people’s oppression, and so on), this may compound their oppressor material.

Unlike with most oppressions, those who are currently allies are likely to become members of the oppressed group. People can move from the oppressor role to the oppressed role by becoming disabled themselves, and this can create complexity, fear, and confusion.

Pretence has been a feature of many relationships between disabled and non-disabled people. Non-disabled people have often tried to hide their oppressive feelings of pity, fear, and disgust under a pretence of concern or even over-enthusiasm. In some cases, non-disabled people have even pretended to like disabled people. (This happened to me as a child. I attended a playgroup for disabled children at which non-disabled children were encouraged to befriend us as part of a programme, after which they received an award and were told that they no longer needed to be our friends. We disabled children called them “fake friends.”) So acting against any feelings of pity and fear and avoiding pretence in getting close may be a big contradiction.⁴ However, even when allies show us real love and caring, it may remind us of pity and we may be confused or restimulated. Consistent, relaxed, and, above all, honest tenderness is often a key contradiction.

A direction I would encourage allies to take is to have complete closeness with disabled people. If you are an ally, what would that mean, and what would you need to discharge?

⁴ Contradiction to the oppression

A NOTE ABOUT LANGUAGE

Words are important, as they convey meanings—including some that are oppressive. For example, I have distinguished the word “impairment” (medical condition) from “disability” (oppression), which goes a long way in naming and opposing the oppression. The wide-world disability movement is not in complete agreement about which words are preferred and which should be avoided. However, here are some general rules and approaches to consider (and discharge on):

Many words used to describe disabled people have been based on and been part of the oppression, for example, “suffering from,” “handicapped,” “wheelchair-bound,” and “crippled.” These words are dehumanising and oppressive and should not be used. Also, words that refer to a medical condition, for example, “the spastic” or “the blind,” should never be used to describe a person. People who use wheelchairs for mobility prefer the accurate and neutral term “wheelchair user.”

As with many oppressed groups, some disabled people have sought to “reclaim” some of the oppressive words and use them in defiance. This

can be a powerful contradiction to the oppression and internalised oppression. However, I would discourage allies from doing this unless and until they have real, close, and committed relationships with disabled people. Even then they should proceed with caution.

Around the world, some disabled people prefer the general term “person with a disability.” In England, I and other disability activists prefer the term “disabled person.”

What we are all trying to do is reach for language that highlights our humanness and that names the oppression as opposed to the impairment.

It’s okay to make a mistake—and, again, not all disabled people agree on which specific words they prefer—but please think, discharge, and ask.

A BENEFIT TO ALL OF US

Disability liberation will benefit all of us humans and enrich our lives in ways we may not yet understand. It also supports one of our core understandings as Co-Counsellors—that we are all good.

David Ruebain
London, England

Art in a Collapsing Society

I think to work on the frontiers of art in a collapsing society still makes sense. Good work done in this period will be remembered and appreciated when there is more leisure and security. But I think if I were an artist, I would broaden my palette and also do some work that is easily widely understood and hopefully has a message of confidence, cheer, and bravery for the people in the middle of struggle.

Harvey Jackins
From page 221 of
The Kind, Friendly Universe



LISTENING PROJECT • NANCY FAULSTICH

Deciding to Live

Dear Native Co-Counselors,

For the past two Novembers, Darlene Daniels¹ and I have traveled to Montreal, Quebec, Canada, to introduce Co-Counseling at a non-RC Native conference “Dialogue for Life” that addresses the epidemic of suicide in Indian Country. The women Co-Counselors from Kahnawake² have assisted us.

The first year, approximately seven hundred First Nations people were present. Each of them had been close to someone who had committed suicide. This year was similar.

We’ve introduced RC to over a hundred people each year, but most of them live in remote and isolated communities and we have not figured out how to consistently stay in touch with them.

Right now, on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota (USA), there are ongoing suicides of young Lakota³ people. I know of four young Native people who have some knowledge of Co-Counseling who struggle frequently with

suicide recordings.⁴ These are just the ones I know of. I am sure that you or someone you know also struggles with the recordings.

How do we get enough discharge to have enough attention to turn the tide on⁵ these internalized genocide recordings? How do we get enough discharge to lead in our communities that don’t have large RC Communities as a resource? We can take the lead here. It means making sure that we are well discharged. It means being brave enough to have a plan of action and daring to love someone enough to get in close with him or her. It means giving up our own addictions and lifestyles that pull us toward the recordings.

I propose that for the next period of time—say,⁶ nine months—each Native RC leader have one five-minute session a week taking the direction, “I decide to live. I decide to live fully for my people. And this means”

Today is a good day to live for my people.

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

¹ Darlene Daniels is the Area Reference Person for Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.

² Kahnawake is the Kahnawake Mohawk Territory, a reserve of the traditionally Iroquoian-speaking Mohawk nation on the south shore of the St. Lawrence River, in Quebec, Canada, across from Montreal.

³ The Lakota people are an Indigenous people of the Great Plains of North America. They are part of a confederation of seven related Sioux tribes and speak Lakota, one of the three major dialects of the Sioux language.

⁴ Distress recordings

⁵ “Turn the tide on” means create the momentum to end.

⁶ “Say” means for example.



MATT WEATHERFORD

African Heritage, Working Class, and Female

I attended the Working-Class Women's Workshop, led by Diane Balsler, assisted by Dan Nickerson,¹ in April 2015 in Massachusetts, USA. One highlight for me has been the discharging and thinking I have done since as an African-heritage female who was raised in the working class. I have challenges trying to separate being Black from being working class. In my mind, being African heritage means being working class. I have been discharging on U.S. slavery and how the unpaid labor of enslaved Africans created the foundation of capitalism.

The majority of the women at the workshop raised their hand when Diane asked who was currently in the middle or owning class or had some relationship with either of them. I am a high school teacher living in the city that has the highest cost of living in the United States. I raised my hand, but it wasn't without feeling intense conflict. I have student-loan debt that exceeds my income, and to my knowledge no one in my immediate family has sig-

¹ Diane Balsler is the International Liberation Reference Person for Women. Dan Nickerson is the International Liberation Reference Person for Working-Class People.

nificant wealth that could be inherited. Also, my ancestors' being treated like property and not being paid for their labor has left recordings² in me of not feeling deeply identified with the work that I do and big feelings of terror about being paid. I am aware of Marxist theories about the alienation of the worker, and I think that discharging on this alienation may be key for U.S.-born women of African heritage.

Many of us African-heritage U.S. females have a fight just to notice that we're female. Our survival has been so dependent on our ability to work and produce that it almost feels like a luxury to take time to think about ourselves as females. Many Black women I know feel that women's liberation or feminism is for white women, but I think what they mean is middle- and owning-class white women, who have had the time to fight for their rights as women.

Diane laid out that working-class females are a majority group globally. What would it really mean to get smart about this? One thing would be to continue building RC Communities

² Distress recordings

and putting RC tools in everyone's hands.

Women targeted by racism made up a quarter to a third of the workshop, and many of the white women I have the closest relationships with were there. Because many of these white women could genuinely and relaxedly like and be with each other, there was a level of work I didn't have to do around racism. That meant that it was more possible for me to work on sexism and male domination.

Most of the demonstrations were with women targeted by racism. I was struck by the stories each of them told and how important it is for each of us to tell our stories about everything, including our lives as female workers. I think part of the oppression of both working-class people and females is to not notice our own stories, to just keep going.

Since the workshop I've felt less numb about myself as a working-class female.

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

We Are Female and Workers

I always enjoy robust, messy gatherings of women in which the women are not preoccupied with their looks or things being "just right," in which things are teetering on the edge of risk-taking and people are telling jokes that end in laughter and fun. I appreciate gatherings of loud, physical women who play and sing out and talk straight about things; who are honest, direct, and unvarnished in showing their struggles as clients; who work hard and enjoy doing it together. Our recent gathering of working-class women leaders¹ was just that kind of gathering. We were delighted to be ourselves, and we simply enjoyed each other.

Diane² was clearly at home and comfortable, nestled in the middle of our group, loving us as females. She spoke about being "females first" and the pull in all our constituencies to see our female selves as secondary. Putting female first can feel like a betrayal of our other identities, yet it is exactly the opposite. We won't be liberated

continued . . .

¹ An RC working-class women's workshop held in Massachusetts, USA, in April 2015

² Diane Balsler, the International Liberation Reference Person for Women and the leader of the workshop, assisted by Dan Nickerson, the International Liberation Reference Person for Working-Class People

LIBERATION

... continued

in our other identities without having our female selves at the center of our lives. And our female intelligence is key not only to ourselves but also to our entire people and the planet. We are battling for our minds and insights, outside of sexism and male domination, so that we can lead the way for every group.

One of the demonstrations was on the feeling that class liberation is about men, that class struggles are male struggles. Diane offered the client the direction, “Workers have vaginas and breasts,” which the client repeated, doubled over³ with laughter, for the next five minutes. It was as if reality was breaking through. Workers have vaginas. Workers have breasts. It was sinking in—not only for the client but for the eighty or so⁴ females in the room who were laughing along with her. The working class is *not* made up only of men.

Dan Nickerson⁵ talked on Saturday evening about the new class initiative.⁶ His interest (at the workshop) was to welcome the group of females most central to production and services, who will keep everyone anchored in a connected, fierce, principled reality. He encouraged us to think about every word of the initiative, to engage our minds, to disagree, discharge, think about it all, and claim it as central to our efforts as females.

Diane and Dan were a team. That was good for all of us to be a part of and see.

Joanne Bray
Greenwich, Connecticut, USA
Reprinted from the RC e-mail
discussion list for leaders of women

³ “Doubled over” means bent over.

⁴ “Eighty or so” means approximately eighty.

⁵ Dan Nickerson is the International Liberation Reference Person for Working-Class People.

⁶ “A New Initiative on Ending Classism,” by Dan Nickerson, on pages 8 to 9 of the July 2014 *Present Time*

From a Working-Class Jewish Female

It's always difficult for me to write to any of the RC e-mail discussion lists. I have to push myself past feelings of insignificance. The combination of being raised in a mixed working- and middle-class Jewish home, facing heavy male domination and anti-Jewish oppression as a young female, and my particular early hurts has made it extremely difficult for me to have a voice. I can't help but notice that I am not alone in this. Although the Working-Class Women's Workshop¹ was a powerful and forward-moving one, few women have written about it so far.

At a meal table with a few of the other Jewish women, Diane² noticed that feelings of invisibility were a common thread for us. Yet the working-class Jewish women that she grew up around were the ones who had fought the hardest and the loudest for the rights of those around them and also in the home. It has had me wondering what has shut us up.³ My mind keeps going back to the demonstration in which it seemed unthinkable to the client that workers were female. I feel something similar as a Jew. The combination of intense but somewhat hidden anti-Jewish oppression in the United States and the mistaken idea held by many Ashkenazi Jews⁴

that upward mobility is the key to safety has left me feeling that I cannot be a Jew and a worker at the same time.

So what would my direction be? Workers have breasts! And vaginas! And read Torah!⁵ And observe the Sabbath!⁶ There's *no one thing* that all Jews do, so it's hard to figure this one out. Ideas are welcome.

Generally at workshops it takes me a full twenty-four hours to “thaw out” enough to begin discharging hard. I have come to expect this numbness and was completely surprised to find that I was able to discharge on heavy early material⁷ from the very first short session in my support group and then continue throughout the weekend. I loved every moment of being with my working-class sisters and being led by Diane and Dan,⁸ who each loved us up.⁹

Joelle Hochman
Somerville, Massachusetts, USA
Reprinted from the RC e-mail
discussion list for leaders of women

¹ A workshop held in Massachusetts, USA, in April 2015

² Diane Balsler, the International Liberation Reference Person for Women and the leader of the workshop, assisted by Dan Nickerson, the International Liberation Reference Person for Working-Class People

³ “Shut us up” means made us be quiet.

⁴ Ashkenazi Jews are Jews of Central and Eastern European descent, who generally identify as white.

⁵ Torah is the body of wisdom and law contained in Jewish Scripture and other sacred literature.

⁶ The Jewish Sabbath, which begins at sundown on Friday and continues until sundown on Saturday

⁷ “Material” means distress.

⁸ See footnote 2.

⁹ “Loved us up” means thoroughly loved us.

RC

Gather all the things
you have decided not to feel;
Give them to
Yourself
as a gift
to be opened
One
by
One.

Carly Frintner
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA



PAM ROBY

An Information Coordinator for Intersex People

Hello! I am the new Information Coordinator for Intersex People and Parents of Intersex Children. We are a group of people many don't know about. A big part of our oppression is about silence, shame, and making us invisible. We are not often talked about. Thus it is hard to get information and to meet other people like us.

Intersex is a general term defining people whose body parts or chromosomes don't match with the usual definitions of male or female. According to medical reports, we are one in fifteen hundred or one in two thousand people. We may have been diagnosed as having CAH (Congenital Adrenal Hyperplasia), AIS (Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome), Klinefelters' Syndrome, or simply a "Disorder of Sexual Development."

Some of us were diagnosed as babies, some of us when reaching puberty, some of us when looking for reasons for infertility. Some of us live with intersex anatomy without anyone (including ourselves) ever knowing. Some of us were born in a time and place in which diagnoses were not made. Some of us needed and got medical help as babies. Some of us didn't need medical help but went through painful treatments because of common beliefs about gender.

Our conditions differ a lot and so do our experiences, treatments, and identities. Let's talk about it.

We are wonderful people. We are needed. We need each other. It is good to know others like us. Break the silence and get together! Please write to me, tell your story!

"Prsank"
<prsank@mail.com>

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A Hopeful Gathering

The following is a welcome given by Tim Jackins at a gathering in Boston, Massachusetts, USA, in May 2015, at which a group of Co-Counselors got to listen to thirty of the RC International Liberation and Commonality Reference Persons talk about their work.

First of all, welcome. Thanks for getting here, especially those of you who came from long distances.

Some part of the RC Community gets this opportunity once every four years. Every four years we gather the International Liberation and Commonality Reference Persons (those who can manage to get together) and spend a long weekend working on distresses about being a Reference Person, sharing information, and figuring out where we want to go.¹ It is a lovely time, a great time. It is also important that these Reference Persons have a

¹ “Where we want to go” means how we want to proceed.

chance to speak to a Community like this—not just to the people they’re trying to think about all the time—and that the Community get to be with all of them. How many of these Reference Persons do you get the chance to listen to and be with? Not many. Some of them are your leaders because you belong to their constituencies. But twenty others you don’t get a chance to know, and they are doing interesting things that it is important for you to know about. So this is a very important event.

They each will have two minutes to tell you something about the work they are doing. They have months of information to impart, and they will have two minutes. In those two minutes you will be able to get a picture of who they are and the work they are doing. Then there will be two meeting times, and you will choose which Reference Person you want to go listen to for each of those times. This may

mean that you meet with the ones who are most important and most central to you, or it may mean that you go to the ones whom you have no connection with but would like to know. It really doesn’t matter which you go to. You will get the chance to see two minds that have dedicated themselves to figuring out RC in a particular direction and to looking after² a certain constituency.

Some of these people have been in their job ever since the job was created decades ago. Some have been in the job for a year or two but have been around RC for decades, helping to think about and build their constituency. All of these minds are remarkable, and what they have done and their commitment to the work are impressive. It should give you hope that there is such a group of committed people working together.

² “Looking after” means thinking and caring about.

The International Liberation Reference Person for South, Central, and West Asian-Heritage People

My name is Azi Khalili. I was born and raised in Iran. I am the International Liberation Reference Person for South, Central, and West Asian-Heritage People.

We want liberation and unification for all people. We know that what is getting in the way of that is distress. It’s the biggest problem facing humanity. And we know what to do with distress. We have the tools.



STEVE BANBURY

We also know that it will take about three million people to create the critical mass that will turn us toward the liberation and the unification of all people. So part of my job in this next period is to go after* a portion of those three million people. They are from South, Central, and West Asia. You’ve heard about some of their countries: Syria, Iraq, Iran, India, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Chechnya. Do they sound familiar? Yes. They are the nations that the United States is at war with right now—that’s why they sound so familiar.

My people from this part of the world are good, human, and loving; they have emotions; they want good lives for themselves and for their children—just like you. During the recent period there has been a huge movement to make people forget that my people are

* “Go after” means pursue.

human. There has been a huge movement to dehumanize and demonize folks from this part of the world.

Part of my job, of course, is to put RC in the hands of more and more of us from this part of the world, to bring us into the center of RC, to get us to lead, and to remind us and our allies about our humanity and goodness.

In terms of ally work, I'd like you to learn geography and history and discharge on the effects of racism, genocide, and colonization on everyone, including you. I want you to work on U.S. identity. I want you to be our partners. I love doing this with you. Thank you for this chance.

Brooklyn, New York, USA



AMANDA MARTINEZ

The International Liberation Reference Person for African-Heritage People

Barbara: I say "re-emergence," you say "liberation." Re-emergence.

Audience: Liberation.

Barbara: Re-emergence!

Audience: Liberation!

Barbara: RE-EMERGENCE!

Audience: LIBERATION!

My name is Barbara Love, and my job is to get you to think along these lines and to think about the liberation and re-emergence of African-heritage people. There are seven things I want you to remember about what we are trying to do:

- 1) We are trying to increase the numbers of African-heritage people who have access to the theory and tools of Re-evaluation Counseling.
- 2) We are trying to identify the issues that interfere with our re-emergence.
- 3) We are trying to create the conditions that make it more possible for us to discharge the things that get in the way of our re-emergence and liberation.
- 4) We are trying to create RC Communities that welcome us, make us feel valuable, and make it safe for us to be an integral part of them.
- 5) We are trying to grow the leadership of increasing numbers of African-heritage people and make it possible for them to participate in all parts of the Communities.
- 6) We are trying to move African-heritage people into all parts of the Communities.
- 7) My biggest job is, with you, to create the conditions for creating a world characterized by liberation, a world that works well for everyone. This includes hastening the end of capitalism. This includes cleaning up the environment. This obviously means all of us discharging what gets in the way of our working, every day, all the time, to create a world characterized by fairness and justice.

It is my great pleasure to be in this project with you.

Amherst, Massachusetts, USA

Hizkuntzetarako eta Ahozko Itzulpenetarako Ezaugarri Komuneko Nazioarteko Erreferentzia Pertsona The International Commonality Reference Person for Languages and Interpreting

Xabi Odriozola nauzue, Euskal Herrikoa. Hizkuntzetarako eta Ahozko Itzulpenetarako Nazioarteko Ezaugarri Komuneko Erreferentzia Pertsona nauzue. Oraintxe nire hizkuntza aditu berri duzue, berrogei bat mila urte dituen. Nire jendeari, nire herriari, nire kulturari nagokien sentikizun indartsua eman dit neure hizkuntzak, eta era berean, integritate eta loturazko zentzu indartsua ere bai; horrek sistemak ni manipulatzeko eta nahastea zailtzen du.

Hizkuntza komunikaziorako tresna soila baino zerbait gehiago dugu. Nire jendea bizi den gunea da, nire jendeak ideiarik onenak sortzen dituen lekua- mundu hau hobera eraman dezaketen ideiak, hain zuzen. Zeure burua aldarrikatzeko tokia ere bada. Zure jendea, zure hizkuntza, zure jaurauspen-jatorria aldarrikatzen lagundu nahi nizuke, eta nonahi zu zeu osoki izaten ere bai.

Donostia, Euskal Herria

I'm Xabi Odriozola, from the Basque Country. I am the International Commonality Reference Person for Languages and Interpreting. You have just heard my language, which is around forty thousand years old. My language has given me a strong feeling of belonging to my people, to my land, to my culture, and a strong sense of integrity and connection that makes it harder for the system to manipulate and confuse me.

Language is something more than a tool for communication. It is the space where my people live, the space where my people's best ideas are created—the ideas that can make this world better. It is also a space for you to reclaim yourself. I would like to help you to reclaim your people, your language, your background, and to be fully yourself everywhere you go.

Donostia, Basque Country

The International Liberation Reference Person for Young People

I'm Mari Piggott, and I'm the International Liberation Reference Person for Young People.

What's true about young people? Young people are born very good and hugely intelligent. Because we have not had as much time to accumulate distresses, we still have flexible thinking. We are smart and are able to think about many things, including connection, closeness, and creativity. Young people have a good picture of the world and how it should be. We haven't gotten as confused and discouraged as you have. Young people are excellent leaders.

What is young people's oppression? The intelligence we young people have in the areas of connection and how the world should be is dangerous to an oppressive society. So young people's oppression comes in and tries to make us feel stupid and powerless so that we don't challenge the oppressive society.

Young people's oppression is mostly unacknowledged, or even seen as good practice and necessary. (Think about

school.) It is important that we talk about young people's oppression and liberation, in RC and out in the world, so it doesn't go unchallenged.

Making RC accessible to young people is one of RC's major goals. We need to move forward on this. We need all of us having sessions on it and also actively challenging young people's oppression, in RC and in our lives.

Why work for young people's liberation? It is a fast track to your own re-emergence. It reminds you of exactly what you need to work on from when you were a young person. Most of our distresses have their roots in our early hurts. Discharging those early hurts and being allies to young people are a fast track for all of us. Also, challenging young people's oppression is a foundation for challenging the oppressive society. Young people's liberation will make things go better for everyone.

Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

The International Liberation Reference Person for Young Adults

My name is Emily Bloch, and I am the International Liberation Reference Person for Young Adults—for people ages twenty-one to thirty. Young adults are great. Young adults are a revolutionary force. Revolutions have often been led by young adults.

When we become young adults, many of us finally have control over our own resources and time. Also, a heavy oppression comes down so that we don't use those resources in a revolutionary way.

You are horrified by our lives. (*laughter*) And we are a little horrified by many of yours. (*laughter*) Our lives show just how on the

edge things really are. There is a lot of instability, a lot of ups and downs. You can see where we are just hanging on. Your lives show the rigidities that you haven't been able to work on. We are horrified by each other, and we need each other.

There is an amazing group of young adults in Co-Counseling. You should get to know us. We should all build close relationships with each other.

And we young adult Co-Counselors are not yet representative of the many constituencies of young adults in the world. We need to work to change that.

I think about my job in two main ways. One is helping people figure out their own lives, because all our lives matter. Every single person's life matters. It makes a difference. It's valuable. It's important. And we can't get so consumed with our own lives that we forget about the rest of the world. We need to think about how to move the world forward together.

I also think about how to get a whole group of younger people ready to lead Co-Counseling, to lead this organization. I look forward to doing that with all of you.

Brookline, Massachusetts, USA

The International Liberation Reference Person for Parents

I'm Marya Axner, and I am the International Liberation Reference Person for Parents. Parents are precious. You parents are precious to me, and you come first. We have this awesome job of being close to young people as they grow. We get to connect deeply with them. We get to love them with all our hearts, and we get to be loved by them. It is really smart of us to be parents.

We are also oppressed. We don't get paid for the job we do, and we work our butts off.¹ This is an incredibly demanding job that takes intelligence, stamina, time, and all kinds of organization. We have to spend a lot of our time figuring out how to provide our families with their very basic needs when we would rather be giving attention to our children. So we are oppressed. This is one of the most valuable jobs in the whole world, and we don't get to do it the way we want to. Then we get blamed because our children have difficulties. This is outrageous! And, as you know, society is falling apart—it's becoming



LYNDALL KATZ

harsher for parents and families, and there is less resource.

So this is what we get to do:

1) We get to use the tools of Co-Counseling to fight for ourselves and our re-emergence, so we can think well about our own lives and about our children, and support them the way we want to.

2) We get to appreciate ourselves and each other as parents.

3) We get to build support for ourselves, inside and outside of Co-Counseling, so that we cut through the isolation. We get to talk about what's going on² in our families. We get to discharge on the difficulties we are up against. We get to stand up for³ policies that support families and young people, that respect young people and parents and allow them to discharge.

continued . . .

² "Going on" means happening.

³ "Stand up for" means support, fight for.

¹ "Work our butts off" means work extremely hard.

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4) We get to unite with other workers who take care of people. In society the people who do the most important jobs get paid the least, or nothing at all. That's partly because these jobs are usually

associated with women. We get to stand up for and get together with all the people who care for people, and figure out policies that are right for us.

Somerville, Massachusetts, USA

The International Commonality Reference Person for the Care of the Environment

My name is Wytske Visser. I am the International Commonality Reference Person for the Care of the Environment. I am working class and a native European. I was born and am living in Fryslan, a province in the Netherlands. Frisian is my first language; English, my third.

Since the RC Communities adopted the new goal on care of the environment,¹ more RC leaders than ever before have gotten involved in care-of-the-environment work. Awareness of the effects of our oppressive societies, of the disruption and exploitation driven by greed, is growing quickly.

It is recommended that all RC leaders lead on care of the environment and always make genocide and environmental racism visible as they do so. Working on care of the environment is not a way to escape from or step over putting ending racism and genocide in the center of all of our work.

Living in a healthy balance with all of life and moving toward a sustainable future are about *one for all and all for one*. Doing the work as laid out in our goal will help us to more quickly end every form of oppression.

Our oppressive class-based, male-dominated societies put each individual in an isolated corner. Confusing messages about appearance and competition keep each of us preoccupied and holding back from showing our love and caring.

We need to unite in peaceful mass movements. Life on earth is amazing and miraculous in its uniquely complex beauty. It is worth fighting for.

We can provide some of the big and bold leadership that is needed for us and for the next generations. Sharing RC tools will bring improvement to every action and organization. It is also time to begin giving up comfort and lowering our consumption. We can be role models that will inspire people in the wide world.

We can transform our societies into ones in which all life is sustained.

Beth Cruise, the editor of *Sustaining All Life*, the RC journal on care of the environment, is working with a team on the second issue. It will be printed in October of this year.

An RC project by the same name, *Sustaining All Life*, will be sending a delegation to the biggest-so-far United Nations conference on climate change (COP21) in Paris, France, this November. We will do workshops, forums, and listening projects and have an information booth with literature, posters, and more. Diane Shisk and I will be leading the delegation. Some of us involved in the project are preparing a non-RC pamphlet to bring to the conference. It will contain what we in RC know about working on care of the environment, along with an introduction to Co-Counseling.

I want to finish with a quote by Harvey Jackins:

"An effectively caring person is the most 'dangerous' revolutionary you can let loose."

Let's go for² effective caring!

Ljouwert, Fryslan, the Netherlands

¹ A goal adopted by the 2013 World Conference of the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities:

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

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

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

² "Go for" means work enthusiastically toward.

Profound Re-evaluations at Auschwitz-Birkenau

I recently attended a Healing from World War II Workshop, led by Julian Weissglass,¹ and visited Auschwitz-Birkenau² for the fourth time.

I am the daughter and granddaughter of Jewish Holocaust survivors. My great grandmother was murdered at Auschwitz-Birkenau. I recently found out that over two hundred of my father's relatives were killed in the Shoah.³ My father is both a civilian survivor and a veteran of World War II. Needless to say, attending the Healing from World War II Workshops in Poland has been important for me and my re-emergence.

The first three times I attended the workshop and went on the visit to Auschwitz-Birkenau, deciding to go and then following through on my decision were terrifying. As my departure date would approach, I'd have strong feelings of wanting to cancel the trip. The welcome letter would arrive and only increase my restimulated terror. It would say that it might be cold, windy, and rainy in Auschwitz, and especially Birkenau, and that the lunches during the visit would be small and probably leave us hungry. Early fears about my survival would come up. (I almost died when I was born. Being premature, I didn't have enough body fat to keep me warm. I also didn't receive adequate nutrition due to an undetected dairy allergy. Being or thinking about being cold and hungry brings up a lot of terror from all this, not to mention Holocaust restimulation.)

¹ Julian Weissglass is the International Commonality Reference Person for Wide World Change.

² Auschwitz-Birkenau was a German concentration camp, established by the Nazis in Poland, where the Nazis murdered approximately 1.1 million people, about ninety percent of them Jews.

³ The Shoah is the Holocaust.



KATHRYN LISS

Fortunately I would never act on my feelings of wanting to cancel my participation. I would have some Co-Counseling sessions and manage to get on the plane and train and get to Oświęcim,⁴ where the RC group would meet to prepare for the visit to Auschwitz-Birkenau. Even among that wonderful RC group, and with lots of discharge, every night we'd spend in Oświęcim I would go to bed terrified of visiting the camps the next day. The first year I attended the workshop and went on the visit, I was so terrified that I didn't manage to sleep more than four or five hours a night for the entire week.

The biggest shift in my perspective happened in 2013. That year I was on the committee to plan a memorial service at Birkenau on the third and final day of the visit. Working with this committee, made up of four Jewish descendants of Holocaust survivors, was delightful, and we planned a memorial service that all of us were excited about. We planned to start it by singing a song in Hebrew, *Gesher Tzar Me'od*. The lyrics of this song in English are "The whole world is

⁴ Oświęcim is a town in southern Poland, close to Auschwitz-Birkenau.

a very narrow bridge, and the important thing is not to be afraid." Still, as our bus approached Birkenau, I felt the old dread returning, even though I knew we would only be there for a short time, and we had already been there on the previous day.

We got off the bus, and I got together with my memorial-service team. As we walked through the gates of Birkenau, arm in arm with the rest of our RC group, one of my partners on the team started to sing *Gesher Tzar Me'od*, and I joined in—as much as I could before starting to discharge heavily.

Through my tears I was able to look around and have a powerful re-evaluation. Singing in Hebrew in Birkenau made me feel intensely alive and powerful, and I realized that we, the Jewish people, had survived while the Nazis had not. Looking at the lovely, powerful, international, multilingual group of RCers around me, I realized that we were more powerful than the Nazis and more powerful than the awful place we were in. I realized that I no longer had to live in dread of that place, that the Nazis were dead and gone. I looked around me at the barbed wire, guard stations, train tracks, and barracks and saw Birkenau in a new way: as a place that was obsolete, old, broken down, and powerless. I saw it as a sad place but not a scary one.

On my return to California, USA, I continued to discharge on this new perspective. I can still cry buckets of tears by telling my counselor the story of how it happened and singing (or having my counselor sing) *Gesher Tzar Me'od*. I've noticed changes in my life as a result. I seem to be able to keep my attention out better than before. I am able to think and act more powerfully and have become a better

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counselor. I have become more hopeful and am able to hold out hope to others.

Preparing for the visit and workshop this year was different. I still got restimulated as my departure date approached, but I never once felt tempted to cancel the trip. Visiting the camps was still a difficult and restimulating experience. We heard about and saw evidence of terrible brutality and oppression, and that was hard. But I did not feel the same terror. I did not feel as if my survival was threatened. I did not go to bed dreading my visits to the camps.

Rape, and Men's Conditioning

Rape and other sexual violence continue to happen in many conflicts and wars, even though they are forbidden in all societies and religions. They happen so regularly that there must be something systematic about it.

How is it possible that men capable of rape can always be found in war situations? If we do not believe that human males are inherently rapists, there must be something about the upbringing of boys in our societies that allows a certain number of men to be restimulated into acting out rape patterns when the oppressive situations allow or seem to require it.

A key component of men's oppression is that men are brutalized to be able to kill and be killed. I think that men also are brutalized to be able to rape and tolerate rape. What do you think?

Anonymous

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

This year on the third day of the visit in Birkenau, as we prepared for the memorial service, I looked around me and realized that I was simply not scared of Birkenau anymore. The last Jew who was murdered there was murdered in 1945. As far as I knew, no Jews had been murdered there since, and it's quite likely that no Jews will ever be murdered or harmed there again. Birkenau is now a safe place for Jews. Since returning from the workshop, I seem to have a new sense of my strength and power.

Thanks to Julian for leading these workshops and visits, to Gabriella⁵ for her excellent organizing of the visits, and to Jacek⁶ and Iwona⁷ for their organizing of the workshops in Warsaw. My life has been changed because of their efforts.

Terry Fletcher

Berkeley, California, USA

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

⁵ Molnár Gabriella, an RC leader in Budapest, Hungary

⁶ Jacek Strzemieczny, the Regional Reference Person for Poland

⁷ Iwona Odrowąż-Pieniążek, an RC leader in Jonkowo, Poland

Standing Against Men's Oppressor Behavior

We men are systematically brutalized, including and especially by the suppression of the discharge process. We are offered a "way out" by oppressing others—younger or "weaker" males (internalized male oppression), females (sexism), and males who are perceived as not acting within the small confines of what is assumed to be male (Gay oppression).

Any male who stands against these behaviors is subject to more hurts—violence, threats of violence, humiliation, and so on. To stand against male patterns of domination, including but not limited to rape, we will need to challenge the heavy fears that were installed on us early in our lives. What are we scared will happen to us if we take a stand? We need to keep discharging on our early hurts connected to domination, homophobia, sexism, closeness, and sex.

We can also discharge about and try taking stands, and expecting and supporting other men to do the same. When did you take a stand against a man's oppressor material^{*} and move a situation forward? When did you try something and it didn't work? What did you learn from that "failure," and what distresses do you need to work on to be smarter next time?

Once I tried to take a stand against a man's oppressor material, and instead of improving things I set up a situation in which he was likely to be attacked and not well thought about. I learned I have to be clear that I am *for* the man and not just against his oppressor material. For me that means discharging on any internalized oppression that would have me feeling different or separate from another man.

Chris Austill

Somerville, Massachusetts, USA

* "Material" means distress.

Working on the “New Initiative on Ending Classism”

Hello leaders of the working class,

I am wondering what your experience has been with working on the “New Initiative on Ending Classism” published in the July 2014 *Present Time*. I am wondering if it has been useful and how and what it has moved forward for you and others. I am wondering where it has taken you in Co-Counseling sessions and what kind of re-evaluations and changes in your thoughts and actions it has led to, if any. If you think it is on the wrong track or is confusing or not useful, I would like to hear about that.

Since you are working-class leaders in RC, I will remind you that we who are working class are the people most likely to move this initiative forward. I know that our internalized oppression often makes us wish that someone else would be the person to do it, or think that someone else would be a better person to do it. Many of us rarely think that we are good enough. I know that you know that those pieces of internalized oppression have really hurt the working class. I also know that it is not your intention to cooperate with those patterns.

I would like you to have a minimum of five sessions on this initiative. It would be great if some of them followed something that you did—inside or outside of RC—inspired by the initiative. This could be making new friends, putting more attention toward your relationships with people “engaged in the direct production of goods or services,” leading something on the initiative in your RC Community, or getting agreement with your regular Co-Counselor that you will both put

some attention to this initiative and what it would mean for you. Anything.

I can say that it has had unexpected results for me personally. I have been noticing classism in my life everywhere, including in places where I never noticed it before. I have realized that I was shutting it out from my awareness, that I had made an unaware decision to move forward without noticing the classism. My unaware excuse was that if I did notice it, it would bother me too much and I wouldn’t get anything done.

Well, I have been getting things done since noticing. Noticing the classism and feeling the feelings I have about this initiative have been uncomfortable, but my relationships with people in the factory have improved, for one thing. I have become more vocal (have been speaking up more) and more visible.

I have a lot more to say, but I will stop here because I want to hear what you have to say. We need to learn from each other.

*Dan Nickerson
International Liberation Reference
Person for Working-Class People
Freeport, Maine, USA*



CHILD'S ACTIVITY CUBE • AMANDA MARTINEZ

Thanks, Dan, for putting this initiative on ending classism out in the Communities so boldly and for thinking about it so clearly. It has been useful to me.

During past years I sometimes felt that people in my Community were not ready to make ending classism a priority, or that the situation was not yet right for it to be embraced in the wide world. I kept working on it despite the discouragement. The new initiative has been a good contradiction to these feelings.

At Tim’s¹ Southern California (USA) Teachers’ and Leaders’ Workshop last October, I led a topic group of six people on the new initiative. I shared a few of my own experiences from several decades of working in the direct production of goods and services, connecting with my coworkers, and trying to support all of us to be leaders. Most of the people in our topic group were younger and newer to RC. I was impressed with their interest in these stories and how ready they were to move in the direction proposed in the initiative.

In November I had an opportunity to hear Tim speak about related issues and to think with other committed folks about them. It was another good contradiction to discouragement.

At Tim’s West Coast North America Reference Persons’ Workshop in January, I led another topic group on the initiative that had eleven people in attendance. It was a mixed-class group. Instead of focusing on our different class backgrounds, we looked at our

continued . . .

¹ Tim Jackins’

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connections with people currently working in direct production and at backing² their leadership. We talked about how that has been going for each of us and what difficulties get in the way. It seemed to push people in useful, challenging ways, and many seemed pleased.

In my workplace, which is one of the larger employers in the area, there is currently a campaign to form a union. For years I have built connections with people at work and communicated important ideas, and now people are asking me for my thinking about the

union. I have had to think about what I want to say—and not say yet—about what we need to do. It brings up feelings for me about things moving faster and fears about whether I will be ready, and whether we will be ready. I think of a direction Julian Weissglass³ has given me in sessions: “I will not let fear stop me from doing anything I want to do.”

For several years now I have been leading one-day Area⁴ workshops on ending classism, for

people of the global majority. Part of the effect of the new initiative is that I have decided to lead an open weekend workshop for my Region⁵ that will include ending classism as a major theme. I have had good sessions on my feelings about it and have noticed, with some surprise, that I am feeling less dread about leadership and more enjoyment of it.

Food Service Worker
Los Angeles, California, USA
Reprinted from the RC e-mail discussion list for leaders of working-class people

² “Backing” means supporting.

³ Julian Weissglass is the International Commonality Reference Person for Wide World Change.

⁴ An Area is a local RC Community.

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

Reconsider the “Memorial” Validations

As an elder, I would like to point out something that seems wrong to me when people appreciate me at the end of a class or support group. Some of them validate me for my past only, and have done so for many years, and quite consistently do not appreciate anything about me that is current. I feel at these times like I am at my own memorial service rather than being offered a thoughtful validation.

I have many past achievements that are worthy of appreciation, but I also am alive now and still have qualities and activities I engage in that are worth validation.

We have all been targeted and conditioned by ageism since we were born, so the distress is heavy and understandable in all of us. However, if you recognize that you might be aiming “memorial”-type validations at elders, please rethink how consistently you do so. Once in a while it’s nice to be reminded of our past accomplishments, but I think that most of the time most of us elders would prefer to be appreciated for who we are today.

Anne Mackie
Cary, North Carolina, USA
Reprinted from the RC e-mail discussion lists for RC Community members and for leaders of elders

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An Indian Woman Stands Up to¹ Marriage

In India marriage is a big event, and the institution of marriage comes with its own package of oppressions related to caste, race, religion, culture, tradition, and language. It is also differently oppressive for females and males. Looking at it from a woman's perspective and discharging have been quite useful for me.

In my family it's expected that females should compromise about and adjust to everything, particularly marriage. Women generally get married when they are twenty, and also become mothers soon. I am thirty-one and single. In the last few years every day, at least once, someone would ask me when I was getting married. As I had been working on not compromising and not giving up on my dreams, I could say, "Whenever I wish."

In one of my sessions I had told my Co-Counselor that I would not get married because I felt isolated; or because my younger sister's marriage was pending, my parents were worried, or it was said by doctors that after age thirty getting pregnant would be difficult; or because people didn't respect a single woman as much as a married woman. I had decided that my marriage was my choice and that I would get married only when I wanted to.

Recently I saw an advertisement in which a heroine says the same things that I had told my counselor. I felt very supported. We women are there for each other, we understand each other, we are allies to each other. It's not all about marriage; it's about us young women being able to think about our marriages, our bodies, and our lives. We are in charge, complete charge, of our lives and the entire universe.

Marriage proposals have been coming, and I am going on discharging² on marriage and sexism. Standing up for myself and trusting my thinking have been a powerful way of fighting the oppression.

I am glad that I am able to tell my mother and other older women that I am a smart young woman, I will be fine, and I can take care of myself irrespective of whether I get married now or later. Though they are worried, because of internalized women's oppression, I am consistently spreading rays of hope about my future, to myself and to them.

No limits for women! Cheers to all females, and all of our male allies!

S.J. Shashikala (Shashi)
Bangalore, India

¹ "Stands up to" means bravely confronts.

² "Going on discharging" means continuing to discharge.



THE FLYSCH ROUTE, BASQUE COUNTRY • DAPHNE DERTIEN

Suggestions for U.S. Writers

*Taken from a discussion on the RC e-mail discussion list
for leaders of wide world change*

The RC e-mail discussion list for leaders of wide world change has over five hundred subscribers, and about a third of them are not USers. We USers should keep in mind that many people on the list may not be aware of the events we are writing about and that many readers' first language is not English.

User distress recordings often make us forget that we are writing for an international audience. Discharging on these recordings and acting against them are an important part of our re-emergence. Here are some suggestions for USers to make this list more inclusive of people from outside the United States:

- Briefly explain the background and context of what you are writing about.
- Refer to U.S. events and people as *U.S.* events and people. (For example, write "the U.S. election" or "the U.S. president" instead of "the election" or "the president"; write "the United States" instead of "our country.")
- Avoid the use of slang (for example, "cool," "awesome," "chill"); sayings (for example, "that's in the right ballpark" to mean "that is close"); and abbreviations (for example, of the names of states or organizations).
- Before sending your e-mail, read what you've written to a friend or Co-Counselor while thinking about what difficulties it might cause a person whose first language is not English and who is not familiar with the events you are writing about.

We would love comments and feedback, especially from people outside the United States. We want people born and raised outside the United States to respond first. We ask that USers wait two weeks to respond.



Terry Fletcher
Berkeley, California, USA
and *Julian Weissglass*
Santa Barbara, California, USA

(I was born and raised outside the United States but have lived in the United States for many years, so I say "we" and "us" about both groups.)

These are excellent suggestions.

I suggest that in addition to thinking about the difficulties a post could pose for an international audience, we also discharge on how we imagine it could be useful to them. U.S. distress patterns can make us assume that what happens in the United States is more important than what happens in other places, and that everyone should know about us while we don't need to know about them. Conditions in the United States, and the ways we learn to use RC to change them, are exactly as important as conditions and how people use RC in every other part of the world, no less and no more.

Another pattern, not unique to USers, is to speak or write because of how it makes us feel, rather than for what effect it will have. Self-expression is good, and it is also different from thinking strategically about moving our project forward. What I mean by strategic is doing something because of how it will help build toward a goal that is important to us more than for how it makes us feel in the moment. We don't need to be too modest. Our personal stories of re-emergence can have great meaning for other people. But I think it would be especially useful for USers to imagine people in many countries reading every word we write and to ask in Co-Counseling sessions, "How will my words be useful to our global community?" It would be a good contradiction* for me, as a non-User, for U.S. writers to ask in their posts for feedback from the rest of us: "How does this thinking or issue affect your people? How are conditions similar or different in your countries?" This would make it clear that we are all in a global conversation. Thank you for thinking about this.

Aurora Levins Morales
Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA

This is a very good initiative, great USers! I would like to add two suggestions: Make your e-mails shorter. Make shorter sentences.

Marijke Wilmans
Groningen, the Netherlands

* Contradiction to distress

What Does It Mean to Share?

I've been thinking a lot about sharing lately. What does it mean to share? In particular, what is the difference between sharing and generosity?

As owning-class people, we can be very generous but not be able to share. When you are generous, you give something to someone. When you share, you split what you have and give some portion of it to someone else. To be generous you do not have to give up anything. You can give a generous donation that gets you a large tax break so that you make money in the process of giving it. You can generously let others use your home while you still maintain ownership of it.

To share, you have to give up something. If you share your home with someone, he or she owns half. To share, I have to give up something of mine that I want. If I have extra jelly beans,¹ don't want to eat them, know that I can get more for free, and give a friend some jelly beans, that is generous. If I have ten and give a friend five though I wished I could eat all ten, that is sharing.

As people raised owning class, how does the ability to share get taken away from us? I think you can only share if you have some faith that people will share back with you. Because many of us grew up in families in which the adults put their self-interests before the needs of their children, we have become confused. In owning-class families, we also often lose our connection to other people and feel like our survival is in our ownership of stuff and money. We feel like if we can control wealth, we might survive. So it is hard for us to share.

How is sharing connected to the control of wealth? By maintaining the control of wealth, we can be generous without ever having to share. We can be "good people" without challenging the distress that says our security lies in

the control of wealth. But if we do not challenge this material,² we don't get to really have people. That is very lonely, and we don't get to challenge and end classism.

How do we share? I think as owning-class people we need to stand in the face of oppression and dare to share. We can start small. It's less scary that way. But we get to share something we want all of. This is different than giving people things because we feel bad about having more. And it can be confusing, because many of us have patterns of self-denial out of guilt. Sharing is different than not asking for what we want or need. I suspect that as we share more, we will be more able to say what we need or want, to stand up for ourselves and our thinking for real. We will be more able to tell³ when we are

² "Material" means distress.

³ "Tell" means notice.

being selfish and when we are taking what we actually need.

I have noticed with myself that the challenge is to share in the moment when I know I don't have to, when no one is likely to notice if I don't, or think that I shouldn't have all of what I want. And when I want something and feel justified in getting it.

Sometimes the "something" is my time. It's not how big or small the thing is—it's contradicting the feeling of "I just want it" and "it's all I have." If I can choose to share that something (which I can't always at all), it contradicts where I believe my survival is in that something more than in the people I might share it with. And I can remember people, and the day goes better and my life gets bigger.

Tamara Damon

New York, New York, USA

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

It's Hard to "Share the Stage"

Wow, thanks for this.¹ I love the nuance between sharing and generosity.

I was just working last night on how much I struggle with sharing "glory" or the "spotlight" as I think about the work I want to do in the world. Yes, I really want to do good, important work (and do), but I am so addicted to getting *sole credit*/glory/attention that it feels really confusing. Example: one of my "ten-year goals" from fifteen years ago was to "get an award for civil rights work." The goal was not to accomplish something meaningful for others (although that's clearly in there) but to *get public credit* for it. And of course preferably just me, not me in collaboration with others.

I find it really hard to work in collaboration with others, in part because of this "sharing" thing. I still don't know how to work *with* people. I either need to be in charge (hold all the power) or step completely back (be "generous" with my power and give it all away). It's really hard to be in collaboration and "share the stage." I can tell² there is something re-emergent (and terrifying) about considering sharing power in an engaged, connected way versus a disconnected, "generous" way.

Thanks for giving me new language for this chronic!³

Jaime Jenett

Oakland, California, USA

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

¹ See previous article.

² "Tell" means see.

³ Chronic pattern

¹ Jelly beans are candies in the shape of beans.



PERU • DIANE SHISK

Unity, Alliances

Liberation leaders must continually find ways to bring forward the necessity of alliances. Unity inside the group, alliances outside the group.

Harvey Jackins
From page 227 of
The Reclaiming of Power

Arabs Ending Divisions

Ruth Hartman¹ and I led Shabbat² at the West Coast North America Reference Persons' Workshop in January 2015. Below is the talk I gave as an ally.

I'd like to talk about some of the work on ending divisions that has been taking place at workshops where West Asian RCers have gathered. (West Asian people are also known as Middle Easterners.)

During the past few years, the West Asian constituencies in RC in North America have been slowly but steadily growing in diversity. Through discharge, we have also been growing as allies to Jews.

The International Liberation Reference Person for South, Central, and West Asian-Heritage People, Azi Khalili, is an Iranian Muslim woman with Jewish heritage. She has done an excellent job of clearly stating how anti-Jewish oppression is used to divide West Asian peoples and keep us all oppressed.

Much of the Arab RC work done in the United States since the 1970s has been with Christian Arabs. Recently there have been more opportunities for Christians and Muslims to work together and build alliances. At Tim Jackins' Asian Leaders' Workshop last August, several Muslims played a visible role and led topic tables for Muslims and Allies. As a Christian Arab ally, I was invited to be present when the Muslims said daily prayers. That was very moving. I led a topic group for allies to Muslims, and a Muslim woman led Shabbat. Azi has counseled us Christian Arabs on anti-Muslim distresses. And at the first Muslim RC workshop last year, she led the work on discharging anti-Jewish oppression and also led Shabbat.

For centuries, Muslims, Arabs, Jews, Christians, and others have lived together in many places in West Asia and North Africa on relatively good terms, during long periods of time. Sometimes one group has been in the oppressor role, and in other periods another group has taken it on.³ Those of us in RC are fortunate to get to use discharge and re-evaluation to recover our human relationships with each other. The recent news story about a Muslim man saving the lives of Jews at a kosher restaurant in Paris can be a good one to spend time on in sessions.

So my thought at this Shabbat is that the work on unity we West Asians are doing in RC is gradually and visibly broadening. As allies-to-Jews work begins to include a larger variety of Middle Eastern allies, we will need to continue thinking, discharging, and learning about the history and diversity of West Asia and the diaspora. It is powerful and moving work.

Amin Khoury (Victor Nicassio)
Pasadena, California, USA

¹ Ruth Hartman is an RC leader in Castro Valley, California, USA, and the Information Coordinator for Jewish Parents.

² Shabbat is the Jewish Sabbath. It has become a tradition at RC workshops to celebrate Shabbat on Friday evening, as a way of contradicting anti-Jewish oppression.

³ "Taken it on" means assumed it.

Jewish “Mental Health” System Survivors

The recent Jewish “Mental Health” System Survivors’ Workshop in Pennsylvania, USA, led by Janet Foner,* was not only a delightful experience for me but also another turning point for both Jewish liberation and “mental health” liberation.

I have been to other Jewish “mental health” system survivors’ workshops, and this one stood out for a number of reasons. People were reaching for each other more, were warmer and more thoughtful to each other, and more relaxed and spontaneous. They laughed a lot and cuddled more. The site itself, in a setting of beautiful trees and flowers, was a contradiction to oppression.

I got a clearer picture of how “mental health” oppression and anti-

* Janet Foner is the International Liberation Reference Person for “Mental Health” Liberation.

Jewish oppression work together. All Jews are not “mental health” system survivors but are directly affected by “mental health” oppression, as are all people everywhere. If you are Jewish (too loud, too “weird,” too “emotional,” too “religious,” and so on), you are not “normal.” And the message of anti-Jewish oppression that all Jews have something wrong with them and so should be killed is exacerbated by “mental health” oppression.

We are all brilliant and courageous in how we have fought the oppressions, especially if we have figured out how to be in RC. “There is nothing wrong with you and never has been!” This piece of reality that Janet has shared with us continues to bring discharge and head us out of the lies that were thrown at us. It is always a powerful weapon that contradicts both “mental health” and anti-Jewish oppression.

Janet gets in close with her constituents and lets them see how much she wants to know them. She also always takes time as client at her workshops, so we all get to see where she continues to struggle and how she values each of us as her counselor. This shows me that my patterns and “difficulties” are not “worse” than hers and that I, too, can strive for bigger leadership, because it doesn’t have to be perfect or “all cleaned up” in order to be good.

We Jewish “mental health” system survivors are now an even more solid gang, loving and supporting each other to be our truly wonderful, lovable, brilliant, and amazing selves.

I send much love and gratitude to everyone who shared this workshop with me.

Marci Stern
Wilmington, Delaware, USA
Reprinted from the RC e-mail discussion list for leaders of Jews

The Connection Between Anti-Jewish Oppression and “Mental Health” Oppression

The Jewish “Mental Health” System Survivors’ Workshop,¹ led by Janet Foner,² helped me to understand some things about my distress that I had not fully understood before.

The connection between anti-Jewish oppression and “mental health” oppression became clear when Janet spoke about how Jews have been treated as different, as not fitting in, as if something is wrong with us.

Work on the Holocaust allowed me to discharge directly on having visited Dachau³ with my parents when

I was twelve. As horrifying as it was, I knew when I was there that I could not show that. Having a lot of feelings, especially being scared, publicly or not, was not acceptable in my owning-class family. I had to pretend that I wasn’t upset, scared, or feeling bereft when faced with the loss of such an overwhelming number of our people.

I liked being reminded at the workshop to have fun and pursue my dreams—great contradictions to the constant focus on achieving success that I had learned, in unspoken messages, was the route to safety.

Phyllis Kessler
Short Hills, New Jersey, USA
Reprinted from the RC e-mail discussion list for leaders of “mental health” liberation

¹ An RC workshop held near Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA, in April 2015

² Janet Foner is the International Liberation Reference Person for “Mental Health” Liberation.

³ Dachau was a World War II Nazi concentration camp in Germany.

I Have a "Mental Health" Oppression Story

I attended the Jewish "Mental Health" System Survivors' Workshop,¹ led by Janet Foner,² and got the opportunity to work squarely³ on my "mental health" oppression story for an entire weekend. I see now how "mental health" oppression is tied into all oppressions and into making oppressor material⁴ thrive in the world. Telling my "mental health" oppression story helped me get directly to the early places where the hurts of oppression came in.

It was refreshing to be around a group of Jews who were willing to admit to themselves how hard their childhood had been. I didn't have to navigate the patterns of assimilation and upward mobility that tend to prevail in most groups of Jews.

I learned that a pattern I've had, for most of my life, of being preoccupied came directly from my mother and grandfather who escaped from Germany in 1937. My preoccupation has been so strong that I was diagnosed at age six with a "learning disability." I've been preoccupied with what happened in the past so as not to repeat it in the future. This has made it hard to think and act effectively to end racism, classism, sexism, and so on, in my life and in the world. It was a relief to get some discharge on it.

Before coming to the workshop, I didn't think I had a "mental health" oppression story, because I'd never taken psychiatric drugs or been institutionalized. But with my "learning disability" diagnosis, my having had some therapy, and my family members who've been through the full gamut of experiences with the "mental health" system, I definitely have a "mental health" oppression story. Probably most people do.

Lori Leifer

New York, New York, USA

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



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¹ An RC workshop held near Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA, in April 2015

² Janet Foner is the International Liberation Reference Person for "Mental Health" Liberation.

³ "Squarely" means directly.

⁴ "Material" means distress.



MAURA FALLON

I've missed more than 9,000 shots in my career. I've lost almost 300 games. Twenty-six times, I've been trusted to take the game-winning shot and missed. I've failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed.

Michael Jordan

(Widely considered the greatest basketball player of all time)



ICELAND • ALAN EPSTEIN

Union Activists!

A “new and good” is that the name of my International Liberation Reference Person (ILRP) job has changed! I am now the ILRP for Union Activists instead of for Trade Unionists.

The reason for the change is that many workers who are active in their unions do not identify as trade unionists. They think that title means only workers in the trades, such as carpenters, electricians, and factory workers. Historically, at least in the United States, those workers were the foundation of the labor move-

ment and were primarily men. At present, both women and men are represented by unions, and these people work in hospitals, schools, restaurants, and many other places, as well as in the trades.

I want all of you who are active in unions to consider yourselves part of the union activists’ constituency. I want to listen to and think with you about your work, your union, and your activism. If you are involved with your union in any way, or want

to be, let’s be in contact! Also, if any of you know other RC union activists, tell them to contact me so we can get to know each other. I look forward to getting to know all of us and to putting our minds together to figure out how to move our unions toward being organizations of liberation!

Joanie Parker
International Liberation Reference
Person for Union Activists
 Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts, USA
 Reprinted from the e-mail discussion
 list for RC Community members

“I Retain the Right to Love You”

A large part of owning-class oppression is that we who are owning class get separated from our families. In particular, the love between parents and children can be lost. Owning-class parents are trained to not show their caring, to undermine and abandon their children, and to ignore their children’s needs. So it is understandable that as the grown children of owning-class parents we often feel justified in not liking our parents or in not being willing to show caring. (As young children, it was our best defense in the face of the oppression.)

Unfortunately, this is capitulating to the oppression. When we hang on to this perspective, we agree to give up on the inherent love that exists between people, and in particular between parents and children. The direction I have found useful lately in sessions is, “You can aban-

don and humiliate me. You can put your own self-interests ahead of mine again and again, but you cannot control my heart. I retain the right to love you.”

I have found it is important for me to specify, “I retain the right to love *you*,” not just say, “I retain the right to love.” The more general version leaves wiggle room for agreeing to the oppressive message that we don’t care about our parents, that since they never showed us real caring, we don’t have to show it back. I have found that if I use the more general phrase, discharge is diminished and re-evaluation after the session is less.

As young people we inherently love our parents. To lose contact with that is a huge hurt—one that can include losing perspective on our own lovableness, and the goodness of our people.

Anonymous

Boys and Sports

I am looking for others' experiences with and thinking about boys and sports. I'm wondering how to handle the men's oppression that is inherent (at least at this point) in boys' competitive sports, and its increasing intensity as boys get older. I'm also wondering how to talk with our sons about men's oppression so that they have a full picture of what they're up against and don't end up blaming themselves for their struggles. I look forward to hearing from you.

Mindy Johnson
Pasadena, California, USA
Reprinted from the RC e-mail
discussion list for leaders of parents



VENICE, ITALY • ELENA MOSES

Thanks, Mindy, for raising the topic of boys and sports. It is an important topic, one that affected me deeply as a young male and as a parent. (I am now seventy-four years old.) From my perspective, the heart of the problem is at the intersection of men's oppression and capitalism. Capitalist society encourages competitive sports because they are profitable for the sports industry and related industries (alcohol, fast-food, clothing, building-construction, and so on). Men's oppression gives men the message that it is okay to destroy their health in order to win and sometimes make money in the process.

WHAT I DID AS A PARENT

As a parent, I played with my children and let them win in every way I had attention for—or when I was able to grit my teeth and carry on.¹ I let them win in wrestling, board games, and sports.

I played sports with my children by myself and with our family (boys and girls, mother and father). We laughed a lot and stopped playing when someone got hurt, so he or she could cry.

I coached a youth basketball league team that was committed to giving all the players on the team equal playing time. I rigidly observed that rule, even though it meant losing games and having some of the young people upset with me. My own son got upset with me because I let some youngsters play who had little attention for the game. He told me that I did not want to win badly enough. But he ended up not playing competitive sports and being a great ally for his nieces and nephews. If some-

one was injured during practice, I stopped the practice and had everyone gather around the person and give attention. I used the occasion to share a little RC theory about the value of crying or saying "Ouch."

I tried to not watch sports on television with my young children. I finally decided to stop watching them at any time. (I recommend that to all parents.) I haven't broken the addiction completely, since I still find myself reading the sports section in the newspaper. I tell myself that I want to be able to talk with other men about the current sporting situation, but that is just an excuse.

I think fathers and other male relatives giving up their addiction to competitive sports is crucial in helping young boys not get addicted. And I think women have a role to play—in interrupting the fascination that females can have with male athletes. Having females attracted to them is one of the "rewards" the society gives to straight² male athletes.

With my grandson, I have talked about how injuries from competitive sports can affect men's physical health later in life. I remember reading a newspaper article about what happened to the health of the men who were on the championship U.S. football teams in the 1980s. And there is increasing information about the long-range effects of concussions and other injuries on professionals and amateurs (including college and high school students) in other contact sports.

Julian Weissglass
Santa Barbara, California, USA
Reprinted from the RC e-mail
discussion list for leaders of parents

¹ "Carry on" means continue doing it.

² "Straight" means heterosexual.

Speaking with My Son About Sexism

I'm responding to the question posed on the RC e-mail discussion list for leaders of parents about how one speaks to his or her child about sexism. I have a few things to share as a mother of a nine-year-old son.

Over the years I have asked myself the following:

- How do I give accurate information to my son when he is faced with misinformation or when hurts related to sexism and men's oppression come his way?
- How can I offer a different perspective that takes into account what he is actually bumping up against and where I think the confusion or hurt is hitting him in that moment?
- And how can I do this as counselor rather than as client?

Here is some of what he and I have figured out together:

Finding a frame of reference that makes sense to him

When my son was younger, he loved the color pink. At home it was easy to give him space to like pink and wear pink clothes. As he got older, he learned that some people think that pink is a "girls' color" and that blue is a "boys' color." One day in kindergarten he wore pink tennis shoes to school and was teased. We had many conversations about it. It became a frame of reference for how society puts girls and boys into specific "boxes" and tells them who to be and what to like. When other situations like that would arise, he would say, "This is like boy colors and girl colors." It was a frame of reference that made sense to him, that reflected what he had struggled with.

Putting his personal experience into a larger context

At some point in the past year or two I introduced the terms *sexism* and *men's oppression*, to help him put his personal experiences into a larger context. (This coincided with conversations we'd been having about racism, anti-Jewish oppression, and the oppression of young people.) I thought he was ready for the new language, based on the types of questions he was asking, conversations we were having, and what he was learning about and trying to make sense of.

Before the No Limits for Women project in New York,¹ I was watching a video of several delegates talking about it. My son heard the video and came in and watched it with me. Afterward he had questions, and over the course of several days we talked about sexism. Mostly the conversations happened because he was interested and seeking information.

It seemed good for him to know that I was involved in the project and taking a stand against sexism. But I tried to figure out what was interesting to him about it and what his own experiences were, rather than having an agenda of my own. In one fruitful conversation, we shared with each other what we loved about being a boy or girl and what had been hard about it. That gave him a lot of space to talk about what was on his mind while also being an opportunity for me to share my experiences.

Giving information and letting him decide

Recently my son and I were reading a *Star Wars* book that was going into a lot of detail about violence and horrible things happening to people. (I have had many sessions on hating *Star Wars*, along with spending hours watching the three *Star Wars* movies with my son—and loving them, too.) On this occasion, I interrupted my reading and said that I wanted to share my thinking with him about the book. I also said that it was his decision whether or not we kept reading it and that I would back² his mind. I said that my job as his mother was to give him information and then let him decide.

I told him that when I was reading the book I was getting scary pictures in my head and that I wondered if he was getting them, too. I said that parts of the book contained men's oppression, including an attempt to fill his mind with scary thoughts so that he would get used to violence and think it was okay to resort to violence. I said that this was part of how society trains boys to be soldiers, and to not show emotion or cry. At some point I needed to cry for a minute to stay thinking. I told him that I would be having sessions on the subject and reassured him again that I would back his mind.

When I was done talking, he closed the book and told me that maybe he would be ready to read it in a year. Then he started to cry. I don't know exactly what the tears were about, but what had happened seemed like a huge victory for both of us. I had been relaxed enough to share my thinking without clienting at him, to give him space to decide, and to be prepared to back him and stay close no matter what he chose. And he had been able to use information, perspective, and discharge to make a flexible decision.

I would love to hear what other parents of daughters and sons are figuring out on this topic.

"Miriam"

New York, New York, USA

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

¹ In March 2015, No Limits for Women (a project of the RC Communities) sent a delegation to the non-governmental-organization Women's Forum held in conjunction with the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women Beijing+20, in New York, New York, USA.

² "Back" means respect and defer to.

Learning and Discharging About My Mother

My mother, the fifth of six siblings, was raised in a village in northern Wales. Her family was extremely poor. She left school when she was twelve and worked in a local shoe shop. Her paltry income was pooled to support the family.

She was an exceptional speller, was an incredible mimic, and spoke Welsh fluently throughout her life. At fifteen she emigrated to Australia with her parents. There she was an unpaid nanny to her elder sister's children and her own younger sister, until she found a job as a telephonist. Once again her income was pooled to support the family.

She gave birth to her first child, a son, entirely on her own when she was sixteen years old. The father, two years older than she was, got scared and abandoned them both. My mother gave her son up for adoption and went alone to visit him at the orphanage on Saturday afternoons after her week's work. It was a two-and-a-half-hour journey each way. She saw him six times before he was adopted.

My mother married my father when she was nineteen and gave birth to me when she was twenty. Both my parents were heavy drinkers. Domestic violence was a feature of our family's day-to-day life. The battles were long and hard fought and had their emotional and physical impact. But in each of those battles I witnessed my mother fighting back with everything, and I do



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mean everything, she had available to her. All things considered, I am grateful to her for that. I have that in me—the ability to stand strong and fight back.

My mother gave birth to her third son when I was nine. In the time between my birth and his, she maintained a full-time job and a household and had three miscarriages. When my brother was six years old, he drowned. He was unable to swim and was unsupervised while the rest of the family was working, unpaid, in a family business.

My mother spent large amounts of time working unpaid for my father in his various business ventures, while also being responsible for the home, including cleaning, shopping, and preparing meals three times per day. She did this up until she was seventy, when she became physically unable to do it anymore.

At age seventy-five, my mother died in my arms with her sister by her side. She had AUD3000¹ in her personal bank account, after sixty-three years of work. None of the property, or its contents, that her money and labour had helped to finance over the fifty-five years of her marriage was in her name.

In the last few hours of her life, I asked my mother if she thought I was a good example of a male human being. She signaled with a nod, yes. Then I said that I thought she had played a significant role in my development. I held her hand and

listed things I had gotten from her: "I am compassionate. I want things to be right in the world. I like people. I know how to have fun and can easily see the funny side of a bad or difficult situation. I can make people laugh. I am a loyal friend. I know how to fight. I don't easily give up. I remain the only person I know of in our family who went to university and graduated. I am an effective teacher and work full-time in a university. I earn a good income. I have an outstanding range of expletives, and know when and how to use them. I know how to work hard. These are the things I got from you, Mum." She agreed.

I have applied the RC parents' commitment² to my mother. I have spent Co-Counseling sessions listing all the

¹ AUD3000 is three thousand Australian dollars.

² The RC Parents' Commitment: I promise to remember always that I am a good parent, that I always have done the best I could, that I have passed on to my child/ren as few of the hurts that I endured as a child as I could possibly manage, and that some day I'll get a little rest.

ways she went out of her way³ to make sure I got more than she ever did. I have spent other sessions discharging on witnessing the systematic, relentless dismissal and trivialisation of her labour, thinking, needs, and what she delighted in—at the hand of my father and other agents of sexism. I have spent sessions owning up to⁴ and taking responsibility for my own oppressive behaviour and compliance with the inhuman mistreatment of my

³ "Went out of her way" means made a special effort.

⁴ "Owning up to" means admitting.

mother and all women. My life is richer beyond my imagining because of this work. I can recommend it to all my brothers.

About fifteen years ago while struggling on a visit to my parents, I telephoned a beloved Co-Counsellor who was a mother. I asked her to say something wise about parents. She said, "Hmm, let me see. Well, they were little boys and girls once, with hopes and dreams." It worked for me. It still does. It's the thought that I hold on to in all of my tangles and restimulations with others.

During her life I asked my mother many questions about her early life, pre-me. In 2016 I am planning my first trip to Wales. I plan to visit all of her favourite play spots and other places she spoke so fondly of. I encourage the men I lead to also find out about their mothers. And last week in my men's RC class, we took turns noticing things we like about ourselves that we learnt from our mothers.

H—
Australia

A Rational World for Mothers

A rational world for mothers would be one

- where I wouldn't feel so alone in my parenting;
- where my husband and I wouldn't be the only ones—despite our years of relationship building, inside and outside of Co-Counseling—to give the attention and the sessions;
- where capitalism wouldn't be breaking down my network of community that I worked so hard to create; where friends wouldn't be moving away, or being displaced, or looking for a "better" life where the grass is supposedly greener, at the expense of relationships;
- where there would be enough time and resource to prioritize my relationship with my partner and not feel like the pulls of capitalism, the lack of resource for my children, and the exhaustion were bigger than us;
- where I could tell¹ that every last thing² I did in the direction of my family and my household mattered and was enough;
- where others around me could tell that relationships among young people matter and would work as hard as I do to build them;
- where other adults would initiate relationships with my children, despite their distresses;
- where I would have all the help I ever needed, and then some.³

Anonymous
USA

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

¹ "Tell" means notice.

² "Every last thing" means absolutely everything.

³ "And then some" means and then some more.



PUNE, INDIA • TIM JACKINS

Clarifying the Work on Classism

First, my deep appreciation to the many of you who have begun work on the “New Initiative on Ending Classism” outlined in the July 2014 *Present Time*.

It has been useful for many people. It brings up feelings for some people, which include confusions about the wording of the initiative. Here are some of the confusions I have seen:

1. *People are referring to it as “The New Initiative on Working-Class Liberation.”*

That is incorrect. It is “The New Initiative on Ending Classism.” It is for everyone, not just the working class.



MARJORIE SMITH

2. *Confusion comes up about the definition of “working class” I use in the initiative.*

The article must be read carefully. It states, “For the purpose of this discussion, I define ‘the working class’ as ‘those people engaged in the direct production of goods or services.’” This does not change any of the other ways we use the term “working class.” If you have identified as “working class” because you were raised that way, you are not now kicked out of the working class. That is not what the initiative says. It says that this definition is for the purpose of the initiative. We are putting a special focus on this particular sector of the working class because of the strategic role their labor plays in creating the wealth that is the base of our economic system, because they are vastly underrepresented in the RC Communities, and because our internalized classism is attached most strongly to this sector of the working class. If you have previously identified as “working class” based on some other definition of “working class,” you may continue to identify as working class.

That the initiative brings up feelings about “not belonging” to the group that is the focus of the initiative is good. These feelings must be discharged. Many, if not most, people in RC who identify as “working class” have been torn away from their people. This has been painful, and it is good to discharge on it. Harvey¹ called the “middle class” the “stolen children of the working class.”

But the initiative is not about feelings; it is suggesting a more

strategic approach to a problem than we sometimes take in our Co-Counseling sessions.

3. *There is confusion about who is and who is not in the group that is “engaged in the direct production of goods or services.”*

I chose the words carefully. A key word is “direct.” The people who are engaged in the direct production of goods or services are the people whose hands are on the product during its creation. Also confusing has been “direct production of . . . services.” The people who are engaged in this are the people who are in direct contact with the customer—over the counter, on the phone, at the restaurant, and so on.

Please memorize the words “A New Initiative on Ending Classism” and “those people engaged in the direct production of goods or services.” Please discharge on them until you understand what they mean and why they are the focus of this initiative, and use them when communicating to people about the initiative.

4. *There is a patterned tendency, I think as a result of university education, to focus on the small points of a proposal that are upsetting rather than deal with the more central parts.*

Again, thanks for taking on² this significant issue.

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

¹ Harvey Jackins

² “Taking on” means doing something about.

Cosmetic Surgery

When I was a child, beauty was a big unspoken issue in my family. I often heard my mother talking to people about my older sister and saying that she was such a beautiful baby she could have been a model. She looked like my fair-skinned mother, who was considered something of a “beauty” in the commercialized way of “she could have been a model.” She used to say to me that when I was born, I was the funniest-looking baby she’d ever seen. I looked like my father, with dark skin and lots of dark hair.

When I began to develop into a woman, my nose grew. It became quite large for a small woman. No one spoke about it. My older sister developed more and more “beauty,” and I became more and more “funny looking.”

(I put the word *beauty* in quotes because I believe that “beauty” is mostly a social construct. We are conditioned to look at some people as “beautiful” and others as not. I remember when I found a newspaper article that said that Cleopatra had a “large nose” and that it was considered beautiful in those times. I cut the article out and read it over and over. The idea of some people being “beautiful” hurts everyone. I believe that everyone is beautiful, but it requires hard work and commitment to live out this belief. I have to constantly reject my conditioned reactions to how people look.)

I lived in an ethnic neighborhood in a big city. No one I knew of had ever had a “nose job.”¹ I did not know that just a few blocks away, in another ethnic neighborhood, it was not uncommon. We did not socialize with other ethnic groups. However, the older sister of my best friend was in a high school of mixed ethnicities, and she told us about how girls in her school often had their noses “fixed.” I got pretty² excited and got the idea that I would do that, thinking that maybe there was a way out of this horror movie.³

I went home and told my parents what I wanted. They offered little resistance. My father said, “Do you know that we think you are beautiful the way you are?” I remember thinking how pathetic that was. My parents knew what

I was up against, but they never wanted to talk about anything like that. I think my mother was somewhat relieved by my decision, although it meant spending six hundred dollars—which in 1964 was quite a bit of money, especially for working-class people. She had been saving to buy a mink jacket. (She desperately wanted the owning-class life her “beauty” deserved.) She “sacrificed” her coat for my nose and told me that.

We went to a surgeon recommended by our family doctor. He said I had to wait until I was sixteen, since my nose would keep growing until then. I was about fourteen at the time.

I was often harassed in the street about my nose. People would shout at me things like, “Hey, how is the schnoz?”⁴ or “Are you getting enough air with that thing?” I knew that every time I met someone, he or she noticed my nose and could not say anything about it in my presence. I had thought that I faced a life with my nose as the centerpiece and had no idea how to handle it. Now that I had a way out, I believed that the pain of it was temporary and it became much more bearable.

I went to confession and talked to a priest about the surgery to see if it was a sin. I picked the youngest priest, who was known for being nice to teenagers. He said he did not know but could not see what would be sinful about it. That was enough for me. There was no discussion with anyone else.

I had the surgery as soon as I could. It was brutal. My face was the color of an eggplant. In the hospital a young boy saw me and screamed to his mother that he had seen a monster. I fainted several times. The bandages had to stay on for several weeks. When they came off, I hated my new nose. The doctor had not listened to me at all and had given me what he thought was a “cute” nose. I did not dare tell my parents how I felt. My mother kept asking me if I liked it, and I said yes, over and over.

I do not think I would have done that to myself if there had been anyone to counsel me about it.

continued . . .

I feel like a veteran returning from war, knowing it is not okay to talk about what happened because people will have very little attention for it.

¹ “Nose job” means surgery to change the shape of their nose.

² “Pretty” means quite.

³ “This horror movie” means the horrific situation I was in.

⁴ “Schnoz” is slang for nose.

LIBERATION

... continued

This year is the fiftieth anniversary of my “new” nose, and I have decided to have a new round of sessions on the topic from the perspective of being an elder now. Over the years I have discharged a lot about it, but it goes so deep that I know there is more.

I question why I want this posting to be anonymous. Is it because the topic is so humiliating? Or because I feel people will be judgmental? Or because people usually client at me about it in some way? I feel like a veteran returning from war, knowing it is not okay to talk about

what happened because people will have very little attention for it. When I do tell people, they usually either go blank and can't think or they client at me about their own “beauty” story, unawarely expecting me to be the counselor. Or I feel humiliated and pretend I am not.

I would love to hear from others who have had cosmetic surgery. I think it would be a great discussion.

Anonymous

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

Getting My Body Back

From the time my breasts started to develop, at about age twelve, I thought something was wrong with them. Four of my five sisters had “normal” breasts; one other sister and I had tiny breasts.

My breasts never developed beyond the budding stage. All my friends were wearing and talking about bras. My mum had never had such a conversation with me, let alone¹ take me shopping to get fitted for a bra. Clearly she thought there was no need. Physically there may have been no need, but emotionally there was a great need. I wanted to be the same as the other girls.

I was sent to boarding school. Still no bra. I remember a girl showing me her large breasts. Mine were not anything like hers.

Later I was sent to a co-educational high school.² The boys there would flick girls' bra straps. I didn't have a bra to flick and was often teased by the boys—a major embarrassment. I went home and found an old, small bra of one of my sisters and decided I'd wear that. This was all done secretly. There was no one I could open up to about it, for fear of further criticism.

By age sixteen I had a boyfriend. That two-year relationship developed

into a sexual one; however, I never allowed him to touch my breasts. We married, and the shame still sat there. He never did touch my breasts in the eighteen years of our relationship. We split up, and I thought it was because I didn't have breasts (that was not true). As a result, I went to see a cosmetic surgeon about breast augmentation.

That doctor told me that I had breasts like a light switch. Even though I didn't like him, I was too frightened to say anything and in my desperation went ahead with the surgery.

So at age thirty-four my breasts were cut underneath and silicone implants were inserted. I healed quickly and was pleased with my new figure. I had the “right” shape at last.³ Having

³ “At last” means finally.

my new breasts (I chose the smallest size) made a huge difference in my self-esteem, self-confidence, and just feeling “normal.” I felt much more attractive and was not so scared to have sexual relationships.

But now I carried the shame of having had cosmetic surgery. I believed that I had to explain myself to my new partner—why my breasts felt and looked the way they did. Thankfully they were never an issue in that relationship. In fact, I got to be open and free with my body in a new and delightful way. For the first time I experienced a pleasing, fun, satisfying sexual relationship in which I didn't hold myself back.

That relationship, however, had its difficulties. I was not in Co-Counselling at the time and didn't have the tools or



MADISON, WISCONSIN, USA • MARIAN FREDAL

¹ “Let alone” means much less.

² “Co-educational high school” means high school for both boys and girls.

insight to understand what was going on⁴ at a deeper level. After ten years I ended the relationship.

Then Co-Counselling came into my life, and a year later I was diagnosed with breast cancer. I was terrified. My thinking was, "Have the implants caused this cancer? Has my time on the contraceptive pill caused it?" Whatever the cause, I did not want that part of my body chopped off.

A lumpectomy was performed and the cancer removed. Radiotherapy followed, which caused the implants to become harder. The doctors advised me to leave them intact, but by that

⁴ "Going on" means happening.

time I had counselled hard and long on "getting my body back." I decided I would have them taken out, after there had been enough tracking of my breasts for my ongoing health and well-being. That took three years.

My Co-Counsellors were a vital support. My long-term Co-Counsellor came with me to the operation, which I went into laughing and in excellent spirits. However, facing my changed body was hard. It remains hard all these years later. I have had to continue to counsel on the chronic distress. The old feelings that I'm not quite right are not yet totally discharged, even though at a deep level I am pleased to have my body back.

I asked my mother about an incident I remembered in my Co-Counselling sessions. She remembered it immediately and told me the story: When I was six months old, she was feeding me on her right breast. I had my left hand on the side of her breast and was drinking contentedly. My father came into the house and yelled at her, "Are you still feeding that baby?" I remember looking at her and feeling scared and noticing that she was scared, too. I think we both got⁵ feeling bad about ourselves, and a piece of terror about breasts was installed in me.

Anonymous

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

⁵ "Got to" means began.



Protestants Ending Anti-Jewish Oppression



I grew up on a family farm in Iowa in the 1940s and 1950s. Nearly all the men I knew were farmers, and because they were needed to grow food, they did not fight in World War II. I also didn't know any women who were in the military. For me, World War II was "over there."

In May of 2014 I attended the Healing from U.S. Wars Workshop led by Julian Weissglass.¹ Filling out the application for the workshop and reading and having sessions in preparation for it were hard and made my connection to war clearer.

My father's oldest brother was killed in World War I. He had been the hope of the family, and they never recovered. My father was sixteen when that war ended, and he experienced the blame and harsh penalties placed on Germany and later the economic depression there. He emigrated from Germany to the United States in 1923. All my aunts, uncles, and cousins on my father's side lived in Germany during the Nazi period. When I was born, in the spring of 1942, the deep shame and guilt my father felt from both world wars was passed on to me.

¹ Julian Weissglass is the International Commonality Reference Person for Wide World Change.



MASSACHUSETTS, USA • ILANA STREET

Being a strong ally to Jews and ending anti-Jewish oppression have been a central focus for me for many years. I have contradicted and discharged feelings of guilt and shame in order to think more clearly and independently. Also impeding my re-emergence and being a strong ally has been the message that I was inherently "wrong" for being born female. Going against this early material² has made it possible

for me to be more visible and take stands against all oppression, particularly anti-Jewish oppression.

In the class on anti-Jewish oppression at the May workshop, Julian talked about an essay attacking Jews that Martin Luther, the German Lutheran theologian, wrote in 1543. Julian recommended that Protestants, especially Lutherans, read it. I was raised Lutheran, as were my first-generation Swedish mother and my German father. I went online and learned more. In addition to his anti-Jewish writings, Luther's general harshness, both to himself and to his followers, stood out. I remember that kind of harshness as a child.

The essay was written at the end of Luther's life and is particularly vicious. It was not available in English in the

continued . . .

² "Material" means distress.

LIBERATION

... continued

United States until 1948. Since the 1980s, Lutheran churches throughout the world have repudiated Luther's strong anti-Jewish statements.

Protestants, particularly white Protestants, are the dominant religious group in the United States. There are differences among us, for example, some of us are white, some are of the global majority, and some do not consider themselves Protestants. However, we can all explore the influence Martin Luther had on our denomination or religious group and work together to end anti-Jewish oppression.

The following questions may be useful: What messages about Jews did you get at church, in Sunday school, at vacation Bible school, in hymns you sang? If you can't remember specific messages, what images do you remember? What sense of yourself might prevent you from standing up against anti-Jewish oppression, or any oppression? What have you done (everything counts!) to end anti-Jewish oppression?

It is our job as Gentiles and allies to Jews to end anti-Jewish oppression, because it is our problem. In

order to do so, we Protestants need to face our history and at the same time treat ourselves and each other gently and lovingly. We get to contradict the harshness that many of us received at home and at church. We get to stand strong against and interrupt comments and false information about Jews and Judaism. Doing so is particularly important at this time when anti-Jewish oppression is increasingly overt and prevalent in many parts of the world.

Joy Kroeger-Mappes
Frostburg, Maryland, USA

Gentiles Fighting Separation

At a Jews and Allies Workshop I learned that we white Gentiles need to "get in" with each other and risk discomfort in our sessions. We tend to manage our big feelings by being distant and isolated, something we can do because we are in a position of relative privilege in society. Many of us have devastating feelings of separation—from ourselves, our people, our humanity, and our earth. Being allies to Jews highlights this sense of separateness—a separateness that allows anti-Jewish oppression to operate. But we can reclaim our power and ensure that humanity triumphs.

Christine Marnane
Kew, Victoria, Australia
Reprinted from the newsletter of the
Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, RC Community



ITALY • HOLLY JORGENSEN

To Gentile RCers

I propose that Gentile RCers become experts on Jewish history, Jewish oppression, Jewish liberation, and Jewish struggle. I propose that we Gentile Co-Counselors become expert at helping Jews discharge all phases of their internalized oppression while they advance to proud, relaxed, flourishing, uninhibited confidence.

Harvey Jackins
From page 199 of
The Kind, Friendly Universe

Appreciating Present Time

Dear Barbara (Boring),

I just read your fantastic article in the April 2015 PRESENT TIME about your surgery and discharging on anesthesia.* Thank you for taking the time to write it up so thoroughly—it gives us all a lot to think about in terms of choosing perspective.



KK

Alysia Tate
Chicago, Illinois, USA

*"Choosing a Perspective on General Anesthesia," by Barbara Boring, on pages 20 to 23 of the April 2015 PRESENT TIME

Kudos* on the January 2015 PRESENT TIME. There are so many great pieces—I particularly loved the ones on quitting sugar and organizing domestic workers. Brilliant.

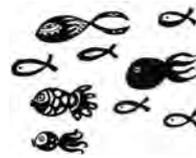
Janette Hills-Jaffe
Sharon, Massachusetts, USA

*"Kudos" means compliments.



RE-EVALUATION COUNSELING COMMUNITY RESOURCES, SEATTLE, WASHINGTON, USA • KATIE KAUFFMAN

I love reading PRESENT TIME. It is truly liberating.



KK

Monika Dolfin
Bandhagen, Sweden

For the past several years I've read every article in every issue of PRESENT TIME and been glad to do so. This time, April 2015, before immediately beginning to read, I went from the front to the back of PRESENT TIME, viewing its drawings, photographs, and other artwork, done by beloved Co-Counselors I've known for decades and beloveds I have yet to meet. Doing so was like being in a fine art gallery. The journal's wonderful art is uplifting and relaxing. I feel happy in the PT gallery!

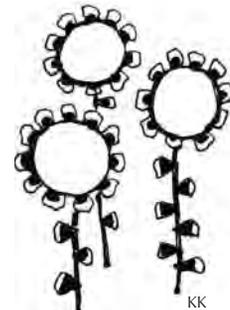


KK

Pam Roby
Santa Cruz, California, USA

Thanks so much for PRESENT TIME. What I like most about it is the mixture of entirely different sorts of high-quality articles—from those by Tim Jackins which steer the Community, to those developing theory, to those describing personal or liberation struggles and how the writer has applied RC, to those from developing Communities. They are all inspiring and satisfying in different ways.

Caroline New
Redcliffe, Bristol, England



KK

The RC Website

There is a website for Re-evaluation Counseling at <www.rc.org>. At this site you will have easy access to a large amount of information about Re-evaluation Counseling, including:

- RC theory (basic theory, including an introduction to RC, *The Art of Listening*, *The Human Side of Human Beings*, and the RC postulates)
- Introductory talks (in audio) by Harvey Jackins (1986) and Tim Jackins (2008)
- RC practice (how to start RC, what to do in a session, counseling techniques, how to lead support groups)
- The *Guidelines for the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities*, 2013 edition, and forms
- Updates to the *Fundamentals Teaching Guides*
- Translations of articles into many languages, and language liberation information
- Articles from recent journals and *Present Time*
- Resources for workshop organizers
- Contact information for ordering literature from Rational Island Publishers
- An online fundamentals of Co-Counseling class
- Outlines for teaching fundamentals classes, in English and Spanish, and articles about teaching RC
- An ever-growing collection of back issues of *Present Time* (currently 1974 to 1998)
- "Today's Thought"—a short daily thought from a Re-evaluation Counseling perspective
- International Reference Person Perspectives
- And more

How to Contact Us Online

- The International RC Community: ircc@rc.org
- United to End Racism: uer@rc.org
- Rational Island Publishers (orders, and billing questions): litsales@rc.org (or order on our website at <www.rationalisland.com>)
- Re-evaluation Counseling Community Resources (Intensives and office matters only): rcoffice@rc.org
- Automatic response e-mail about RC: info@rc.org
- For sending photos: photos@rc.org

Online Fundamentals Class

An online fundamentals of Co-Counseling class is available for people who are interested in learning more about RC.

Active participation in the class is reserved for those who do not have fundamentals classes in their geographical region. Learning Re-evaluation Counseling via e-mail is much more difficult than learning it in a regular class and requires a higher level of commitment to the learning process and to regular Co-Counseling sessions.

Please see the RC website at <www.rc.org/page/onlineclass> for more information about how to sign up for membership in the online fundamentals class.

United to End Racism

United to End Racism (UER), an ongoing program of the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities, is on the web at <www.rc.org/publication/uer/contents>. The e-mail address for UER is <uer@rc.org>.

United to End Racism is working with other groups involved in eliminating racism, and sharing with them the theory and practice of Re-evaluation Counseling.

Sustaining All Life

Sustaining All Life (SAL), a project of the RC Communities, is sending a delegation to the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris, France, November 30 to December 4, 2015. SAL will present workshops, hold public forums, and lead support groups and listening projects as part of the work of taking the tools of RC to climate change activists. For more information, see <www.rc.org/page/sal>.