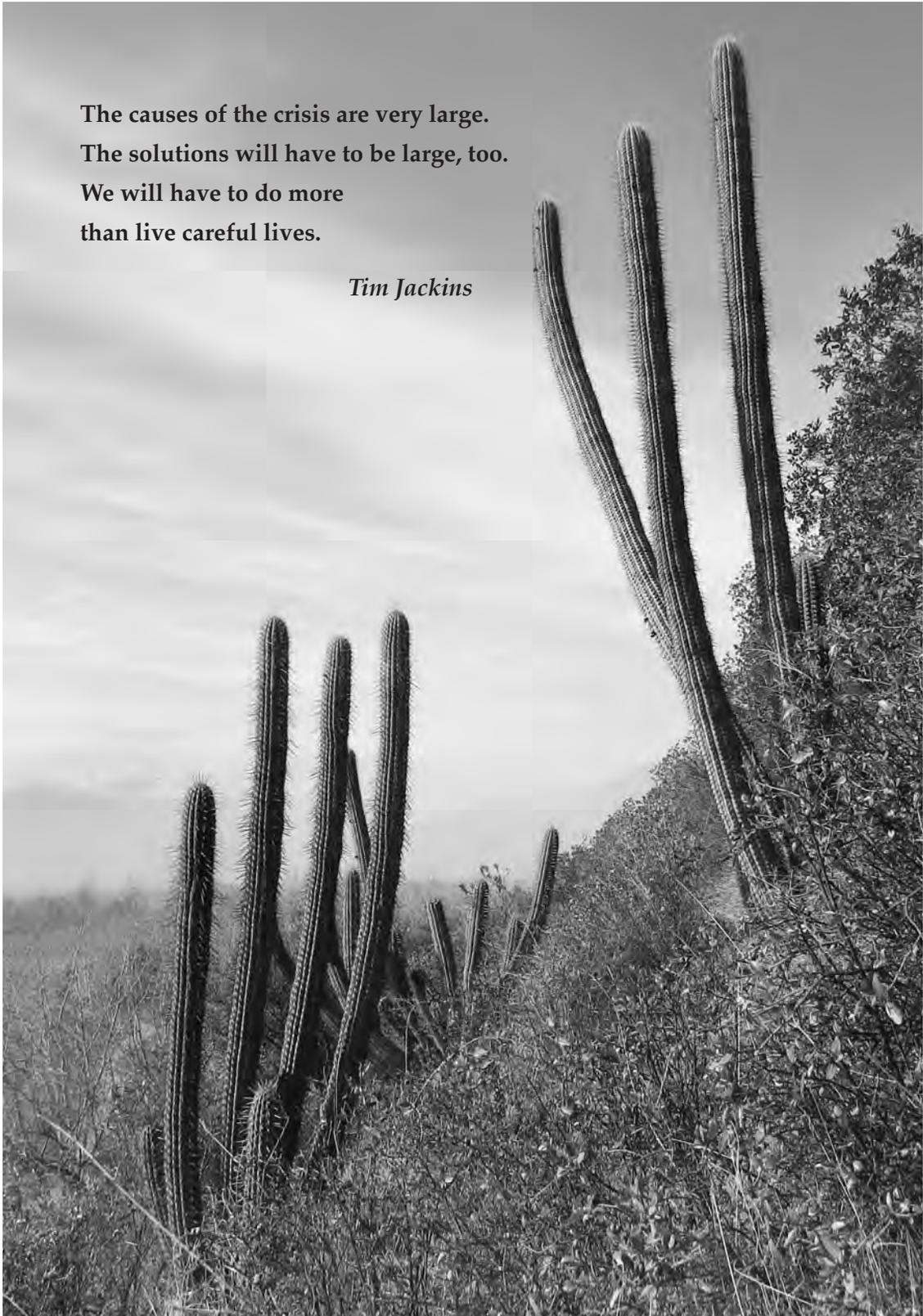


The causes of the crisis are very large.
The solutions will have to be large, too.
We will have to do more
than live careful lives.

Tim Jackins



Present Time

No. 181 (Vol. 47, No. 4)

October 2015

Here is another inspiring issue of *Present Time*. Thank you to all the contributors! If you have an article or a poem for the January issue, please get it to us by Monday, November 16. Any changes to the back-pages lists need to reach us by Monday, November 23.



Lisa Kauffman, editor

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The First Step Is to Get in Motion

From a talk by Tim Jackins¹ at the West Coast North America Reference Persons' Workshop, January 2015

I read science, because it's the clearest place where I can find minds going a little farther all the time and being fascinated by thinking. Science will be useful in figuring out how to turn something around with the environment, but not without our minds getting out of where they are stuck.

We are going to win this fight for the environment. I am confident of that. (You may not be. You may be feigning confidence, and that's a good thing to do in some circumstances.

All RC teachers have to borrow someone else's confidence until they can discharge enough to get it themselves.) We can do it, but we have to look at what's really in our way—those old feelings of helplessness—and also realize the size of the job and the fact that we're capable of doing it.

WE NEED TO MOVE BIGGER

We have cleaned up our minds and done certain things, and now we need to move bigger. We can't simply go forward in the way we know how to (though it's been effective). We can't just contain our material² and try harder. It needs to be a different effort. Now something different would be much more useful. It involves facing how bad it was in our early childhood, how discouragement got its claws into us, and how we really feel like we can't. All children are made to feel like they can't change the world. But it's not enough to go on feeling that way and trying hard. That's a misrepresentation of reality. We can change the world. But we don't look like it when we earnestly go ahead without discharging the distress. And people can't rely on our determination alone. It is not trustworthy, because it wears out. They need to see more of our mind engaged, see us thinking that we really can do this. That means facing the hopelessness we hold down all the time. We can do that. We can do it just for ourselves, and now there are bigger reasons to do it.

I'm pushing you rather hard in a way that I haven't before, and it may be restimulating. But as a counselor we can't just be supportive to someone's struggle; we also have to say, "And now we face the places that you haven't been able or willing to face, whether you want to or not." We may have to be a bit of a non-permissive counselor



CHEN PINGJUN

to really help people out of the places where they got badly hurt. I'm trying to do this with you on this issue. I'm trying to make you move in ways you feel like you don't want to, or know how to, or don't think you can. I know you can.

I think we can turn this crisis around. I have great faith in human minds. While all this destruction is going on,³ a tremendous amount of learning is going on at the same time.

People are understanding the world even better and figuring out how to become allies, how to take on⁴ struggles. That's all happening at the same time.

We can take on the things that we're afraid to take on, the battles in our heads that have cowed us and made us sit still for a long time because they've seemed like too much. They are simply early distress. I will keep talking to you about this for quite a while, because it's important. These distresses are chronic, so it's easy to go on, make life work as best we can, and leave them in place. We have gone a long ways on that basis. We never had the resource to do otherwise. But now, as near as I can tell,⁵ we have done the work to build the resource to do something different. We don't just have to suffer the existing conditions, make small changes to make life a little better for us and for those we can reach. But to do more requires facing things that seem like they won't move, because they never have.

It's hard to go after⁶ the next thing in front of us, because we haven't faced things from the past. We learned early how to make do⁷ with what was available. We had to. But now, to leave our perspective frozen in distress is a mistake, and we have a choice to do something different.

As far as I can tell, we have to try for everything or we get confused. If we settle for something limited by our distresses anywhere, the confusion spreads. We're still afraid that we can't do things. We settle for what we are, instead of trying for what we could and want to be. And this ends up accommodating an oppressive society. It's not that we

continued . . .

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

² "Material" means distress.

³ "Going on" means happening.

⁴ "Take on" means confront and take action on.

⁵ "As near as I can tell" means as well as I'm able to perceive it.

⁶ "Go after" means pursue.

⁷ "Make do" means manage, do well enough to survive.

COUNSELING PRACTICE

... continued

need to confront the society all the time, but we need to figure out what we really can do. We need to do this for each of our minds individually and for what we have collectively decided we want to have happen.

So that's my picture of the current front of our struggle.

We have done well, and it's been a little lurching. We've gotten confused by our old defeats. We have to change that. We have to change it in our lives and out where the society is collapsing. We also need to change it within our Communities, to make them more fully human. We can give people a clearer, fuller, warmer, and more personal picture of what's possible for them when they come into RC. We can hold it out even though they can't believe it initially. We have to not insist on it, not be worried about it, just be confident about it.

NOT URGENT, BUT THE PRESENT MATTERS

We have lots of things to do that our discouragement hasn't let us try—out in the world as well as in RC—but I don't want our motion to become an urgent motion. The present is not urgent. We don't have to do anything. At the same time, a common distress is the feeling that it doesn't matter if we don't do it now. "I'll do it later." We put off facing the difficult things. It does matter when we face them. It's not urgent, but the sooner we can move, the more

possibilities we have. The present matters. We can lose sight of that because of the defeats of the past, in which it didn't seem to matter what we did. Every moment matters. But it's not urgent. Very few moments are vital. We're not in one of those. It may feel like it, but we're not likely to be in a moment like that.

We also don't need to have the full solution before we move. We don't need the full solution now. We need to start testing ideas so we can learn enough to get a full picture and find good solutions. If we don't move, we'll never learn enough or challenge our distresses enough. Go out and do things, maybe tiny little things. What's needed is that you do something where you couldn't do anything before. It doesn't matter if you can see any effect at all; doing something has an effect on your mind.

If we didn't have the distresses in our minds, everything would be different, much clearer, and easier to take on. But we do have them, and the first step is to get in motion. It really doesn't matter what you do. It does matter that you don't wait. It's not urgent, but every moment is a possibility that you weren't able to take advantage of in the past.

You always have a chance to do something that will start things moving in the right direction. It does not have to be big. You will figure out bigger and bigger things as you get to play with the small things.



CLIMATE MARCH, NEW YORK CITY, NEW YORK, USA • ALISON EHARA-BROWN

Secret Knowledge

Each of us knows that he or she, first person singular, is much more of a person than other people realize. All of us treasure this secret knowledge that we are better than we have been able to act, that we are smarter than we have been able to show, that we have worlds of ability that we haven't used yet.

*Harvey Jackins**

From *The Upward Trend*, page 250

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

Sessions— a Contradiction to Isolation

In recent years I have been discharging on isolation. I have noticed that when I don't do enough Co-Counseling sessions, then I get into isolation easily. A session in and of itself acts like a big contradiction to isolation. Even if I am not discharging on isolation, I can still feel connected when I do sessions regularly.

The stronger the relationships I build with my Co-Counselors, the stronger other relationships become. My sessions help me to connect to myself more easily and thereby fight against my isolation and figure out how to handle other relationships. My relationships with my Co-Counselors give me a lot of hope about relationships in general.

S.J. Shashikala (Shashi)
Bangalore, India

The Importance of Discharging Fear

Being active in the environmental and climate justice movements has made me more aware of the importance of discharging consistently on fear and discouragement. Tim¹ has talked a lot about discouragement, so I'll focus on fear.

GOING AFTER FEAR IN MY SESSIONS

I'm sure I am scared—I think we are all scared—but I'm one of those people who don't easily feel or discharge fear. So I've had to decide to go after² fear in my Co-Counseling sessions. I also assume that fear is one of those unbearable feelings that Tim has been urging us to go back and discharge. So I do this work parallel to the general work of going back to the early incidents that are so hard to return to and clean up.

I started out by scanning all the scary things I could remember in my life and going over them in sessions. That was useful. It led to lots of laughter and helped me remember that I must be scared. Scary things happened to me! Next I decided to go after my birth. I had clues that it had been frightening (in wrestling sessions³ I had felt like I couldn't breathe, and I knew I'd had some anesthesia), so I worked a lot on that for a few years. That, and Tim's persistence in pointing us to the earliest memories, led me to discharging on the first three weeks of my life, which had scared me more than my birth did.

¹ Tim Jackins

² "Go after" means actively pursue.

³ "Wrestling sessions" means counseling sessions in which a counselor, who has been trained to do it, provides aware and thoughtful physical resistance to push and fight against.

When I started I didn't have memories of my birth or my early life. I just had a sense of what they were like and worked from that. As I discharged, I got a clearer and clearer sense of them, and, more important, I could discharge more easily on the early experiences.

TAKING ACTION ON THE ENVIRONMENT

While doing this work in my sessions, I became aware that environmental degradation and climate change were much bigger problems than I had realized. (The 2001 goal on the environment⁴ worked. And maybe I could only face and understand the present danger because of my work on fear.)

⁴ 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.

I decided I had to get involved, both inside and outside of RC, in working on the environment. Doing that, along with building RC, has become a central focus of my life. I belong to three different environmental/climate justice groups and participate as much as I can, given my RC commitments. I didn't think I had time to do this much, but I've found many ways to make more time and to be a valuable part of the environmental movement.

Being fully immersed in environmental work has put me up against my fears on a regular basis and has led to some interesting thoughts.

FEAR, CLASS SOCIETIES, AND DISCHARGE

I think we are a very scared species. It's understandable. Human beings have lived on the Earth for 200,000 years, and for about 198,000 of those years we struggled to survive on a daily basis. We didn't have reliable food sources, many other species posed a danger to us, we hadn't figured out how to fight disease or heal from serious harm to our bodies, and climate events could be devastating. With our vulnerability to getting hurt, we acquired distress recordings of terror, which then became institutionalized in our societies. Class

continued . . .



PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA, USA • SUE EDWARDS

COUNSELING PRACTICE

...continued

societies are the unthinking response to humans' recorded fears for survival.

Harvey,⁵ Tim, and others have written a lot of important articles about class societies. Understanding class oppression is central to understanding both our societies and our own distresses. The point about class societies that comes to my mind here is that no individual has a good life in class societies but that a larger number of people survive from generation to generation. With our undischarged distresses, we have compromised so much for the survival of our species.

All the other oppressions evolved to maintain classism. They set us against one another so that we can't unite against it. They restimulate our fears of not having enough for our group so that we can't easily open ourselves to being with other groups. Then the internalized oppression isolates us within our own group.

And we lost access to the discharge process, which would have let us discharge and think our way out of the fears. Without it, there was no way to build a world without oppression and institutionalized fear.

Discharge is thoroughly suppressed. Every one of us, even after years in RC, struggles to reclaim it and use it fully to heal from our heavy early material.⁶ This is not because we don't understand the discharge process or haven't worked hard at it. It's because it has been that thoroughly suppressed. It's also because we



SICHUAN MUSHROOM • BETSY DAMON

need deep human connection to fully access it, and our human history has left us fearful of and isolated from each other.

Now we have a global situation in which capitalism—in its drive for profit, in its solidifying into policy the distress recordings of wanting more and more—is exploiting the majority of the people on the planet and much of the planet's physical resource. And the waste products from this exploitation continue to accumulate and threaten our survival. It's ironic that the economic system we created in an effort to ensure our survival now poses one of the biggest threats to survival that we as a species have ever faced. And most people are scared to look squarely at this situation, and its implications for the future.

Nearly all of our feelings about the present are rooted in early material, so working on what is restimulated by climate change and environmental degradation. And we'll have to do this to be able to engage with people about these issues, listen to their fears, and be relaxed and hopeful enough to bring them together in effective action to reverse the damage.

So many hurts happen to us in utero, at birth, and in infancy—all before we have accurate information about the world and an understanding that there is much in the world that is good and solid. These early hurts (including from physical struggles, medical interventions, oppression, harsh conditions, and loss of connection) can scar us deeply. Then they intertwine with society's institutionalized recordings of fear, and the two compound each other.

So I have worked a lot on my birth and the first three weeks of my life. I've spent many years discharging about the lack of connection, how devastating it was to not be allowed to discharge, and some scary events that happened. I, like many of us, decided very early that people couldn't be counted on to think about me and that I would have to handle hard things by myself. And much of my life has been shaped by that decision. Only recently did it occur to me that it was really scary to be so little and feel like I was all alone. Really scary. And I had a relatively good situation. My parents just lived in an oppressive society, without discharge, and so struggled to connect with anyone and were unable to see and understand me and my needs.

In addition to individual recordings of fear and recordings from living in this oppressive society, I think we must all carry a fear for survival that comes from human history. I've known that I carry distress recordings of past generations. I've seen how my family history impacts me. But I hadn't thought of how the history

⁵ Harvey Jackins

⁶ "Material" means distress.

of my human family had installed on me fears for my survival, and how those fears would be constantly restimulated in a society dominated by oppression, war, poverty, exploitation, and now climate change. Perhaps that kind of restimulation is part of why almost everyone struggles to face and think about all the ongoing atrocities in our world.

Although the situation in the world has been very bad for a long time, people have mostly remained passive. Tim says this may be partly because it would feel worse to fight back, be visible, speak out, and take leadership than it feels to be passive and tolerate oppression and exploitation. But when things get extremely bad, as hard as it may feel to rise up and be active against injustice, it feels worse to just go along. And so people rise up in revolution for a while, until it feels worse to keep going than to stop. And then they stop. Being able to act on our thinking instead of our feelings has never been more important than now.

So I am working on fear, and where it keeps me quiet and passive, and coupling that with being out in the world, visible and active. I don't have to be controlled by the ancient fears. I don't want them to keep me from facing the dangerous situation we are in. I want to be able to move effectively in response to every situation. I want to organize together with

huge groups of people from every sector of society to change everything. And I want to be effective in loosening the grip that fear and discouragement have on the population at large, so that we have a better chance at stopping the prac-

tices that are putting us all at risk. It's a good way to live my life.

*Diane Shisk
Alternate International Reference
Person for the Re-evaluation
Counseling Communities
Seattle, Washington, USA*

Diving Deep

In working to heal from past mishaps
I choose to go back with my counselling buddy nearby
To the murky unclear depths of where the hard things started.

It is not really that she goes back with me while I dive in
More like she's floating on the surface but aware all the time . . .
Guarding my lifeline as I grope in the deep underwater.

She steadies me up to stay in that place if I wander off.
After a while I can pretty much* stay on course and work to clean out
The muddy mess that's been sticking to me for decades.

I cry and remember new places where that hurt got in the way
Of functioning well, of reaching out, of being my powerful self
I cry some more. Some of the hopelessness shifts.

It's just a job we can do . . . like housework or weeding. I know
There will be more weeds to pull or dirt to clean and yet
There's an easing from the cleaning, the weeding and the discharging.

On reflection, this intentional focussed adult use of our
Inherent humanness is in part a decision. My decision.
And in part it is a meeting of two minds . . . hers and mine.

Blessed be.

*Sandy Wilder
Moruya, New South Wales, Australia*

* "Pretty much" means mostly.



To Want to Know



The basic attitude of human intelligence is certainly one of curiosity. You can count on* this enormous drive to learn something new. There is a thirst for new information that one can evaluate and relate to what one already knows. It's a fundamental human characteristic to want to know.

*Harvey Jackins
From *The Upward Trend*, page 285*

* "Count on" means rely on.

Discharging on the Environment

I counseled on the environment today! Not from a prompt, not from a direction, but fully on my own, of my own accord!

It was my weekly Thursday morning mini-session, and I was trying to avoid my tendency toward “these white women I work with bother me,” which often leaves me feeling stuck. As I scanned my brain for what really gets under my skin¹ about it all, I spotted white privilege. That led me to thinking about the session I got from Diane Shisk² this past weekend at the International Young Adult Conference.

The class topic was the environment, with a heavy focus on racism. I knew from past workshops that this topic is usually not met with ease or enthusiasm. Before people can get to their feelings about the state of the environment, they usually have to trudge through feelings of not wanting to look at it, thinking it won't make a difference to look at it, or being stupid and not important enough to look at. This is a testament to how disconnected we have gotten from the environment, as well as the hopelessness that keeps us there.

Diane wanted to do a demonstration with someone from the United States who had seen firsthand the effect of racism on the environment—and *no one* was raising their hand. So I volunteered.

I started telling how I'd decided to come up for the session, and when I got to the part where Diane had asked for someone who lived in “one of these toxic dumping grounds,” my heart just broke. I didn't even get the rest of the sentence out. It all came crashing down on me, in one fell swoop,³ in the brilliant way that our minds and hearts work. *Toxic dumping grounds.*

¹ “Gets under my skin” means bothers me.

² Diane Shisk is the Alternate International Reference Person for the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities.

³ “In one fell swoop” means suddenly, all at one time.

I pictured this beautiful earth, I pictured huge human-made machines, and I started to shake. I pictured all the production happening around the world. I pictured the sludge. The fumes. The stench. The people. I pictured the air and the trapped feeling that “this is life,” and the shaking turned to sobbing. What a terrible predicament we are in! Yes, we. Then all of a sudden, like when a thick fog starts to lift, I could picture how powerful we all are. All we have to do is allow ourselves to feel.

One suggestion Diane made about working on this topic was to find a personal connection. Sometimes it's too hard to just dive in; the hopelessness takes over, and there's a lot of numbness. So it helps to find a personal connection to the environment—whether it's an animal, a species, or something related to one of our constituencies—and start there. She also said that eventually we are going to have to give up our powerlessness, because we have some big things to do.

Before the demonstration we had a mini-session, and my counselor pointed out that my brain actually could think about this topic. That was hugely encouraging! So often we feel like we are unable to think about big, hard topics, but that's just a feeling. It's also a place where we can help each other. It helps to have another person outside of our distress notice things that we can't from inside of it and *remind us of our goodness.*

I already feel more hopeful about working on the environment, and hopeful that we *can* figure out something to do about it. So hopeful that I knew I needed to share this “new and good” with you, without wondering whether or not it was important. We could all use a little encouragement, a little hopefulness, and I hope that you can find some in this today. I can't wait to see what we do.

Ani Darcey

Los Angeles, California, USA

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



Thinking All the Time

Only “thinking all the time” is an effective antidote to the stupid (but sneaky) persistence of patterned behavior on ourselves and our groups.

Harvey Jackins

From *The Upward Trend*, page 281

The No-Socializing Guideline

I am a longtime Co-Counselor living in rural Centre County, Pennsylvania, USA. The four women Co-Counselors here had been maintaining an RC support group for many years. We have recently grown to six, and we seem to have the energy and support to keep growing.

The six of us have been acquainted for many years in various other groups and circles of friends. I understand why it is important to keep wide-world restimulations out of our special RC relationships, and we do a pretty¹ good job of it, but it is always a challenge for me to correctly maintain and verbalize the no-socializing agreement.²

The strategy for RC Community building is to reach out to your closest friends and family. I sometimes find it difficult to keep the RC and wide-world relationships separate and to explain that concept to the women in the group. I would love to know more about other Co-Counselors' experiences with and understanding of the no-socializing Guideline.

Ann Wilken
Centre County, Pennsylvania, USA

¹ "Pretty" means quite.

² Guideline N. of the 2013 *Guidelines for the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities* (the policies for the RC Communities)



Slowing Down and Discharging

Thanks, Ann, for reaching out in this way.¹ I appreciate your question about keeping RC and social relationships separate.

I grew up in RC and began as a teenager to teach friends how to Co-Counsel. I've taught quite a few friends or otherwise supported them to learn. It's been great for them and for our relationships in many ways. One thing I struggle with is what to do when my friends meet each other after having already learned RC.

In some cases my friends decide to have a social relationship and are slow to add RC to it. In other cases they decide to have an RC relationship and are reluctant to come to a birthday celebration or other situation in which they might see each other socially.

I was inspired to reread the no-socializing policy on the RC website and was struck by this part: "If one person associates another person with RC at

¹ See previous article.

the beginning of their relationship, there is a strong tendency to expect, awarely or unawarely, that the person associated with RC will operate as a counselor in the relationship."²

I recently attempted to move into a house together with my partner and two friends. They all are active RC Community members, and my partner had met one of my friends when they had both already known about RC. We were encouraged to slow down and discharge more about the decision. One of the things I've been counseling on is the frozen needs³ I've attached to the idea of living with these two friends—in particular, from my earliest hurts from being left alone.

I imagine it would in fact be a big contradiction to my early loneliness

² See in Guideline N.1. the eleventh paragraph under REASON.

³ Frozen need is a term used in RC for a hurt that results when a rational need is not met in childhood. The hurt compels the person to keep trying to fill the need in the present, but the frozen need cannot be filled; it can only be discharged.

to live with these two friends. But it could also be setting me up for⁴ being disappointed with them, because my old need for closeness won't ever be filled in the present. Furthermore, my desperation to have friends around has clouded my judgment about other details of the potential move.

Generally, I've been advised to discharge and make my own decisions about how to handle relationships that are both RC and social. Identifying and pushing against where I feel like I "need" to have my friends in a certain way has been the most helpful way to discharge.

Thanks again for posing the question. I know this can be a scary topic to be open about. I would love to hear the experiences and perspectives of others.

Isaac Zones
San Francisco, California, USA
Reprinted from the e-mail discussion list for RC Community members

⁴ "Setting me up for" means predisposing me to.

With a Clear Goal, Things Can Change

In April 2015 we had a Wide World Change Workshop here in England, led by Julian Weissglass,¹ organised by me. It was very different from most big workshops we have here. Eighty-five percent of the people were working class and/or people of the global majority and/or Irish, Scottish, Welsh, or Cornish and/or young people and/or Jewish. I thought it might be good to share what happened to make it be that different.

A WORKING-CLASS IRISH ORGANISER

The Wide World Change Workshop three years ago, in Manchester, England, was dominated by the patterns which sit on white southern English owning- and middle-class Gentiles. I decided then that I wanted more working-class people to be there and asked Julian if I could organise the next workshop. He agreed.

AN EXPLICIT GOAL IN MY MIND

I started to think about what a workshop here would be like if eighty percent of the participants were working class and/or people of the global majority and/or Irish, Scottish, Welsh, or Cornish and/or young people and/or Jewish. I was so scared about having that thought that I didn't even have sessions on it to begin with—just harboured it secretly.

At one of Tim's² workshops, in February 2014, I was feeling very good about myself and I asked Tim if it would be okay if I asked Colette and Sheila³ (the Regional⁴ Reference People for Ireland and for Northern Ireland) if they would like their Regions to be part of the Wide World Change Workshop. I also asked if it would be okay for an organiser to have a goal of eighty percent of the participants being working class or of my other target groups. (I said I would still make the workshop open to everyone—that I would work for the goal informally through personal contacts.) He said yes to both. I had lots of sessions with a few trusted Irish people about how scary it was to have my goal.

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

² Tim Jackins'

³ Colette Morrison and Sheila Fairon

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

IRISH REGIONS PARTICIPATING FROM THE START

After sharing my vision with Colette and Sheila, I asked them if they would like their Regions to be part of the workshop and they said yes. (I had a close relationship with both of them and they trusted me.) When I wrote the flier, I put their Regions at the top and made it clear that if the workshop was over subscribed, my target groups would take priority.

A DAY ON ENDING IRISH OPPRESSION

The day before the workshop, we had an Ending Irish Oppression Day, open only to people coming to the main workshop. That meant that lots of us Irish people came to the main workshop and that we were less scared than usual. We were a big group and very loud at mealtimes. It's not normally like that. (Perhaps we were too loud, in our delight at escaping English dominance, and not thoughtful enough of others—but this is a long journey we are on.)



BURMA • MAURA FALLON

ALLIES AT THE "ENDING IRISH OPPRESSION" DAY

I invited a very small group of English allies to the Ending Irish Oppression Day, on the basis that they sat at the back, listened and learnt, had all their sessions with each other, and didn't look for contact with the Irish people. Most of them were Regional Reference People. It was good that they came. I think something could change in the relationship between the RC Regions in Scotland, England, Wales, and Cornwall and the RC Regions in Ireland. I'm still not clear on what that is going to look like, but I am sure this will be the start of that change.

continued . . .

... continued

ONE-TO-ONE RECRUITMENT

I was scared to have the goal of eighty percent working-class and other target groups. I kept it close to my chest,⁵ but I did tell people one to one when I was encouraging them to come. Everywhere I went, I encouraged people I was close to who were from my target groups. Lots of them didn't see themselves as wide world changers—in fact, the very title put them off⁶—but I just made them laugh a lot about that and showed them how much I wanted them to come.

I asked Alima⁷ (a Black woman I know and love) and Liam⁸ (a young man I know and love) to be part of my gang for recruiting to the workshop, and they encouraged young people and Black people to come.

Each time white owning-class people applied for the workshop, I rang them up⁹ and explained that it was hard for working-class people and people targeted by racism to see themselves as wide world changers and asked them if they could recruit a working-class or Black person to come. They were glad to do that.

LOTS OF SESSIONS

Julian and I had lots of sessions leading up to the workshop—mostly on the Ending Irish Oppression Day. I also had regular sessions with Gill Turner,¹⁰ who

⁵ "Close to my chest" means very private.

⁶ "Put them off" means offended them.

⁷ Alima Adams, a Co-Counselor in Cambridge, England

⁸ Liam Geary Baulch, a Co-Counselor in London, England

⁹ "Rang them up" means called them on the phone.

¹⁰ Gill Turner is the Regional Reference Person for Scotland and Northeast and Northwest England.

led the allies that day, both of us being as open as possible with each other. Mostly it was just completely terrifying!

THE SCOTS

I have daily early-morning mini-sessions with Fionntan Hurley, an Irish man who has lived in Scotland for many years, so I shared everything with him. He leads a group of working-class Scottish Catholics with Irish heritage. Because of him, they came as a group to the workshop and got other Scots to come, even though the workshop was just outside London. (Normally the Scots wouldn't come down here for a workshop.) They were strong and visible as a group and made a huge difference

SINGING BY GROUPS

Sheila Fairon was leading the singing and had the brilliant idea of asking different groups of people to lead the singing before each class. So lots of groups that might normally be a bit quiet and invisible got to be up front and visible. That made a big difference.

In the closing circle, someone asked people to put up their hand if the reason they were there was their relationship with me. Maybe half the workshop put up their hand. That still makes me cry.

What I learnt more than anything from this experience is that if you have a clear goal, you can make things change—even things that might appear to be unchangeable.

Terry Day
London, England

What to Do with Other People

I heartily recommend this to you as the core of what you do with other people—that you be that outside intelligence that really notices them, really respects them, encourages them, has confidence in them, and continually asks, "Where are you hampered?" and offers help.

Harvey Jackins
From *The Rest of Our Lives*, page 271

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RC in Kenya

The following is a report by Janet Wambui Kabue, the Area Reference Person for Nairobi, Kenya:

A ONE-DAY WOMEN'S WORKSHOP

In November 2014, thirteen women gathered in Cura, in the outskirts of Nairobi, for a one-day women's workshop. Wanjiku Kironyo (the Regional Reference Person for Northern Africa) and I led it. The women were from different parts of Nairobi. They got to share what they love about being women and discharge on what is difficult. The workshop also focused on language liberation and the commercialization of women's bodies for the beautification industry.

From participant *Rosenell Nyakinyua*: The women were able to appreciate themselves and the culture surrounding them. Language liberation was used broadly—to pass on the message of love, loving and appreciating our culture, and appreciating the environment. Re-evaluation Counseling now means the world to me.¹ I want to pass the message of love, and caring for the environment, to everyone to ensure a safer future for the future generations.

ONE-WAY TIME FOR PUPILS IN SCHOOL

On several Friday afternoons I visited a school to give one-way time² to pupils ages nine to fourteen. A lot goes on in the lives of young people in school that they do not get a chance to talk about. I offered the school management one and a half hours of listening to the lovely group on Friday afternoons, twice a month.

¹ "Means the world to me" means is extremely important to me.

² "One-way time" means one-way attention.



LA SELVA BEACH, CALIFORNIA, USA • PAM ROBY

A ONE-DAY WORKSHOP IN KHWISERO

A one-day workshop took place in October 2014 at Shiongo Secondary School in Khwisero, Mumias, a village in Western Kenya. I led it with a team of RC leaders, including Nicholas Oiko,³ who had introduced RC to the students. We used the chalkboard as a tool for discharge. In our culture the chalkboard is reserved for teachers. This was a great opportunity for the young people to "own" it and express their views.

We started the workshop by reminding the young people that they were good. We celebrated something that each of them was good at and wrote that on the board. Next we shared the things that were good and true about

³ Nicholas Oiko is an RC leader in Khwisero, Kenya.

them. We also focused on the RC goal on care of the environment⁴ and wrote our commitments for that.

From *Rosenell Nyakinyua*: Re-evaluation Counseling has been a great journey for me. I have used it for only half a year and I already love the progress. The team did a marvelous job. It was great to learn new ideas. What struck me most was the rule that one is not supposed to socialize.⁵ I had not fully realized why the rule was put in place. A highlight was the enthusiastic young boys and girls in the high school. They were full of life, ready to learn more about this new tool that was introduced to them not so long ago. They picked a cause I am fond of—the environment. They promised to take care of it. They made it clear to us that they would be the change makers we sought in maintaining a great environment. They believed that it had to start from them.

continued . . .

⁴ 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.

⁵ The no-socializing policy of the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities: that Co-Counselors not set up any relationship, other than Co-Counseling, with other Co-Counselors or with people whom they first meet in a Co-Counseling context

... continued

A YOUNG ADULTS WORKSHOP IN KISERIAN

In 2014 I led a two-day workshop for twenty-nine young adults from various parts of Nairobi. Noah T. Winner, an RCer from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA, was in the country and supported the workshop. Before and during it I continually discharged on the feelings that come up for me when leading. I grew up in a culture in which young people were not encouraged to stand in front of people and speak. Doing that was one huge contradiction⁶ and a good opportunity to reclaim my power. I also looked around the room and saw a group of powerful people who had committed themselves to re-emergence and to living full lives.

The workshop was held outside of Nairobi, in an area known as Kiserian, on a farm overlooking the Ngong Hills. The area is serene, and it was lovely being out there. During one of the breaks, some cows came to graze near where we were sitting. For me it was a powerful connection with nature, as I grew up in a rural village surrounded by farm animals and activities. I thought about coexistence and not taking up each other's space or feeling the need to kill in order to survive.

The class that stood out for me was the class on sexism. We went back to childhood and talked about how we had been trained in our roles as men

and women. We remembered some childhood games and how some were oppressive. We did more work on this during the men's and women's support groups.

Our area has experienced several forms of violence and terrorism-related deaths. We discharged on the death of a community member and the involvement of young adults in violence.

My highlights were leading the workshop, being with the young adult community, and seeing and being part of the energy as we fight for liberation.

From Anne Wanjiku Kamau: Our activities included games and sports, open discussions, discharging, and "opening up." My highlight is always any discharging session; I enjoy this the most since it is what RC is mostly about. I'm not forgetting the good meals and cool⁷ environment! I wouldn't mind having RC workshops often.

From James Mwangi: The youths were able to fathom the meaning of RC, its importance, its origin, and its impact. Our facilitators taught from their own life experience. In RC you always have a partner who listens to you as you share. I'm looking forward to another RC camp session.

From Isaiah Ochieng Mboke: Re-evaluation Counseling involves reviewing hurtful past experiences and finding a way to let go—a process called "discharging." It's a way of breaking out of the cocoon and sharing your issues with a trusted person. Every story is confidential to the parties involved. Youths learned how to approach life and challenges with a different and more optimal perspective. Re-evaluation Counseling is life changing and reliable.

⁶ Contradiction to distress



METAL SCULPTURE • BRIAN LAVENDEL

Organizing Other Intelligences

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

Harvey Jackins

From The Rest of Our Lives, page 257

⁷ "Cool" means great.

Young People and Care of the Environment

At a recent young people's workshop, I decided to do a class on climate change and care of the environment. I had talked a bit about this topic at other young people's workshops but had never dedicated a whole class to it, so it was a new challenge.

I talked about the dual and contradictory messages that young people's oppression gives us on this topic. Firstly, discouraged adults tell us that climate change is our problem to deal with because we'll be around when things get worse. Being hopeful about the world is left up to us,¹ and we don't have space to ever feel discouraged. Secondly, adults aren't backing² our leadership. They give us the message that we don't know enough and aren't smart enough to lead in this area. Adults need to discharge their discouragement so they don't give up on fighting for the environment. They also need to follow and back young people's leadership. Young people have a lot of strengths that are needed to end the destruction of the environment. Having had less time to accumulate distress, we have a good understanding of connection (to others and to the natural world), playfulness, humour, and how the world should be. Work for the environment will move faster if we incorporate humour, play, and connection into it rather than getting weighed down by the seriousness of it.

I talked about how important it is that we take on³ care of the environment. If we don't, humans (and other species) won't be around to do all the other important things we want to do. I talked about how connected oppression is to climate change and how the communities and countries most targeted by racism and classism are already being hit the hardest by the destruction of the environment. I shared that RC has a new goal⁴ that talks about the interrelatedness of oppression and envi-

ronmental destruction and how we need to discharge and act to end both.

By far the best part of the class was when some of the young people shared what work they had done for the environment. I asked young people of the global majority to share first, which many of them did, and we had time for a couple of white young people to share as well.

The young people talked about attending rallies and sit-ins against pipelines and fracking and about participating in the People's Climate March.⁵ Some of them had organized busses of young people to get to these actions and had led parts of them. One young person talked about working with her friends to create Facebook groups and other strategies to stop a pipeline. Another talked about how environmental destruction is affecting non-Western countries by damaging their food sources. He has been organizing young immigrants in a campaign to get climate refugees recognized as official refugees (gaining them certain rights) in the United States. Another talked about how an organization of young people he is a part of has been working to get the city of Boston (Massachusetts, USA) to divest from fossil fuels. His group has gotten huge support. And another talked about his work on animal conservation with a zoo. He raised thousands of dollars for the zoo by selling hot chocolate and baked goods and is now doing presentations on climate change and animal conservation for young people and adults in various organizations. (Some of us got to see his presentation later.)

The young people who spoke were brilliant, brave, powerful, and inspiring! I plan to do more classes like this at young people's workshops in the future.

Mari Piggott
International Liberation Reference
Person for Young People
Squamish, British Columbia, Canada
Reprinted from the RC e-mail discussion list
for leaders in the care of the environment

¹ "Left up to us" means assumed to be our responsibility.

² "Backing" means supporting.

³ "Take on" means undertake.

⁴ 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.

⁵ A march in New York City, New York, USA, on September 21, 2014, in which an estimated four hundred thousand people participated



The 2016-2017 Pre-World and World Conferences

AFRICA—November 18-21, 2016

Lagos, Lagos State, Nigeria
Organizer: Chioma Okonkwo,
+234-8023-108-536, chioks4@yahoo.com

SOUTH ASIA—November 24-27, 2016

Pune, Maharashtra, India
Organizer: Niti Dandekar, +91-20-24352771,
dandekarniti@gmail.com

WEST COAST NORTH AMERICA

January 13-16, 2017

San Francisco Bay area, California, USA
Organizer: Mary Ruth Gross,
+1-510-243-5934,
maryruthgross@gmail.com

AUSTRALIA/NEW ZEALAND

February 17-20, 2017

Sydney, New South Wales, Australia
Organizer: Lyndall Katz,
lyndallk@gmail.com

EAST ASIA—February 23-26, 2017

Beijing, China
Organizer: Ma Lihong, +86-13552670282,
rcmalihong@163.com

LATIN AMERICA—March 23-26, 2017

Location to be determined
Organizer: Carmen Rodriguez Sanchez,
+56-2-2232964,
carmenrodriguezsanchez@gmail.com

CENTRAL/SOUTHERN

NORTH AMERICA—April 27-30, 2017

Near St. Louis, Missouri, USA
Organizer: Alysia Tate, +1-773-680-9767,
alytate@gmail.com

EASTERN EUROPE AND ISRAEL

May 19-22, 2017

Location and organizer to be determined

WESTERN EUROPE—May 25-28, 2017

Location to be determined
Organizer: Fredrik Eklof,
parsamtal@fredrikeklof.se

EAST COAST NORTH AMERICA

June 22-25, 2017

Location to be determined
Organizer: Beth Edmonds, +1-207-865-3869,
bethedmonds@gmail.com

WORLD CONFERENCE

August 8-13, 2017

Storrs, Connecticut, USA
Organizer: Stacey Leeds, +1-860-974-1043,
leedspechie@charter.net

No Need to Lead in Isolation

I have just finished leading a people of the global majority workshop, in southern California (USA). I think it went well.

One thing that I did was extremely helpful to me. I learned it from Barbara Love.¹ She meets several times during a workshop with her leadership team to check on how the workshop is progressing. She asks questions such as

- What is a highlight of the workshop for you, at this time?
- How do you think the workshop is going as a whole?
- Do you perceive any challenges?

Asking these questions, and others, at the workshop that I led helped me in a number of ways:

- I received feedback on whether key issues, learning points, and so on, that I was presenting to the workshop were being received.

- I heard views of others on whether we were headed in a good direction.

- I was able to deal with challenges or issues before they became “big deals” or big problems.

- I stayed open to others’ thinking. (It is sometimes hard for me to hear people’s thoughts without considering them as criticism.)

- I didn’t feel that I was taking the entire workshop on my shoulders. I was able to let others provide thinking, guidance, and leadership in making sure that the workshop went well.

I did not give up my job as the leader and main decision maker at the workshop. I just took in the suggestions and information and made decisions from a less isolated place.

After the workshop, I felt pleased with the work we had done. I did not feel as though it was only my work. I was happy that a group of us had worked together to make a workshop go very well. I felt good! I felt that I had shown up² in a big way as a female leader with a team around me. I had made the decision and taken action not to do the work alone.

Thank you, southern California leaders, for your fantastic support. And thank you, Barbara Love, for sharing such a good leadership model.

Rachel Noble
Portland, Oregon, USA

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

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

² “Shown up” means been present.

Emerging from Crises in Nigeria

I am writing this with much joy and excitement, having come out of a long, chaotic political tension. On Friday, May the 29th, a new democratically elected government took over¹ in Nigeria, against all odds.

The most powerful countries around the world had predicted and warned that Nigeria would split and that another war was inevitable. That had brought about the exodus from Nigeria of both foreigners and nationals. It had been predicted that some states in northern Nigeria would go extinct because of a series of insurgent attacks by the terrorist group Boko Haram.

It was a dreadful period in our nation's history. Time and space will not allow me to write in detail all that happened.

It affected our RC Communities in some northern states, because the government banned, for security

reasons, any gatherings apart from religious ones. Most schools in most northern states were under lock and key.² The abduction of over two hundred Chibok³ girls from their hostels was frightening. (They have yet to be fully rescued from the terrorist group, but we Nigerians are more hopeful than ever.) The Ebola crisis was a threat, too. It touched one of our safest states, Lagos state, which happens to be where I reside.

All these things and many more stirred up lots of feelings, but RC tools, support groups, and sessions helped us all to navigate well. They helped us to keep thinking in such a bleak situation. They helped us to empower people around us with what we have in RC.

Chioma Okonkwo
Lagos, Nigeria

² "Under lock and key" means being kept locked.

³ Chibok is a town in northeastern Nigeria.

¹ "Took over" means assumed control.

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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 (USD) 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.



ELLIE PUTNAM

My Workshop at Dusk

I just saw the sunset.
Pink lemonade
and tropical punch.
Magnificent color;
Ecstasy!

And I thought I was solo
in seeing this sunset so sweet.
But then I saw a silhouette
Of someone soaking in the
same sun.

And it became ten times more
magnificent than it had been
when it first begun!

Lori Leifer
New York, New York, USA

Integrity and Honesty

The elements of the kind of charisma I want leaders to have are, first of all, *integrity* and *honesty*—meaning what they say and keeping their word when they give it.

Harvey Jackins
From *The Rest of Our Lives*,
page 289

New from Rational Island Publishers

A new pamphlet:

Sustaining All Life

The RC Communities are sending a delegation to the United Nations climate conference in Paris, France, November 30 to December 4, 2015. A new pamphlet, *Sustaining All Life*, has been created for that purpose. It gives a succinct picture of how RC theory and practice are not only useful for but essential to solving the climate crisis.

From page 2: “[Our] main work . . . is to (1) create awareness of the emotional damage that interferes with each person’s thinking about and acting to end environmental degradation, and (2) undo this damage on an individual basis. . . . Unless we are able to heal our emotional hurts, harmful behavior tends to reappear.”

From page 7: “We will all suffer from climate change. It is necessary that we act in everyone’s interest and replace a system that has always harmed the majority of people and is now harming everyone and much of life on Earth.”

\$3.00

plus postage and handling



KATIE KAUFFMAN

A new issue of the journal

Sustaining All Life

Don’t miss the second issue of *Sustaining All Life* (the RC journal about care of the environment)! It’s filled with inspiring examples of the clear thinking and good work that Co-Counselors are doing around the world.

Consider ordering a copy now. We all need to be well informed about climate change and environmental degradation and understand the large role we can play in reversing them.

\$4.00

plus postage and handling



KK

NO LIMITS

The Liberation of Women

In March 2015, No Limits for Women (a project of the Re-evaluation Counseling 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.

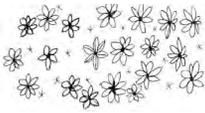
This twenty-page pamphlet was created to help the delegation inform other delegates about the work of No Limits.

We can continue to make good use of it—in communicating ever more widely what we’ve learned in RC about women’s liberation.

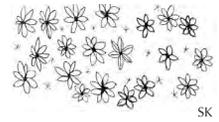
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Ordering information on page 110



Taking Action Toward Big Solutions



From a talk by Tim Jackins at the Teachers' and Leaders' Workshop
in Kring van Dorth, the Netherlands, May 29 to June 1, 2015

I want to look at our current challenges. We live in a capitalist society. Capitalism is destroying itself. We're not doing it; the system is simply unstable. More and more it shows. And more and more, society is using oppression to try to stay in existence. All of the oppressions are being used more openly. (Sexism, racism, and the other oppressions exist only to support the economic system. If they didn't help the system make a profit, they wouldn't exist.)

Society is unable to hide how bad things are. And things are going to get worse. That's good. It's necessary. For things to change, they must become entirely unworkable, because there is not yet enough intelligence operating.

This form of society needs to end because it is unjust. It needs to end because it offers no good solution for anyone's life. This has been true of other oppressive societies too. What's new about this society is that its collapse is destroying the environment. Other societies were hard on people but didn't affect the rest of the world that much. This society makes bigger messes. The other ones weren't any smarter; they just couldn't make as big a mess as we can.

Our society is unable to think about the consequences of its functioning. The most important thing in this society is making money, and if you can make money, nothing else matters—not even your own long-term self-interest. People are making decisions that make their own lives more difficult and will make their children's lives very difficult.

Something has to change this destructive situation. I don't think we need to argue about whether or not it's happening. And we don't need to scare each other by describing all the ways it's happening. We need to figure out what will change it and what stops us from making that happen. We may be a hundred years late, but we can still play a big role in bringing about intelligent change.

Sustaining the world is not a capitalist enterprise and does not fit within a capitalist legal structure. We have to think bigger than the structure we live in.

The causes of the crisis are very large. The solutions will have to be large too. We will have to do more than live careful lives. We get to figure out what the distresses are that are stopping us, keeping us feeling small and powerless and as if we have no right to object.

Capitalist society is structured on capitalist laws—laws that are about what one can and can't do in the context of keeping capitalism going. Sustaining the world is not a capitalist enterprise and does not fit within a capitalist legal structure. We have to think bigger than the structure we live in.

A recent example: Shell Oil moved a very large drilling platform into Seattle (Washington, USA)—to use Seattle as a base for

going to the Arctic to drill there. Drilling in the Arctic makes perfect sense to Shell. Enough oil has been burned, because of Shell and other companies, that the northern ice cap is shrinking due to global warming, so there are more places to drill—so of course they are going to drill. It has a logic, but it's a capitalist logic. Everything they are doing is legal, and it will destroy the environment. So something else has to happen—and the companies are not going to do it. They may do little things if it's profitable, but they won't stop the big profitable polluting activities. Last year there was a meeting of large corporations to discuss how to make money off of global warming—not how to stop it, but how to make a profit off of it.

The other side of this example is that Shell was met in Seattle by about three hundred people in kayaks. It was a very good picture—this gigantic machine and these tiny little bits of colored plastic. It gave voice to the opposition. Most of the people of Seattle are against Shell being there. The mayor is also against it, as is the City Council, but they function inside the legal structure so they are fining Shell five hundred dollars per day. That's what they can do. Something more will have to be done—about Shell and all the other companies that are destroying the environment.

We have to figure out what. And we will have to plan for it and communicate it as widely as we can. There are lots of people doing this. Unfortunately, too much of the time they are fighting with

continued . . .

WIDE WORLD CHANGING

... continued

each other because they are scared and desperate and don't know what else to do. We can figure out what else to do, but we have to do it soon. We have to counsel on our fears that stop us, on the hurts that make us act alone instead of with people. And then we get to see what we can do.



MARGO HITTLEMAN

If we try to do anything, we will have wonderful sessions. Anytime we step into the real world, it is easier to counsel on our distresses. They are not real, but we don't know that very well until we step out into reality. Lying alone at night with our distresses, they seem real. Out in the street with two thousand people saying no, they don't look as powerful.

The challenge we face is real. It is something we need to counsel on and then decide to do more about. Millions of people are trying to do more already. There are lots of people we can join, and our helping them think, our listening to them, can make a big difference.

My picture of this work is that we have two places to counsel. One is on stopping acting alone. To meet

the challenge of the environment, we have to do differently. We have needed to stop acting alone for a long time, in all parts of our lives, and now our world is going to be destroyed unless we change. A little motivation.

The other place to counsel is on where we act small. To change things quickly, we need to act big. We need to be loud with what we think, and say no to things that are destroying the environment. If we keep saying no loudly, with millions and then billions of people, things can change.

So we have these two pieces of work to do. And doing them will improve every other part of our lives at the same time, because being alone and acting small spoils every part of our lives.

De Nederlandse vertaling van het vorige artikel / Dutch translation of the previous article:

Samen Werken aan Grote Oplossingen

Van de theorie door Tim Jackins, tijdens de Nederlandse Leidersworkshop
in de Kring van Dorth, van 29 mei tot 1 juni 2015

Ik wil kijken naar onze huidige uitdagingen. We leven in een kapitalistische samenleving. Het kapitalisme is zichzelf aan het vernietigen; dat doen wij niet. Het systeem is simpelweg onstabiel. Dat zien we steeds vaker. Meer en meer gebruikt de samenleving onderdrukking om te kunnen blijven bestaan. Alle vormen van onderdrukking worden steeds openlijker gebruikt. *(Seksisme, racisme en andere vormen van onderdrukking bestaan alleen maar om het economische systeem te ondersteunen. Als ze het systeem niet zouden helpen om winst te maken, zouden ze niet bestaan.)*

De maatschappij is niet meer in staat te verbergen hoe slecht het ervoor staat. En het gaat slechter worden. Dat is goed. Het is noodzakelijk. Om de maatschappijen te kunnen veranderen moeten ze eerst volledig onwerkbaar worden omdat er op dit moment nog niet genoeg intelligentie actief is.

De samenleving in deze vorm moet beëindigd worden omdat ze onrechtvaardig is. Het is nodig dat het eindigt omdat het voor niemand's leven een goede oplossing biedt. Dit is ook waar geweest voor andere onderdrukkende samenlevingen. Wat nieuw is aan het instorten van deze samenleving, is dat het ook het milieu vernietigt. Andere samenlevingen waren zwaar voor mensen maar ze hebben niet in dezelfde mate de rest van de wereld beïnvloed. Deze maatschappij maakt veel grotere puinhopen. Andere maatschappijen konden dat niet. De anderen waren niet slimmer, ze konden er gewoon niet zo'n grote troep van maken als wij dat kunnen.

Onze samenleving is niet in staat om na te denken over de gevolgen van haar functioneren. Het belangrijkste in deze maatschappij is geld verdienen, en als je geld kunt verdienen, dan doet niets anders er nog toe - zelfs je eigen langetermijnbelang niet. Mensen maken beslissingen die hun eigen leven moeilijker maken en daarmee dat van hun kinderen enorm moeilijk.

Iets zal deze destructieve situatie moeten veranderen. Ik denk niet dat we er over hoeven te discussiëren of dat wel of niet aan de hand is. We hoeven elkaar ook niet bang te maken door alle manieren te beschrijven waarop het gebeurt. We moeten uitzoeken wat het zal veranderen en wat ons tegenhoudt om ervoor te zorgen dat het gaat veranderen. We lopen misschien wel honderd jaar achter, maar we kunnen nog steeds een grote rol spelen om intelligente verandering te bewerkstelligen.

De oorzaken van de crisis zijn erg groot. De oplossingen zullen ook groot moeten zijn. We zullen meer moeten doen dan voorzichtige levens leiden. We moeten uitzoeken welke pijnpatronen ons stoppen, welke ons klein en machteloos doen voelen, (en maken dat het voelt) alsof we geen recht hebben om bezwaar te maken.

De kapitalistische maatschappij is gebouwd op kapitalistische wetten. Ze vertellen wat je wel en niet mag doen zodat het kapitalistische systeem in stand blijft. Het behoud van de wereld is geen kapitalistische onderneming en zal mogelijk niet passen in de legale kapitalistische structuur. Wij moeten groter denken dan de structuur waarin we leven.

Een recent voorbeeld: Shell bracht een heel groot boorplatform naar Seattle (Washington, USA), - om Seattle te gebruiken als een basis om naar het Noordpoolgebied te gaan en daar naar olie te boren. Voor Shell is het boren naar olie in het Noordpoolgebied volstrekt logisch. Er is genoeg olie verbrand door Shell en andere bedrijven zodat de ijskap op de Noordpool als gevolg van het opwarmen van de aarde aan het krimpen is. Dus zijn er nu meer plekken waar ze kunnen boren. En natuurlijk gaan ze daar boren. Er zit een logica achter, maar het is een kapitalistische logica. Alles wat ze doen is legaal, en zal het milieu vernietigen. Dus er moet iets anders gebeuren en de bedrijven zullen dat niet gaan doen. Ze zullen misschien kleine dingen doen als het winst oplevert, maar ze zullen niet stoppen met grote winstmakende vervuilende activiteiten. Afgelopen jaar was er een bijeenkomst van grote multinationals om te discussiëren hoe geld te verdienen aan de opwarming van de aarde, niet over hoe ze het kunnen stoppen, maar hoe het winst kan opleveren.

De andere kant van dit voorbeeld is dat Shell in Seattle, driehonderd mensen in kajaks tegen kwam. Het was een heel mooi beeld - deze enorme machine tegenover die kleine stukjes gekleurd plastic. Het gaf een stem aan de oppositie. De meeste mensen in Seattle zijn er tegen dat Shell daar is. De burgemeester is ook tegen, net als de gemeenteraad. Maar ze functioneren binnen het legale systeem, dus geven ze Shell een boete van vijfhonderd dollar per dag. Dat is wat ze kunnen doen. Er zal meer moeten gebeuren

- ten opzichte van Shell en alle andere bedrijven die het milieu vernietigen.

Wij moeten uitzoeken wat. En we zullen met een plan moeten komen en de communicatie daarover zo breed verspreiden als we kunnen. Er zijn een heleboel mensen die dit al doen. Jammer genoeg wordt er te veel tijd gestoken in onderlinge gevechten, omdat ze bang en wanhopig zijn en niet weten hoe ze het anders zouden kunnen doen. Wij kunnen uitzoeken hoe het anders kan, maar we moeten dat wel snel gaan doen. We moeten counselen over onze angsten die ons tegenhouden, en over de pijn die maakt dat we in ons eentje functioneren in plaats van met elkaar. Daarna krijgen we zicht op wat we kunnen doen.

Als je iets proberen, zullen we geweldige sessies hebben. Elke keer als we een stap in de echte wereld zetten, is het gemakkelijker om te ontladen over onze pijnpatronen. Die zijn niet echt, maar dat beseffen we niet goed totdat we (daaruit en) in de werkelijkheid stappen. Alleen in bed liggend lijken onze pijnpatronen heel echt. Daarbuiten op straat met twee duizend anderen die nee zeggen, lijken onze pijnpatronen een stuk minder krachtig.

De uitdaging waar we voor staan is echt. Het is iets waar we sessies over moeten doen om daarna te besluiten actiever te worden. Er zijn al miljoenen mensen die proberen om meer te doen. Er zijn heel veel mensen waar wij ons bij aan kunnen sluiten en onze steun om hun denken te helpen ontwikkelen kan een heel groot verschil maken.

Mijn beeld van dit werk is dat we twee plekken hebben om te counselen. Eén gaat erover dat we stoppen met dingen alleen doen. Om de uitdaging van het milieu aan te gaan moeten we het anders gaan doen. Het was al een lange tijd nodig om te stoppen met dingen alleen te doen in allerlei delen van ons leven, en nu wordt onze wereld vernietigd tenzij we veranderen. Een kleine motivatie.

Het ander stuk om aan te werken gaat over waar wij ons als klein gedragen. Om dingen snel te kunnen veranderen moeten we groot handelen. Het is nodig dat we luid en duidelijk zijn over wat wij denken, en we moeten nee zeggen tegen dingen die het milieu vernietigen. Als we heel luid nee blijven zeggen, met miljoenen en daarna met miljarden mensen, dan kunnen dingen veranderen.

Dus ik denk dat we deze twee stukken werk te doen hebben. Ondertussen zal het tegelijkertijd alle andere delen van ons leven verbeteren, omdat isolement en het ons klein houden, alle stukken in ons leven aantast.

*Vertaling door Frank van den Heuvel, op basis van werk van schrijftolken tijdens de workshop
Translation by Frank van den Heuvel, based on the work of scribe interpreters at the workshop*

Racism and Care of the Environment

A hundred Co-Counselors, forty-five percent of them people of the global majority, attended the recent Racism and Care of the Environment Workshop led by Barbara Love and Diane Shisk¹ in Warwick, New York, USA. The following are some of the points that were made:

- There is a deadline for ending oppression. We have a fifteen- to fifty-year window for ending classism and changing the economic system. Millions of lives are at stake. We need masses of people on the streets, shaking the structures.

- We can't wait for racism and other oppressions (all rooted in classism) to end before we take on² caring for the environment. They all have to be worked on simultaneously. We need to (1) identify where we feel connected to care of the environment and our constituency and start discharging there,

(2) have sessions on "Are you kidding? I have to discharge on *this*, too?" (3) remember that our feelings are from early times, including feelings of panic and urgency.

- Our distress recordings have had us spending our lives making things go better for ourselves and for others as *reformists* instead of *revolutionaries*.

- We need to work on early terror and defeats (that paralyze us or have us constantly "doing") *at the same time* as we decide and act in the wide world (which will bring up more feelings for discharge). Be ready for lots of defeats! Being defeated doesn't mean we've done anything wrong. There are large forces opposing change.

- We need to build RC. We need to lead up-front and center. Leading from behind and not getting noticed won't move us forward.

- The destruction of the environment disproportionately impacts people of the global majority. Their communities also bear a dispro-

portionate share of repairing the destruction and overcoming the "whiteness" of the green movement.

- Climate change is the biggest human rights violation that has ever happened.

- The United States has five percent of the world's population and contributes twenty percent of global carbon emissions, of which eighty to ninety percent comes from use of fossil fuels (oil, gas, coal).

- At the rate we are going, by the year 2050 the earth's average temperature will have increased by 3.6 degrees, which will translate into six million deaths annually.

- There are still 7.5 trillion dollars' worth of fossil fuels in the ground that we can't burn if we're going to survive.

- It would be interesting to connect the anti-war and environmental movements.

Berta Ramos-Ramirez
New York, New York, USA

¹ Barbara Love is the International Liberation Reference Person for African-Heritage People. Diane Shisk is the Alternate International Reference Person for the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities.

² "Take on" means undertake.



CAPE YORK, QUEENSLAND, AUSTRALIA • BARBARA MOLANUS

Take Charge of What Will Happen

The past was as it had to be. Complete
The way it was, it calls for no regretting.

Nor is our future predetermined ever
But, rather, forking endlessly before us,
Invites us to take charge of what will happen
By fresh anticipation and wise choices.

Harvey Jackins

From *The Meaningful Holiday*, page 35

Racism and Care of the Environment, in Trinidad and Tobago

Waveney Richards, the Regional¹ Reference Person for the Caribbean, led a weekend workshop here in Trinidad and Tobago that paralleled the Racism and Care of the Environment Workshop.² We followed the same schedule and used Skype to join in the main classes and Rudy's³ topic group on Ferguson.⁴ Eight of us later shared our highlights.

Chantal Esdelle
Tunapuna, Trinidad and Tobago

One highlight was seeing the relationship (due to colonialism and greed) between racism and the destruction of the environment. I came to the workshop believing they were two separate issues.

Barbara Love clarified that the global majority are the victims and not the perpetrators of environmental destruction.

In the next period I will focus on my lifestyle: my food, the degree of my consumerism, and making my spaces environmentally friendly.

M—

Highlights were Diane Shisk's reminder that the powerlessness, hopelessness, and isolation we feel with regard to the environment come from early hurts, and Barbara's reminder that looking at environmental destruction—like looking at racism, colonialism, genocide, and sexism—is a way in to discharging these feelings.

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

² A workshop held in Warwick, New York, USA, in August 2015, led by Barbara Love, the International Liberation Reference Person for African-Heritage People, and Diane Shisk, the Alternate International Reference Person

³ Rudy Nickens, the Regional Reference Person for Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska, USA

⁴ Ferguson, Missouri, USA, where Michael Brown, an unarmed Black teenager, was fatally shot by a white police officer on August 9, 2014, setting off a protest movement there, and across the country, against the ongoing police brutality against Black people in the United States

Rudy's description of the young people working for social change in Ferguson was powerful. I will use it when I feel overwhelmed about changing anything.

In the next period I will start making gardening a part of my life, so that I am actively reminded of my connection to the earth and people.

Chantal Esdelle
Tunapuna, Trinidad and Tobago

Gillian, Johnny, and Akillah,⁵ pioneers in thinking about the environment right here in our community, showed me that there is hope in Trinidad and Tobago.

I noticed the importance of the East Indian liberation support group I lead and decided to continue to lead it every second Saturday.

I will also keep thanking everything in the environment: hugging trees and thanking plants.

Angela Knights
Arima, Trinidad and Tobago

I understood the connection between racism and the environment.

Discharging on racism, colonialism, imperialism, anti-Jewish oppression, and care of the environment will help me to notice my connection with others in my Caribbean setting and to stand up and fight for myself, my earth, and my people. I will also start recycling in my community.

Kwynn Loregnard
Maraval, Trinidad and Tobago

One highlight was the direction to create a relationship between a white person and a person of the global majority.

continued . . .

⁵ Gillian Goddard, who founded Sun Eaters and makes chocolate, a practice systematically removed from the Caribbean by Europeans; John Stollmeyer, who leads permaculture work and the Orinoco Foundation; Akillah Jaramoogi, who leads the Fondes Amandes Community Reforestation Project

WIDE WORLD CHANGING

... continued

I will galvanize the permaculture⁶ Gayap⁷ tribe to link up with the Orinoco Foundation and move them toward creating Indigenous lifestyles in Trinidad and Tobago.

John Stollmeyer
St. Ann's Watershed, Trinidad and Tobago

One highlight for me was noticing how racism and environmental destruction go hand in hand—for example, in the placing of waste plants close to Indigenous and people-of-the-global-majority communities. Previously I had thought they were two different topics.

I will continue to work on discouragement and early defeats, as they make me feel stuck, paralyzed, and overwhelmed. I will also educate my students and their parents on ways they can contribute positively to the environment, for example, with recycling bins, and will lead a workshop on carbon footprints.

Natasha Joseph
Trinidad and Tobago

⁶ Permaculture is the application of ecology to designing integrated systems of food production, housing, appropriate technology, and community development.

⁷ The word "Gayap" comes from the Indigenous Karinya word *kayapa*, which describes the tradition of people getting together to complete a huge task, like clearing land, building a structure, or planting and reaping.

I want to put more attention on the intersection of racism and the environment. I will find ways to make this part of our day-to-day process as Co-Counselors. I will also influence private clients on environmental care, and the political directorate on strategy.

Waveney Richards
Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago



ARIZONA, USA • LISA VOSS

I Could See How Far We've Come

It's exciting to be engaged in a project in which people are able to think more all the time, and at the Racism and Care of the Environment Workshop,¹ I could see how far our work on racism and the environment has already come.

Barbara and Diane pushed each other and us the whole weekend. They pushed us to work on the early defeats that leave us discouraged and hopeless as we take on² new, big challenges. And they were cheerfully confident that human beings are capable of changing the world in big ways.

The reports on what United to End Racism³ groups have already pulled off⁴ in their efforts to support and change the climate movement were inspiring. I heard that climate groups want to hear what we know about racism and how this provides opportunities to tell sometimes large groups of people working on climate change that they need to focus on ending capitalism—that when white people try to solve climate change without addressing this unequal system at the same time, it comes across as racism to people of the global majority.

Liam Geary Baulch
London, England

¹ A workshop held in Warwick, New York, USA, in August 2015, led by Barbara Love, the International Liberation Reference Person for African-Heritage People, and Diane Shisk, the Alternate International Reference Person

² "Take on" means undertake.

³ United to End Racism is a project of the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities in which groups of Co-Counselors go to non-RC events to share what we've learned in RC about ending racism.

⁴ "Pulled off" means successfully accomplished.

Pope Francis's Encyclical on the Environment

At the recent Racism and Care of the Environment Workshop,¹ I led a topic table on Pope Francis's encyclical on the environment, *Laudato Si—On Care for Our Common Home*. Thirteen people came. Most were of Catholic heritage. Almost everyone had heard about or even read some of Francis's words.

I spoke a little about the encyclical, emphasizing the following:

People before profit. The pope writes about how climate disruption is mainly the result of the rich (predominantly white) industrial world's emissions of heat-trapping gases, while the worst impacts of it—droughts, sea-level rise, super storms—are experienced by poor people, mostly of the global majority, who have the least means to buffer themselves from calamity. Here's a quote from the encyclical that I read at the table: "Where profits alone count, there can be

no thinking about the rhythms of nature, its phases of decay and regeneration, or the complexity of ecosystems which may be gravely upset by human intervention. Moreover, biodiversity is considered at most a deposit of economic resources available for exploitation, with no serious thought for the real value of things, their significance for persons and cultures, or the concerns and needs of the poor."

It matters that this pope is the first Roman Catholic pope of the global majority. And some right-wing² ideologues consider him "the most dangerous person on the planet."

Gratitude. Throughout his letter, Francis reminds us that the earth provides for us, that without her gifts we would not live, that thankfulness (in prayer) is our proper relationship with the earth.

Reciprocity. The earth takes care of us, and we must take care of her. This is what Indigenous people around the world emphasize, and I think it's important that the leader of two billion Catholics is acknowledging it.

Awareness of our deep connection. In RC we understand that loss of connection, with people and the earth, is related to hurts that have left on humans patterns of greed, neglect, irresponsibility, "superiority," racism, and harming the environment. Francis emphasizes the same thing (in Catholic lingo) in the encyclical.

Simplicity. He says that if everyone lived simply, there would be enough material resources for every person on earth to thrive. He himself has made it a point to forego the extravagant pomp that has been attached to the position of pontiff and lives as simple a life as a pope could possibly live.

After I shared these thoughts, everyone had a chance to discharge.

While the encyclical is a source of great hope and will bolster the growing movements to end racism and environmental destruction, it doesn't talk about what we in RC have: discharge, and deep relationships built on the understanding of discharge, re-emergence, oppression, and liberation. Our job, however, is not to criticize where the pope and the Church fall short but to listen to other Catholics, and our allies, about the encyclical, racism, and care of the environment, and bring our thinking and skills into the mix.

Jack Manno

Syracuse, New York, USA

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

¹ A workshop held in Warwick, New York, USA, in August 2015, led by Barbara Love and Diane Shisk

² "Right-wing" means politically reactionary.

Thinking and Physical Work

All of my own experience and my observations in a wide variety of work environments indicate that the best thinking is usually done while engaged in physical work (and the sharpest thinkers I have known have been working-class people). I turn to the ever-waiting gardening, janitorial, and maintenance work in my present environment in Seattle whenever I feel stuck on a problem.

There is no question in my mind that an occasional few months in the rice paddies or machine shops would drastically improve the intellectual output of intellectuals (as well as their digestions, physical health, and effectiveness as human beings).

To be engaged in useful, mastered, and somewhat routine physical work seems to permit the mind to soar freely.

Harvey Jackins

From *The Benign Reality*, pages 54 to 55

“Speaking Up Is Easy—You Just Have to Do It”

A year and a half ago I returned to live in Johannesburg, South Africa, after many years of living in foreign countries. Despite the twenty years since the dawn of democracy in my country, and the release of Nelson Mandela from prison, I found that the economy is still largely in the hands of white men (with white women benefitting accordingly).

I also found that good white people generally believe that black South Africans should just “get over it” and stop making a fuss about the three hundred years of colonial rule that kept ninety percent of the people in poverty and as servants and continues to do so.

On the basis of the work we’ve been doing in RC, I decided to build a movement to end white privilege, like that which has emerged in the United States over the last fifteen or so years. I now lead a small group of white women RCers on noticing our goodness and owning up to¹ our privilege. I also lead a small group of non-RC white women on the same subject.

I wanted to be heard more widely, so last week I rang into² a South African radio station in response to the question “What is the responsibility of the middle class?” I must explain that this is not the middle class that exists in developed countries. It is the relatively small group of black people in South Africa who have jobs at which they earn more than the minimum wage. These people are one salary packet³ away from bankruptcy. (And the official unemployment rate is twenty-six percent, the unofficial rate is much higher than that, and an estimated forty-six percent of South Africans go to bed hungry most nights.)

In response to the question, I said that the black middle class has no responsibility beyond what they are already doing—which is supporting large extended families whose members are either not working or in low-paying jobs.

I said that it’s those of us in the ruling class, the owning class, from white families with generational wealth and privilege, who have the responsibility to share what we have. I said that we don’t know how to do that and we’d like to learn from the collective way that African culture flourishes. I said that reparations need to be paid and that white people have to figure out how we are going to do this—and do it generously.

The talk-show host let me speak for a few minutes without interruption and then kept me on the program for a while after my contribution, referring to my perspective as though I was one of the panelists.

Speaking up is easy—you just have to do it.

Roslyn Cassidy
Johannesburg, South Africa
Reprinted from the RC e-mail discussion
list for leaders of wide world change

¹ “Owning up to” means admitting to, taking responsibility for.

² “Rang into” means called on the telephone.

³ “Salary packet” means paycheck.



ANNE BARTON

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.

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Making Big Changes

Tim Jackins has for many years had us working on fighting for ourselves, on not believing our feelings of defeat and discouragement, and on remembering our importance to and connection with one another. This work has not only been giving us back our minds and our lives, it has been preparing us to tackle the biggest problems facing our societies. We can now use what we have gained from this work and move as a Community to be a powerful, visible force in turning around climate change.

The current situation facing us is stated well in the recently released RC pamphlet *Sustaining All Life*:

“Carbon emissions from the mining, processing, transporting, and burning of fossil fuels, along with the destruction of forests, grasslands, and other carbon sinks, are creating a heat-trapping blanket around the Earth. Reliance on fossil fuels and other unsustainable practices is also damaging the natural systems on which our lives and well-being depend. All of this is driven by consumption-based societies.

“Nearly all climate scientists agree that carbon pollution is causing global climate change. The pollution is already generating unusual and severe weather across the world. We are seeing more and bigger floods, increasingly severe droughts and wildfires, extreme temperatures, and destructive storms. Rising temperatures are reducing ice volume on land and sea. The global sea level is rising; coastal lands are flooding. The oceans are absorbing carbon di-

oxide and becoming more acidic, with negative impacts on marine ecosystems.

“Additional planetary warming will create new problems and increase the severity of current ones, such as smaller crop and fishing yields and reduced access to fresh water. Thousands more species will go extinct. There will be more severe weather. Widespread disease, poverty, social disintegration, and war will also become more likely.



MAURA FALLON

“The damage done by human-caused catastrophic climate change and environmental destruction disproportionately impacts communities of Indigenous people, people targeted by racism, and poor and working-class people (referred to hereafter as frontline communities). It disproportionately impacts the nations that have long been targeted by colonialism, genocide, and imperialism, many of which have populations that are mostly people targeted by racism (we refer to these hereafter as frontline nations). And the damage disproportionately affects the women, children, and elders of these communities and nations. All of this is largely the result of racism, the oppression of Indigenous peoples, classism, and sexism.”

Climate scientists say we have a fifteen- to fifty-year window in which to change direction and turn the climate crisis around. Because capitalism is the root cause of the crisis, the only way to solve it is to directly challenge capitalism—its structures and policies and all of its other manifestations. We can do this by uniting across races and all oppressions to form a mass movement that will speak in a united voice so loudly, clearly, and persistently that it cannot be ignored.

We will have to speak out about the cause of the crisis and its damaging impact on those who are already so severely oppressed and exploited. We will have to build a worldwide coalition that includes the environmental movement; the movements to end racism, genocide, poverty, sexism, and war;

the labor movement; and all who would work for a sustainable, just future. Quoting from a speaker¹ at Beijing+20,² “Climate change is poised to become the most massive human rights violation the world has ever seen.” Yet organizing to reverse it can serve as a basis for uniting us all.

To do this we will have to challenge all of the ways we feel small and unimportant, stupid and inarticulate, discouraged and hopeless, scared and passive. We will have to call for a new kind of society—one that supports life and liberation. We will have to shake the structures of capitalism with our numbers, our voices, and our visible actions.

¹ A speaker with the organization Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law, and Development

² The United Nations Commission on the Status of Women Beijing+20, in New York, New York, USA, in March 2015

Tim talks about how we have built good lives but with our early hurts still in place, how we have mostly accommodated our defeats and lived with their effects. We haven’t been good at making big changes, in ourselves or in the world. We haven’t been good at standing tall, grabbing attention, making demands, and shaking the structures of our oppressive society. We have settled for small gains. We haven’t gone for³ changing everything all at once—and now we need to, for ourselves and for the world.

We have done enough discharging that we can take action now. We can apply our best thinking, bring people together, and support and propose actions to move everyone forward. We won’t feel ready or like we know what to do, but those

³ “Gone for” means pursued.

feelings don’t need to stop us anymore. We can assume they are rooted in our past and discharge them. We can go forward, knowing that we will make many mistakes and face many setbacks.

We can remind each other that just as the defeats of our past weren’t the real problem, any present-day defeats won’t be the real problem either. Defeats are only a problem when we don’t discharge them. And we have our ever-clearer minds, our relationships with each other, and our Community to fortify us and send us forward against our distresses and the challenges of the present. Why not move together and take action now?

Diane Shisk

*Alternate International Reference
Person for the Re-evaluation
Counseling Communities
Seattle, Washington, USA*

My Working-Class Men’s Support Group

I start nearly every working day with a group of working-class men. My mornings are sweeter and my days run better because of it. This is how it came about:¹

I run a rape crisis centre, together with a great team of women, which means that my working life is based on women, being with women, and working for the liberation of women, and I love this. It would be easy, in a physical sense, to eliminate all men not related to me from my life.

I was raised poor and working class, and as a child I had close relationships with my dad and granddad. They were both exceptionally thoughtful about letting me know that I deserved to live in any way I wanted as a female and supporting me to do that. I spent many days helping on building sites, basking in the warmth and humour of the men my dad worked with, and learning some useful skills.

¹ “Came about” means came to exist.

When I worked with Gypsies and Travellers on securing their rights, I spent time with some men in the toughest of circumstances. Their zest for life would break through at any opportunity and was life enhancing for me.

I have always had to face sexism and male domination in order to have relationships with men, so when I started work at the rape crisis centre, fifteen years ago, it was a relief to hide out among women. However, I also began to miss having working-class men in my life, so I decided to put that right.

I did it by going to a café every morning before work. I had been in a few times to get a drink to take away and had noticed the window cleaners, builders, upholsterers, and carpenters. I liked the familiar look of them, so I decided to drink my drink in the café every working morning. I would get there as soon as it opened and sit in a corner where I could see everyone coming

continued . . .

WIDE WORLD CHANGING

...continued

in. Nearly all the regulars² were working-class men. I would say hello to absolutely everyone who came in during the half hour I sat there. I persisted with this, and let the men know that I noticed when they were not there.

I grew to love these men. I'd go to where they were sitting, alone or in small groups, and chat. I'd find out about their holidays, their hobbies, their working lives, and their families. Then I'd go back to my seat. Gradually they started noticing each other, saying hi, and joking with each other and with me. Then, one by one, they started coming to sit in my corner.

I now have a lovely half-hour-or-so morning "support group" of valiant, humorous, sharp, warm-hearted working-class men. They care for each other and for me, support each other and me, rejoice and commiserate with each other, and talk about the issues that impact their lives. Then we all go to work, or home from night work, with straighter backs and lighter hearts.

I have gained so much, and so have they, from what we have slowly established together, simply because I decided to have them in my life. It was such a simple and fun thing to do.

Christine Diamandopoulos
Olney, England

² "Regulars" means regular customers.

On January 21, 1919, shipyard workers in Seattle, Washington, USA, went on strike for higher wages to accommodate rising postwar prices. On February 6, in an act of solidarity, thousands of Seattle workers from over a hundred local unions joined the strike, which lasted for five days and paralyzed the city. It was the first general strike in U.S. history. In a city of 315,000 people, more than 65,000 were on strike. The strikers served food, supplied hospitals, and kept peace in the streets with tremendous organization and efficiency. The poem below was written by "Anise" (a pen name of Anna Louise Strong) in the *Seattle Union Record* for which she was feature editor from 1916 to 1921.

They Can't Understand

What scares them most is
That NOTHING HAPPENS!
They are ready
for DISTURBANCES.
They have machine guns
And soldiers,
But this SMILING SILENCE
Is uncanny.
The business men
Don't understand
That sort of weapon.
It comes
From a DIFFERENT WORLD
Than the world THEY live in.
It is really funny
And a bit pathetic
To see how worried
And MAD
The business men are getting.
What meetings they hold,
What WILD RUMORS
They use

To keep themselves
STIRRED UP.
Yet MOST of them
Might be real pleasant
HUMAN BEINGS
Except that life
Has separated them
Too much from the common folks.
It is the SYSTEM
Of industry
That makes them sullen
And SUSPICIOUS of us,
Not any NATURAL depravity.
It is the system
That trains them to believe
In the words of our
Beloved Ole,*
That they can bring in
Enough ARMED FORCES
To operate our industries.
But how many

MACHINE GUNS
Will it take to cook
ONE MEAL?
It is your SMILE
That is UPSETTING
Their reliance
On ARTILLERY, brother!
It is the garbage wagons
That go along the street
Marked "EXEMPT
By STRIKE COMMITTEE."
It is the milk stations
That are getting better daily,
And the three hundred
WAR Veterans of Labor
Handling the crowds
WITHOUT GUNS.
For these things speak
Of a NEW POWER
And a NEW WORLD
That they don't feel
at HOME in.

* Ole Hanson, the mayor of Seattle at the time

Bringing RC to the U.S. Social Forum

The following are reports from a group of Co-Counselors who did a *United to End Racism, No Limits for Women, and Sustaining All Life*¹ project at the recent U.S. Social Forum.

A Concrete Step Against Discouragement and Powerlessness

Thirty-five RCers from the California, USA, RC Regions² participated in the U.S. Social Forum in San Jose, California, in June 2015.

The U.S. Social Forum is a gathering of organizers from social movements, schools, and grassroots community-based organizations that work on climate change, environmental and economic justice, food justice, racial justice, economic alternatives, and other social justice issues. It is an offshoot of the World Social Forum, which coincides with the World Economic Forum held annually in Davos, Switzerland.

While the World Economic Forum is a meeting of government and corporate leaders to plan and develop global capitalism, the World Social Forum brings together social movements and non-governmental organizations under the theme of “Another World Is Possible.” It creates a space for organizations and social movements to work together, build relationships, and create campaigns, art, organizations, and new ideas for a world without exploitation and oppression.

One afternoon at the forum I led, assisted by Carolyn Kameya,³ a People’s Movement Assembly—a four-hour participatory event in which people could think and strategize together. About seventy people attended.

As they gathered in the room, Co-Counselors greeted and connected with them. Then we all sat in a big circle and did introductions, including sharing something new and good about anything. The introductions took an hour but were worth it. They

gave everyone a chance to speak and to know a little about each other, and lots of laughter happened with the “new and goods.” They also gave me a chance to hear what people were hoping for and what kind of work they did, which was helpful in thinking about the group.

After introductions I talked about how the social injustices that social movements are working to end often operate inside the movements themselves, and how one of the problems with past revolutions was that after systemic change, and even removal of the owning class, the patterns persisted because people hadn’t gotten to heal from what it had been like to live in the oppressive society. I said that along with changing the systems and institutions, we need to heal from what it’s been like to live in the oppressive society, so we don’t reproduce the patterns.

I said that part of liberation is being heard. I shared how in my work to end domestic violence, oftentimes the biggest picture of liberation comes with naming the violence, with saying that it happened (along with, of course, getting away from it and stopping it). I said that in RC we have learned that people can heal from past violent experiences, so they don’t impact them in the present, and that people need to be listened to in order to heal.

continued . . .

¹ United to End Racism, No Limits for Women, and Sustaining All Life are projects of the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities in which groups of Co-Counselors go to non-RC events to share what we’ve learned in RC about being more effective in ending racism, ending sexism and male domination, and stopping environmental degradation and climate change.

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

³ Carolyn Kameya is the Regional Reference Person for the San Francisco Peninsula and San Jose, California, USA, and was the leader of the United to End Racism project at the U.S. Social Forum.



KENYA • TIM JACKINS

WIDE WORLD CHANGING

... continued

Then we did a mini-session. I told people to take turns listening and look like they like each other and said that I would let them know when to switch. After the mini, some of the RCers gave examples of how we'd used what we know in Co-Counseling for strengthening social movements.

After the mini-session I broke people into two groups—white people and people of the global majority—because during introductions people had brought up wanting to think about racism and some of the white people had been taking up a lot of space by talking for a long time. These two large groups split into smaller groups, led by RCers, in which people had a support group followed by a “think and listen” about their work in creating another world.

When everyone came back together, we answered lots of questions about how they could apply the ideas and methods to their work. (We had also explained everything—“news and goods,” mini-sessions, support groups, “think and listens,” breaking up into oppressed and oppressor groups, appreciations—as we'd gone along.) Then, with someone next to them, they shared what they had liked about being at the meeting and an appreciation of themselves and someone else in the room. At the end they were talking and talking to each other—zestfully and happily.

It was fun to go out into the world with other RCers and try things. It was neat to listen to their fears of doing this project and then watch those fears melt away. We squeezed the project into our already full lives (of working, taking care of families, caring for sick friends), but doing it together made it feel like resource and not a drain or an effort. It was a nice concrete step against discouragement and powerlessness.



OVERLAND TRACK, TASMANIA, AUSTRALIA • LYNDALL KATZ

Thanks, Carolyn, for leading us! And thanks, Mary Ruth,⁴ for all your behind-the-scenes organizing!

Below is the description we submitted to the U.S. Social Forum to register the People's Movement Assembly:

This will be an in-depth participatory workshop and assembly on creating the conditions to strengthen movements.

It will include a short presentation of some skills of Re-evaluation Counseling that will help you to resolve issues that are often challenges in movements, support your work, and strengthen the movements you are part of and creating. These skills include how to resolve conflict, how to set up the conditions to create new ideas, how to build consensus, how to recover from losses, how to heal from what it's been like to grow up and live in an oppressive society, how to work across constituencies and issue areas, and how to create new, effective strategies.

In addition, you will have the chance to talk and work together with others to resolve challenges and create a vision for another world. You will get to think with other organizers about your work—your successes and your challenges. Questions for the assembly will include: What has been challenging, hard, discouraging about being an organizer? Where are you stuck? What has gone well? What is your vision for another world?

You will get to use a range of tools, including “think and listens,” “news and goods,” appreciations, mini-sessions, speaking order, and panel discussions. You will hear from people who have applied these tools to resolve hurtful experiences, come out in better shape, and become more effective at reaching their goals for justice.

You will learn how to access in the future the resources you learn about at the assembly.

Re-evaluation Counseling is a form of peer counseling in which people of all ages and backgrounds learn how to exchange effective help with each other to free themselves from the effects of hurtful experiences from growing up and living in an oppressive society. People learn the theory and practice in classes and exchange listening with one another.

Chris Selig
San Francisco, California, USA

⁴ Mary Ruth Gross

We've Figured Out a Lot

On the first afternoon, a few of us were attending an opening session led by some of the forum organizers. At one point, Chris⁵ turned to me and said, "You should say something." My stomach dropped to my knees. Really, all I wanted to do was be quiet and melt into the background. My mind was blank. But Chris was right. I knew it would be good for our group to be visible from the outset. So I stood up, said my name, said that I was with United to End Racism, and asked a question about racism in the city the speaker was from. His response was animated and included many stories and examples. A woman in the audience later sought me out. We made a lovely connection, even talking about RC, in an interaction that happened because of Chris' encouragement.

We can get used to the way we do things in RC and forget how significant they are. One woman in our sexism workshop was impatient to get moving toward concrete action. She didn't think we needed to tell our stories. "We've done all that," she said. Vivian⁶ encouraged her to give the mini-session a try. After only a two-minute-each-way mini with a Co-Counselor, she knew something was happening that she hadn't experienced before. *People need to listen and be listened to.* Some of us met and talked to a woman on the street about our racism workshop. She attended and afterward was so appreciative that white people were not only not vilified but also shown to have an important role to play. *The people are good. The system is bad.* Two men on our panel at the sexism workshop spoke from their hearts about what they had experienced and figured out. People were moved. The mini-session afterward was alive with emotion. *Men are not the enemy and can be tremendous allies to women.* The examples go on and on. We've figured out a lot that would be good for everyone to understand. I think we need to remind ourselves of that.

Below are the workshop descriptions we submitted to the U.S. Social Forum organizing committee. They were all accepted and became part of the program.

⁵ Chris Selig

⁶ Vivian Santana Pacheco

Care of the Environment— Skills for Making Movements Even More Sustainable and Effective

A participatory workshop using Re-evaluation Counseling tools to support the work of environmental and economic justice movements in sustaining life and ending oppression.

Organization: Sustaining All Life

Description: This is a hands-on, participatory, skills-building workshop with opportunities to create new ideas, sort out problems, resolve discouragement, and create new visions for making environmental and economic justice movements even more effective and sustainable. You will get chances to talk and listen. You will learn skills that can be used in a wide range of settings to increase the sustainability and effectiveness of your work and life.



MATT WEATHERFORD

Problem to be analyzed: It is important to become aware of the rapid and unceasing destruction of the living environment of the Earth. We get to resolve anything that inhibits our becoming fully aware of this situation and take all the necessary actions to restore and preserve our environment. Many people have been hurt in a way that has driven them 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 of all oppression. 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 difficulties that get in our way of making the changes necessary to end the destruction of the environment. This workshop will use tools of Re-evaluation Counseling to resolve the difficulties that get in our way of accessing our fully flexible intelligence, which is needed to care for the environment well.

Fronts of struggle: Cooperative economics—poverty, housing, workers' struggles, anti-capitalism, economic alternatives. Earth and planet—sustainability, food sovereignty, ecological justice. Health, healing, and spirituality.

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WIDE WORLD CHANGING

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No Limits for Women—Challenging Sexism and Male Domination in Our Lives and in Our Work

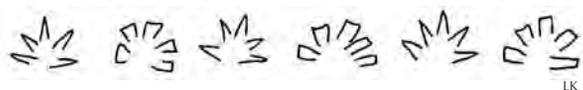
This workshop uses the tools of Re-evaluation Counseling to address how to effectively challenge sexism and male domination in our social justice work.

Organization: No Limits for Women

Description: This is a hands-on, participatory, skills-building workshop that will help women recover from their internalized oppression and overcome the limits installed by sexism and male domination. You will have the opportunity to talk, and to listen with respect as women talk about their lives and how sexism affects their social justice work. You will gain skills that you can use to strengthen connections and build increasingly honest relationships among women targeted by various oppressions, leading to unity of purpose and action.

Problem to be analyzed: Sexism exists in our lives and can affect the ways that we work together. We will look at divisions among women and the injury caused by those divisions. We will listen as women acknowledge the goodness in their cultures, communities, and organizations, while unraveling the sexism that may still be contained in them. Sexism also harms men, and men and women can work together to eliminate sexism. We support women to lead in this effort. This workshop will use the tools of Re-evaluation Counseling to begin undoing the effects of sexism and male domination in our lives and in our social justice work—whether we have been targeted by sexism, have internalized sexist messages, or been conditioned to act as the agents of sexism—so that we can work together effectively.

Fronts of struggle: Health, healing, and spirituality



Encouraging and Gratifying

It was encouraging to see RCers support one another through their emotional barriers to present this listening tool to people who might or might not accept it (right away).

It was gratifying to see people experience the powerful effects of listening and having someone listen to them with warm attention. It surprised some of them.

Making Connections Across Communities and Cultures Genuine: Healing the Hurts of Racism

This participatory workshop will use the tools of Re-evaluation Counseling to address how to eliminate racism and its effects on our lives.

Organization: United to End Racism

Description: Groups of humans have been oppressed in a variety of ways throughout much of human history. Racism, one form of oppression, shapes and perpetuates the inequities of our societies and has become part of our societal institutions. Although racism is aimed at particular sections of the population, it corrodes and corrupts the entire society. It also limits the progress of every individual in society toward a full and meaningful life. Though many of us reject the precepts of racism, we unintentionally internalize messages of superiority and inferiority because of living in societies in which we are surrounded by racist messages. Despite our best intentions, some of our actions can reinforce this. To end racism, it is vital that we remove racist policies from our institutions and ensure fair and just conditions of life for all. It is also vital to heal the damage done to individuals by racism. It is only by healing this damage that we can be confident that racist attitudes will not continue, and give rise to racist policies in other guises. This workshop will use tools of Re-evaluation Counseling to undo the effects of racism on our lives, whether we have been targeted by racism, have internalized racist messages, or been conditioned to act as agents of racism. Unraveling this damage allows us to make real and lasting connections among people of diverse backgrounds and cultures, challenge racist policies, and grow a vibrant movement for justice.

Fronts of struggle: Cooperative economics—poverty, housing, workers' struggles, anti-capitalism, economic alternatives. Culture—capitalist appropriation of culture, political culture, movement culture. Health, healing, and spirituality.

Carolyn Kameya
San Jose, California, USA

A few people had trouble understanding how RC could help them in their organizations, causes, and communities. It might help to keep repeating that we re-evaluate our patterns through discharge; that change starts within us first; and that once we change from within, we can be examples of what is possible and be powerful agents for change.

J.T.
San Jose, California, USA

Not a Failure but an Opportunity

In our first workshop, a white man was disruptive and unwilling to go along with the speaking order. Surprisingly, he showed up on another day for some of our other events.

In our No Limits for Women Workshop, a white woman urgently asked when she would get a turn to ask questions and stated that she didn't feel it would be useful to tell her stories. Yolanda⁷ did an elegant job of making her laugh, and when her mini-session with Anthony⁸ was over, she said how useful it had been to be listened to and that she'd realized in two minutes that she still had "unresolved stories."

During a workshop on Saturday, a Black man in the back of the room was showing signs of frustration. I wanted to go sit next to him so I could listen to him during the mini-session, but my feelings, from internalized racism, about angry Black men had me terrified. So I shook a little with Judy⁹ and then went.

I managed to set up a three-way session with him and another man, who had grown up in South Korea. The Black man was clearly angry. He didn't want to sit near me and moved away each time I approached him, saying that he already knew the stories of Asian men and was upset that we didn't know the stories of Black men. He wanted to hear from the white people.

When I explained that we would do that later, after we'd listened to one another, he said that he wanted to hear what I had to say. So I went first in the mini-session. But as soon as

⁷ Yolanda Provoste

⁸ Anthony Maes

⁹ Judy Serebrin

I started, he interrupted me, questioning what I was saying, so I used that opportunity to invite him to go first.

In his session he was still quite angry and talked about his experience in the U.S. military in countries such as Vietnam, the Philippines (my country), and South Korea. When it was my turn, I mostly shook and cried about police brutality against Black men. When the third man went, he talked about the atrocities of war committed by the United States in South Korea. It was a difficult mini-session, and I was sure it was a failure.

However, when the workshop was over, Michael¹⁰ heard the Black man talking about racism and went over to listen to him. The man talked for a long time, and Avi¹¹ joined Michael in listening to him. I later found out from Michael that he was not very angry anymore and had signed up for getting more information about RC.

Sometimes the people who are "disruptive" are the ones who end up being interested in us and RC. My theory is that they are ripe for discharge and are drawn to our ability to stay relaxed, listen, and treat them with kindness and respect. They may have never received that kind of reaction when showing their struggles.

The more relaxed we can be in handling "disruptive people," the clearer picture they, and others around them, will get of this project we are describing. It's not a failure but an opportunity.

Nik Leung
San Francisco, California, USA

¹⁰ Michael Levy

¹¹ Avi Leung

Leading, All Day

When I am not leading a workshop, I often let my shyness, fear, guilt, and internalized anti-Jewish oppression pull me away from people. But for the forum I programmed my smart phone to remind me each morning, "You are leading today. All day." That worked.

Julian Weissglass
Santa Barbara, California, USA



PAINTING • CHARLES L'HEUREUX

“Best Practices”

The panels of RCers were perhaps the most powerful part of our workshops. The personal testimony, presented with conviction and sometimes a bit of discharge, gave people a picture of the value of RC that could have never been communicated in a theory talk.

“Mental health” distress and “activist urgency” could prevent some people from benefiting from our workshops. We did well with the former by not talking about or displaying heavy discharge, and with the latter by talking about how feelings when not dealt with have torn apart social change movements in the past.

Another potential source of restimulation is “insider groups”—people who share bonds of common history, beliefs, and loyalties. Fears can come up for people when they encounter a group like this. They may feel suspicious about the “real” intentions of the group or threatened by its unfamiliar talk and behaviors. To reduce this restimulation, we naturalized RC as much as possible. For example, rather than saying “discharge,” we said “emotional release.” Also, Mary Ruth had prepared an excellent handout on the “tools of RC” that demystified our basic structures like “news and goods” and mini-sessions.

From my observations, there are a number of other “best practices”:

- Clearly explaining in the publicity for our workshops that learning RC listening techniques will be a central focus. (Some of the blurbs in the forum program were too brief to convey this.) It shouldn’t be a surprise.

- Making sure to present solid information on the announced

topic (for example, care of the environment or eliminating racism). After one workshop, someone told me that the announced topic seemed like a footnote to a presentation that was really about RC.

- Not outnumbering people. At another workshop there were fifteen RCers and four participants. Perhaps we should aim for a ratio of about one RCer to three participants, unless the participants understand that they are coming to a meeting of an ongoing group that has already been trained.

- Defining every term that is not widely understood.

- Having a support person who can step in and help with part of the presentation or be there for brief consultations. (Having that person visibly counsel the leader might require some explanation.)

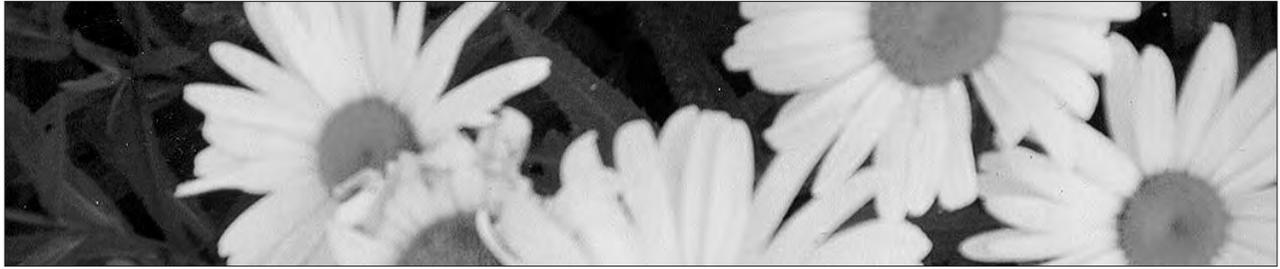
- Giving a brief overview of RC ideas and sharing RC’s history as a loose-knit community that began in the 1950s, spread internationally, and continues to develop. This transparency could defuse fears about “What is this group?”

- Being transparent as well about our interest in people joining the RC Community. Some of us were a little shy about that. We could say something like, “We have two objectives in today’s workshop. One is to provide you with tools you can use immediately to make things go better in any setting. The other is to invite those of you who are interested to learn more and to help build a Co-Counseling Community where you live, so that this project can grow and do more good in the world.”



AUSTRALIA • TIM JACKINS

Michael Levy
Santa Cruz, California, USA



STEVE BANBURY

A Blow to Oppression

As I discharged and thought about what I wanted to say in my one and a half minutes on a panel, my worst fear was that I would be too scared to think, let alone¹² speak. My discharging (not only in those few days but in the many years previously) and the confidence of my counselors paid off. The night before the panel, I suddenly imagined the pathway from my brain to my mouth opening and the debris in it clearing out. The next morning the image was still with me and the pathway seemed completely clear. Not only that, it felt *permanent*. I was relaxed on the panel and pleased with what I said as a white raised-working-class Jewish woman.

At one point in the forum, two white men and a man of the global majority were given the assignment to write about our team's experiences. When I learned no women were assigned to the group, I asked to be in it.

As the four of us were discussing how best to write together, it was proposed that we each write up our own parts and then combine them. That seemed to me the most efficient way to do it. However, the man of the global majority (I'll call him A—) proposed something different. He wanted us to discuss and write together a single document. We all agreed to give it a try.

But shortly after we started to work on it, one of the white men fell asleep. Then the other white man expressed impatience with the process and suggested that maybe we should all try to write by ourselves. A— seemed to be getting increasingly restimulated, so we decided to do a mini-session, with the two white men counseling together.

In the mini-session it was clear to A— and me that some sexism and racism were happening, and we wondered if the two of us should stay together and let the others go off by themselves. But to me that looked so much inside of men's oppression, and A— thought that staying together was more of a contradiction for him than "getting the work done."

¹² "Let alone" means and even more so.

When we came back, I told the white men that the falling asleep and not wanting to work together was restimulating to A— and me, that it seemed to be sending us the message, "I'm not in this with you." We also told them that we really wanted to figure out how to work together.

I think that they wanted to understand but didn't quite. One of them asked if we could counsel him on it. A— did not want to. I thought that I could but that I needed more discharge, so I proposed another mini.

A— and I had good sessions. We noticed having allies in each other and decided to figure out what we wanted and to stand up for it. I wanted to try to counsel the men. We agreed that if it was too hard for A— to listen to, he could leave.

When we got back together, both of the white men worked on early experiences of being bored in school and always having to work alone. Afterward both of them wanted to follow our lead and stay together.

Where we had struggled earlier with the logistics, we now elegantly figured out a way for one or the other of the white men to type while we all pitched in.¹³ It was much more relaxed and participatory. In fact, we found ourselves joking and laughing together.

I think what we did was useful and a blow to oppression. A— and I were able to reclaim power with each other's assistance and got closer to each other in the process. A— mentioned how what we had done reminded him of Dan Nickerson's¹⁴ proposal for ending capitalism: "In your paid job, do as little as possible to get by and spend the rest of your time building relationships."

Judy Serebrin
Redwood City, California, USA
With input from A—

¹³ "Pitched in" means contributed.

¹⁴ Dan Nickerson is the International Liberation Reference Person for Working-Class People.

One of Life's Greatest Satisfactions

I remember Harvey¹⁵ saying that working together with others toward a common goal is one of life's greatest satisfactions. He was right!

My highlights at the forum:

- The progressive vision and vast experience we can offer other activists and movements, including how to move past victimization toward discharge and re-evaluation
- Our attention to freeing human intelligence by both ending social oppression and resolving hurtful personal experiences stemming from oppression

¹⁵ Harvey Jackins

- Our emphasis on thinking, love, and human connection as a basis for social movements
- Meeting people from many places who were excited to learn about RC, and listening to them, hearing their insights, sharing ideas
- Teaching about the essential nature of humans, discharge and re-evaluation, oppression and liberation, internalized oppression, developing allies, and policies for liberation
- Appreciating being alive at this moment and being able to participate in this historic effort

Gail Mandella
Berkeley, California, USA

One Person

The truth is that anything that ever happened in the world that made much difference, that is regarded as great or significant, all started with one person making up his or her mind that things were going to change.

Harvey Jackins
From *The Benign Reality*, page 145

A New United to End Racism T-Shirt!

We've just received a shipment of United to End Racism t-shirts—with the same wonderful graphic as the original, created by Robert Young, but with only the simple text United to End Racism on them. They are lovely, artistic, and meaningful, and we will be using them for many activities for a long time to come.

If you have worn out your old one, or never had one of the originals (we created them for the United Nations World Conference Against Racism in 2001), you now have the opportunity to buy this updated version.

Wearing the t-shirt is a great way to begin conversations and take a more public and active position against racism. And now is an excellent time to be even more active than we have been before.

You can order the t-shirts from Rational Island Publishers for \$20 (no quantity discounts), plus postage and handling. See page 110.

Love,
Tim Jackins



Available in small, medium, large, extra-large, and extra-extra-large

United to End Racism Pins



1 inch by 3/4 inch

Another good way to initiate conversations about ending racism.

\$5.00, plus postage and handling.
(No quantity discounts.)
To order, see page 110.

Sustaining All Life at the Paris Climate Conference

Our Sustaining All Life* delegation is making good progress in organizing for its participation in the United Nations Conference on Climate Change (called COP21) in Paris, France, November 30 to December 4, 2015.

We decided to send a delegation to these United Nations climate talks because they will define the main guidelines for a legally binding climate agreement for the 196 negotiating countries. There has never been such an accord, and it is very important that it be reached this year. We have a limited "window of opportunity" in which to reduce carbon emissions, transition to renewable energy, and provide needed assistance to developing nations. (For more information about Sustaining All Life and the United Nations climate talks, please see <www.rc.org/sustainingalllife>.)

Our delegation is a diverse, international group of twenty-five Co-Counselors supported by twenty-five RC volunteers. We will be communicating basic RC understandings and practices to people involved in environmental and environmental racism work, climate justice work, and other efforts toward a just and sustainable society. We will prioritize communicating what we understand about the connections between racism and other oppressions and care of the environment, and how work to end oppression must be central in the environmental movement. We've submitted applications to have an exhibit and an information booth and to lead the following workshops:

- Young People at the Forefront of the Climate Movement

*Sustaining All Life is a project of the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities, in which groups of Co-Counselors go to non-RC events and share what we've learned in RC about helping people take action to save the environment.

- Eliminating the Effects of Racism on Our Work to Sustain All Life

- Sustaining Indigenous Life Worldwide

- Reclaiming the World: The Environment and People Raised Poor and Working Class

- Being Active Forever, Never Burn Out Again

The young people and young adults in our delegation will also attend the Conference on Youth on the Friday preceding COP21 and have applied to lead a workshop there: Young People Ending Racism in the Environmental Movement. Our whole delegation will be joining the march through Paris on Sunday, November 29, and carrying a Sustaining All Life banner.

Many Co-Counselors have contacted us saying they would like to come and be of assistance to our delegation. We will lead an orientation to COP21

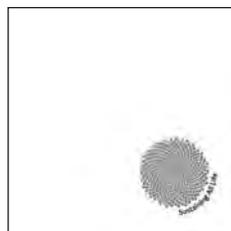
and Sustaining All Life and have daily support groups for them, and they will help us bring people to our workshops, forums, and other events.

A *Sustaining All Life* pamphlet with our logo on the cover has been printed in English. (See ad on page 18.) Translations of it into Japanese, Norwegian, Dutch, French, Chinese, Hindi, Spanish, Swedish, German, and Finnish are in progress.

We are fundraising to support this effort. Please contact Ellie Putnam <ellieput@w-link.net> if you can assist.

Finally, we are asking all RC Communities to hold a Care of the Environment event in support of the climate talks, close to the time when Sustaining All Life will be in Paris. In Paris we will post a listing of all the RC events happening worldwide in support of the talks.

Diane Shisk
Seattle, Washington, USA



A Sustaining All Life Hankie!

As part of our fundraising efforts for Sustaining All Life,* we are selling this beautiful handkerchief. It measures 14 inches by 14 inches and is printed on natural-color cotton fabric. It has the Sustaining All Life logo in one corner, so that it will be prominent when the hankie is folded into quarters.

\$10, plus postage and handling
(no quantity discounts)

To order, see page 110.

* Sustaining All Life is a project of the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities, in which groups of Co-Counselors go to non-RC events and share what we've learned in RC about helping people take action to save the environment.

Preface to the Pamphlet *Sustaining All Life*

A new RC pamphlet Sustaining All Life was recently created as an introduction to the RC project Sustaining All Life, which will be sending a delegation of Co-Counselors to the United Nations Conference on Climate Change in Paris, France, November 30 to December 4, 2015. Below is the preface to the pamphlet:*

It is possible to limit the effects of human-caused catastrophic climate change and restore the environment—and some big changes are needed if this is to happen. These changes will require a massive movement, spanning the globe, of people from every background. We believe that current barriers to building a sufficiently large and powerful movement include (1) long-standing divisions (usually based in oppression) between nations and between groups of people within nations, (2) widespread feelings of discouragement and powerlessness among the populations of many countries, (3) denial of or failure to engage with the environmental crisis, and (4) difficulties in effectively address-

ing the connections between the environmental crisis and the failures of capitalism. The tools of *Sustaining All Life* are useful in addressing these issues and others.

The challenge before us gives people everywhere a unique opportunity to advocate on everyone's behalf. It's also a unique opportunity to make significant change without setting one group against another. Oppression—including racism, the oppression of Indigenous peoples, classism, and sexism—must also be ended to fully stop the destruction of the environment.

Thousands of years of struggle for survival have been hurtful to our species. It has left us unable to think well about all people and the Earth. It has caused us to develop societies in which groups of humans oppress other groups of humans. The period of actual struggle for survival of our species ended a long time ago, but its effects persist. Emotional hurts, passed down the generations, have resulted in so-

cieties based on exploitation, oppression, and division. Among these hurts is discouragement—many people feel like we can't make meaningful change.

Sustaining All Life offers tools of mutual support, engaged listening, and a process that frees people from the effects of the hurts and oppression. We can also use these tools to remove many of the difficulties of working together. This personal work heals the internal damage and, as a result, people are able to think more clearly about the environmental crisis, build and strengthen alliances, and fully enjoy working together to set the world right. This healing work also builds courage and stamina, and the confidence that we can create a just, sustainable future for everyone.

The pamphlet can be ordered from Rational Island Publishers for \$3.00 (USD) plus postage and handling. See page 110 for ordering information. See also the ad for the pamphlet on page 18 of this Present Time.

* See article on previous page.

Talking About Racism on Facebook

As a white working-class person, I was successful in eliminating many of the effects of racism on my mostly white working-class coworkers in the factory. I had to do this in order to unify us and make sure we could not be manipulated and distracted from our goals by racist patterns.

Lately, since I have retired and am no longer in the factory, much of my contact with people is on Facebook. My friends are from the very "right" to the very "left," and I am committed to the re-emergence of all of them.

I never "client" on Facebook. I post positive things that I create myself and not, for the most part,¹ "shared" messages.

I handle expressions of racist patterns in different ways, depending on the situation. I handle them one way when I'm face to face with the person and people of the target group aren't present. With someone I have a long-term relationship with, I have time to strategize a position that will work

¹ "For the most part" means in general.

for that person, so I think more long-term. When people of the target group are present, or on social media, I do something more direct in the moment, unless the person corrects the situation himself or herself.

Since *Facebook* is so public, I never do or say anything that would humiliate someone. Working-class people, perhaps all people, do not handle humiliation well.

I work hard to not sound like I think I am smarter than the other person. I almost never argue. If the thread of an online post goes back and forth more than once, I engage the person offline. I don't think arguing works, and if it is public, it just forces a person into a more rigid position.

I often talk about my own understanding or struggle, rather than argue. For example, I say things like, "My grandfather was in the KKK.² He was a good man, but I don't think he looked at the big picture." I say that we who are white have more in common with people targeted by racism than we have differences and that we should be uniting with them to combat the real economic issues rather than competing with them.

I put out good information. *Fox News* (right-leaning) recently did a good, short, factual online story explaining Ramadan.³ I thought that my right-wing friends would be more likely to read something from *Fox News* than from *The New York Times*, which they would see as "left." I shared the *Fox News* information on Ramadan, and both "right" and "left" friends liked it.

To combat some posts my cousin shared that were racist against Muslims, I wrote a post saying that my Muslim friends were not the way the post described and that from what I knew, Muslims were as different from each other in their practice of religion as my Christian friends were. I got "likes" on *Facebook* from both my "left" and "right" friends.

² The KKK is the Ku Klux Klan, a white hate group that carries out terrorist attacks against people of color, Jews, immigrants, and Gay people.

³ Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, during which Muslims fast to commemorate the first revelation of the Quran (the central religious text of Islam) to Muhammad.

I rarely post articles written by others that represent my views; only my friends who agree with me would read them. Instead I say what I want to say in my own words. My friends are more likely to read and be influenced by something I write, because they like me and respect me and it is not tied to any recognizable media bias.

I work hard to use the simplest explanation I can and to keep my posts short.

Posts are sometimes necessary not just to go up against those you disagree with but also to strengthen your base. Sometimes because racism is so scary people go quiet when confronted with strongly racist messages and need the encouragement of someone speaking out.

Dan Nickerson

Freeport, Maine, USA

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



COODEN BEACH, ENGLAND • ELENA MOSES

Civil Disobedience

Does it make sense to use civil disobedience as a tool when stopping the destruction of the natural world? Is it effective?

We seem to have limited time to do something about the destruction of the natural world, so effectiveness is really quite interesting! I think of what I read Tim Jackins saying to some group, it might even have been the World Conference of the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities. "This is a group of very nice but so far rather ineffective people" (or something like that). I have laughed about it many times and thrown vague thoughts in the direction of what could be more effective than what I or we do now.

Here are some of my thoughts:

In RC we think that "decide, act, discharge" is a faster way to re-emergence than discharging until all distresses are gone before we embark on acting. If we step outside of what seems possible from within our distresses, not only do a lot of feelings come rushing up with extra speed and force but we also get to discharge these now-available feelings from a position of actually having done something that seemed impossible. Wow. We get a glimpse of the world and ourselves outside of our distresses. "Aha, this is what it is like to love/not drink alcohol/speak one's mind/go to bed on time!"

It seems to me that the same is true regarding institutionalized distresses, society's "distresses." Things might go faster if we apply "decide, act, discharge" on a societal scale too. I think that in this case "act" would mean that we in some concrete way change something that is "distressed" in our society—that we put society, or part of it, outside of its "distresses."

Nothing makes me discharge more on liberation and oppression, hope and hopelessness, power and powerlessness, and fear than when I hear about people refusing to cooperate with oppression or creating a piece of rational human society where oppression up until then was filling up the space—people actually stepping in to protect a threatened person, disarm weapons, refuse to work under oppressive circumstances (go on strike), take over land that has been stolen, build unexpected alliances, stop pollution by plugging up a polluting pipeline, charge with murder police officers who are responsible for a Black man's death.

I have participated in some civil disobedience, and I have noticed that when people encounter our actions, it brings up a lot of their feelings about change. I have listened to a lot of people talk about hope, hopelessness, powerlessness, and their histories of taking action themselves. It happens around any kind of political activity but especially, it seems, around civil disobedience.

When my German grandmother heard about some of my resistance to the military, she started crying about how if people back then had done more of what we were doing, Hitler's regime might have been stopped. That was the only time she had ever spoken with me about World War II.

It is difficult to see things clearly when destruction continues unchallenged. We need to make some space to feel, discharge, and think by making things actually change, if only a little. It is like non-permissive counselling: "No, you do not get to go on destroying our planet,

my people, any people. I will not let you." The space created is there for everyone to use: us, the people who carry out the oppression and destruction, and everyone else who gets to hear about what we have done.

The oppressive society feeds on our feelings of powerlessness. Societal power (the upholding of oppression) is also organised in very concrete ways—for example, in economic, military, legal, and political institutions. These are the pillars that in practice organise, uphold, and protect the oppression. Our distresses and these institutions cooperate to keep the oppressive society going. We need to think strategically and creatively about how to challenge both feelings of powerlessness (ours and others') and the economic, military, legal, and political pillars that uphold the oppressive society.

A common idea is that civil disobedience is to be used only when one has tried all legal ways and they have proven ineffective. Parliamentary democracy is advertised to us (at least where I live) as perfect and able to sort out any problem. Hmm. Parliamentary democracy is used by oppressive forces to continue destroying the world. Politicians are under pressure from economic interests to support and protect those interests and their doings. Also, the very idea that parliamentary democracy is so fantastic, along with how the history of the resistance that created so many of our rights is hidden, makes us passive. We think that someone else has the power, not us, and that rights and freedom are given to us if we ask those "in power."

I have heard that the more actual resistance (non-cooperation with oppression) there is in a campaign, the more likely it is to succeed. This is based on studies of movements for change all over the world, many of them outside of "the West." When it comes to changing things, actually doing what we want to see happen seems to be more effective than asking or demanding that oth-

ers, for example our government or big companies, make the desired changes.

Is it so? If it is, then why?

There is much more thinking to do about these things! I would like to hear more about people's experiences with and thoughts about resistance and organising strategically

to change something, about the possible links between various kinds of action and discharge and re-evaluation, about handling repression, about successes and failures and lessons learnt, about how change actually happens, about thinking big and what happens then.

Lotta Kronlid

Goteborg, Sweden

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

A Successful Protest

I am active in the Center for Earth Leadership, which includes members from several organizations involved in climate work. I am intensely proud of a recent protest in Portland, Oregon, USA.

An oil exploration vessel, the *MSV Fennica*, under contract with Royal Dutch Shell to assist in Arctic Ocean drilling, was in dry dock in Portland for repair. First the *kayaktivists* (protestors in kayaks) surrounded the repair yards. Then Greenpeace activists suspended themselves from the St. John's Bridge, forcing the ship to return to port. RCers were present at the protest and involved in the planning.

The news will tell you that this effort failed, as the *Fennica* was able to pass the protestors the following day. It was not a failure—for two days the ship was delayed, and it was made to turn back one of those days.

For me, participating in active protest is a way to build confidence, develop leadership, and strengthen the network of groups that can work together on future projects. It also helps me discharge.

Randy Smith

Portland, Oregon USA

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

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



GREENPEACE ACTIVISTS BLOCKING THE OIL EXPLORATION VESSEL (SEE ARTICLE ABOVE)

United to End Racism, at a Synagogue

A few weeks ago, eight of us from our Regional¹ Jewish leaders' group led a United to End Racism² event at our local synagogue. It was a success in interesting ways.

As we had hoped, the weeks of preparation made for good chances for us to build closer relationships as white people and to form a stronger team. Our sessions and support group meetings about racism leading up to the workshop were deeper and more productive. Preparing to be part of bringing United to End Racism to people we knew gave us a strong sense of common purpose and made discharging on the racism we carry more real for us. We worked hard

in sessions and in reaching out to invite our contacts in the community. We also backed each other in the logistical work to make the workshop happen. Racism further isolates white people from each other, and doing this as a group contradicted that.

Here are a few things I noticed in leading the workshop:

The white people who came were eager to do this work. Once we offered our perspectives on connection, the goodness of white people, and the way that racism damages us and limits our lives, they could use our attention in the support groups to begin to have sessions on their oppressor material.³

We set a goal of deepening our relationships with other white synagogue members around the mutual goal of ending racism, rather than having a goal of bringing them into RC. Unlike at United to End Racism projects at wide-world national and international conferences, we were working within an ongoing local organization and set of relationships. Without knowing exactly how we could continue beyond this first workshop, we had a sense of building a foundation for further work. We've since been invited to lead parts of the synagogue's upcoming meetings with a citywide racial-justice coalition and to lead a follow-up workshop during Yom Kippur, one of the primary and most-attended Jewish holidays.

We felt more connected to people we know in the synagogue and more hopeful about that being a place where we can be ourselves. We came out of hiding in some way. That helped me to better understand how for many white people it still seems like a secret to us that ending racism is a priority in our lives. We were daring to break through how our relationships with white people have been limited by staying separate around and silent on racism. The workshop was a chance to act on how ending racism is important to us personally and in that way to reclaim a key piece of closeness with other white people.

Billy Yalowitz

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA

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



J. EISENHEIM

³ "Material" means distress.

The Beatification of Oscar Romero

Dear Catholics,

Whether or not you know who Oscar Romero¹ is probably depends on which nation you live in, what generation you are part of, and what race and class you are. Many Catholics who are poor, working class, or of the global majority, especially from Latin America, know who he is and love him. Progressive people, Catholic or not, often know who he is and about his courageous stands, as well as what killed him and why. However, many of us who are white and from imperialist nations have been deliberately confused and disconnected from the rest of the world and so lack information about oppression.

I hope you will use the beatification of Oscar Romero² to ask other Catholics what they understand about Romero's life and death and the direction Pope Francis appears to be taking us. I hope you will raise these questions with Catholics who are observant and those who are not—in your families and churches, and in RC with other Catholic-heritage people as well as our allies.

Joanne Bray
International Liberation Reference
Person for Catholics
Greenwich, Massachusetts, USA

Thanks, Joanne, for writing and calling attention to Monseñor Romero and the Salvadoran people. It means a lot to me.

I have lived all my life in the United States, and until I was in my thirties I knew El Salvador only through U.S. news media, film, and progressive artists. Then in 1998 I began a friendship with a Salvadoran immigrant whom I met at a bus stop and started Co-Counseling with a Salvadoran I met at an RC workshop in Mexico.

It is hard to describe what the past seventeen years have opened up for me. During this time I have Co-Counseled regularly with several people from El Salvador, lived with a Salvadoran friend, worked with Salvadorans in my food-service job, become friends with people currently living in El Salvador, taught one of them Co-Counseling over the phone and by e-mail, and visited the country several times. The stories and perspectives that Salvadoran people have shared with me have been powerful and invaluable, and I have discharged a lot.

Before these experiences I was living in a bubble of misinformation, at a distance from the rest of the world. I have only begun to absorb a bit of the huge complexity of the planet we live on, but my previous limits have been replaced by a sense of possibility.

In El Salvador the distress patterns of the political right³ still operate, imposing on the people a distressed, distorted version of reality. Pope Francis' moving forward Monseñor Romero's sainthood makes it harder to hide the truth and confuse people about what happened in the country. It will have a similar effect in the United States.

With love and solidarity,
Victor Nicassio
Los Angeles, California, USA

continued . . .

¹ Oscar Romero was the fourth Archbishop of San Salvador, El Salvador. He spoke out against poverty, social injustice, assassinations, and torture. In 1980 he was assassinated while offering Mass.

² The beatification of Oscar Romero means the declaration by the pope that Oscar Romero has attained the blessedness of heaven.

³ "Political right" means politically reactionary forces.

*Traducción al español del artículo anterior:
Spanish translation of the preceding article:*

Gracias, Joanne, por escribir y llamar la atención sobre el Monseñor Romero y el pueblo salvadoreño. Significa mucho para mí.

He vivido toda mi vida en los Estados Unidos, y durante los primeros cuarenta años de mi vida, sólo conocía El Salvador a través de los medios de comunicación estadounidenses, el cine, y las y los artistas progresivos. Entonces en 1998, comencé una amistad con un inmigrante salvadoreño a quién conocí en una parada de autobús, y ese mismo año comencé una relación de coescucha con una persona salvadoreña que conocí en un taller de RC en México.

Es difícil describir lo que los últimos diecisiete años han revelado para mí. Durante este tiempo he tenido sesiones regularmente con varias personas de El Salvador, he vivido con una persona salvadoreña, he trabajado con gente salvadoreña en mi trabajo del servicio de alimentos, he establecido amistades con personas que vive actualmente en El Salvador, he enseñado Coescucha a una de ellas por teléfono y correo electrónico, y he visitado el país varias veces. Las historias y las perspectivas que la gente salvadoreña ha compartido conmigo han sido poderosas e inestimables, y he desahogado mucho.

Antes de estas experiencias, vivía en una burbuja de información incorrecta, a distancia del resto del mundo. Recién he comenzado a absorber un poquito de la enorme complejidad del planeta en que vivimos, pero mis límites anteriores han sido reemplazados por un sentido de posibilidad.

En El Salvador, los patrones de angustia de la derecha política⁴ todavía operan e imponen sobre la gente una versión de la realidad distorsionada y basada en angustias. El hecho de que el Papa Francisco empuje el proceso de canonización del Monseñor Romero hace más difícil esconder la verdad y confundir al pueblo sobre lo que sucedió en el país. Esto tendrá un efecto similar en los Estados Unidos.



Con amor y solidaridad,
Victor Nicasio
Los Ángeles, California,
Estados Unidos

Traducido del inglés por Victor Nicasio
Translated from English by Victor Nicasio

Oscar Romero was to the people in Central and South America what Martin Luther King was to people of the global majority and their allies in the Civil Rights Movement in the United States.

That Pope Francis has beatified Romero is a blessing. It recognizes the struggle of all those in the world, especially in Latin America, who have been oppressed by the world's owning classes. The pope's dedication to championing the world's majority, poor people, is heartening. The beatification of Father Romero reminds all Catholics of what is important and where we stand in regard to speaking out and acting to end all oppression. I am moved by this, and proud of our pope.

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

⁴ "Derecha política" significa fuerzas políticamente reaccionarias.

A Climate Change Gathering for Family and Friends

Last Sunday I led a gathering on climate change for family and friends. It lasted three hours and ended with a finger food¹ supper.

I remembered Tim Jackins saying something about not waiting to figure out everything before acting—that we get to try things and learn from them. So I decided to try what my mind came up with.²

I invited thirteen people, and eight were able to come, including my mom, sister, seventeen-year-old nephew, and partner, and three friends. I said that the goal of the meeting was not to form an action group but to have an opportunity to put attention on climate change and get support to think about it so that we could each move toward meaningful action. I said that if additional collaboration came out of it, that would be fine. I let people know why I was doing it, my thoughts on how to listen well, and my goals for the meeting.

My goals were

1) that each person get support to put attention on climate change and what he or she can and wants to do,

2) that each person come away³ “bolstered” (lifted up, encouraged) and more hopeful,

3) that each person come away with a next step to take and some information about what others are doing.

I structured the meeting around a series of questions. We answered some of them in the large group

¹ “Finger food” is food that can be eaten with one’s fingers (without utensils).

² “Came up with” means thought of.

³ “Come away” means leave.

and some in pairs. I said that we wouldn’t be discussing the questions but just letting each person think about and answer them with attention.

These were the questions:

- Why did you come today?
- What is some way you feel connected to the natural world?
- What makes you a great climate warrior?
- What have you heard about climate change?
- What are your unanswered questions?
- What concerns, worries, and fears do you have about climate change?
- What makes you hopeful?
- What solutions to the climate crisis have you heard about or thought of? What would it take to bring these about?⁴
- What successes and challenges have you had in thinking about climate change and taking action?

⁴ “What would it take to bring these about” means what would it require to make these happen.



AMANDA MARTINEZ

• What gets in your way of thinking about it and taking action?

• What things have you already thought of that you would like to try?

• What communities are you a part of?

• How would you like to be connected with others in addressing this issue?

• What strengths do you bring to the climate recovery movement?

(We didn’t have time for all the questions.)

We shared appreciations as we ate the finger food. My friend said that she wanted to meet again, and others agreed. All of them said that having support and hearing from others helped them think about the issue.

Wonderful for me was that my partner backed⁵ me beautifully. We cleaned the house, put out flowers, and bought and prepared food. Most wonderfully he listened to me while I thought through the questions and the format. He was clear that we were doing it together and that his role was to back me. He told me afterward that what he needs is a support group of just this kind—family and friends—to think about climate change.

I am pleased and encouraged that I tried something, that it was useful for the people who came, and that they want more.

Cameron Hubbe
Eugene, Oregon, USA
Reprinted from the RC e-mail discussion list for leaders in the care of the environment

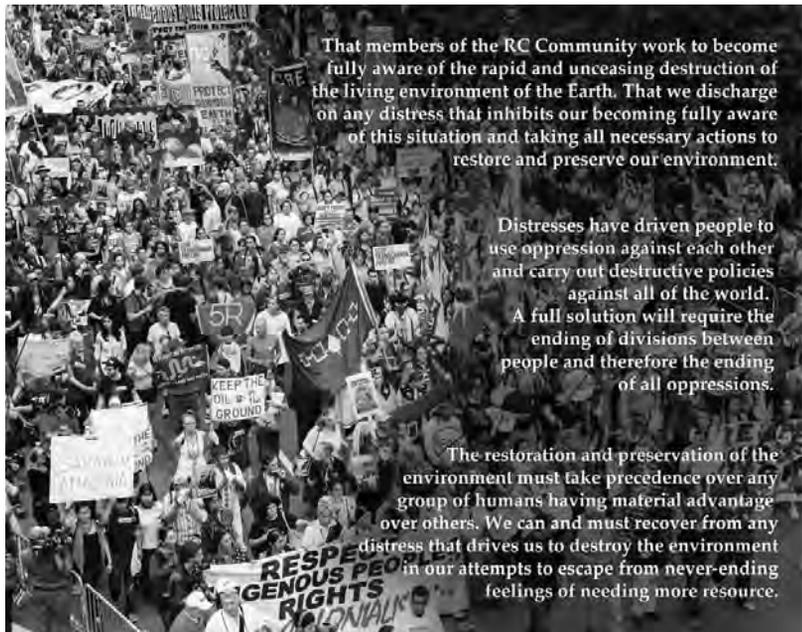
⁵ “Backed” means supported.

RC Environmental Goal Posters!

Rational Island Publishers has produced several lovely 20-inch by 27-inch color posters. The one to the right comes in two versions: one with our RC goal on the environment* on it and the other with the goal rewritten to communicate its essence without using RC vocabulary. Both are in English.

Another poster, which you can see on the RC website at <www.rc.org/publication/present_time/rip_posters>, is in RC language and comes in both a Spanish and an English version.

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



A third poster, to the left, has our goal in non-RC language and is available only in English.

Having these posters in our daily lives is a way to remember our commitment to changing our economic system and our relationship to the environment.

All the posters are \$8.00 each, plus postage and handling (no quantity discounts). For ordering information, see page 110.



..... Charleston and Racism

I am a mixed-heritage middle-class Black woman living in the northern United States. I want to express that no amount of education or material privilege protects a Black person in the United States from the brutality of racism.

All of us Black leaders in RC have achieved a measure of success. We have learned how to navigate white-dominated institutions. We have learned how to have attention for white people. We have learned how to have good lives for ourselves.

I think this sometimes confuses our allies. It is reassuring to them to see us doing so well. They forget how hard we are working to navigate racism—for ourselves and on behalf of many people we love—every day.

I am considered a “successful” Black woman by middle-class U.S. standards. I have light-colored skin and can move freely in middle-class institutions. I am college educated. I have a middle-class job. I support myself financially as a single woman. I own my own home. My white mother and her parents left money behind when they died, leaving me with a measure of white privilege.

But I am always expected to provide significant financial and emotional support to the Black friends and family I love. I do not personally know any white people of a similar class background who have anything like this experience.

In recent months, this has meant opening my home to someone who can't pay rent, helping loved ones keep their cars or their homes, sending money and clothes to someone in jail, paying someone's college tuition, and offering lots of sessions on hopelessness, despair, grief, and rage.

My friends of other racial backgrounds with similar middle-class status or jobs do not seem to have this many people in close to them who are struggling in this way.

The Charleston shooting* was truly a brutal terrorist act. But it is just a reminder of the destructiveness of

* On June 17, 2015, a young white man shot and killed nine Black people attending a Bible study at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina, USA. The senior pastor of the church, State Senator Clementa C. Pinckney, was among those killed. The shooter later confessed to committing the murders in hopes of igniting a race war.

the racism aimed at people of African heritage every single day.

I hope that you will use this opportunity to make contact with all of the Black people you know and love—in and out of RC. Remind us that you are thinking about us. Remind us that you care about us. Please offer to listen to us as much as you can.

It has been difficult for me and other Black people in my RC Community to discharge about the events in Charleston. We are numb. We live in a city where more than four hundred people—most of them Black—are murdered every single year. (Chicago has more shootings each year than New York and Los Angeles combined.)

Let's use this chance to fight any of the messages of racism that separate us. Please stay close to all of us Black people—during this time, and always.

We can all decide to remember that we love and need each other.

Alysia Tate

Chicago, Illinois, USA

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



TIM JACKINS

Like Magic

Like magic, they appear
Crimson and gold falling leaves.
Farewell, sweet summer.

Sojourner Truth

Seattle, Washington, USA



LANCE CABLK

Start with Pride

Each one of us, in our liberation, must start with self-appreciation, with pride in ourselves. To undo any accumulated invalidation is an essential and central part of any human being's liberation from oppression.

Harvey Jackins

From *The Upward Trend*, page 403

Our Lives Matter

Yesterday, not more than four blocks from where I was buying my lunch in our little capital of Port of Spain (Trinidad and Tobago), three prisoners shot their way out of prison. When their getaway car crashed, they ran inside and hid in our major hospital then escaped and have since not been picked up.

The gunfight resulted in the death of a young police officer and two prisoners and was connected to the drug trade, which is controlled by forces outside of this little banana republic and has led to five hundred Black men, in our 1.2 million population, dying by the bullet.

I can notice how much I feel “it has nothing to do with me,” even though one of the members of my teachers’ class will not be attending this afternoon because she is afraid to step into the road. (She works at the hospital and was on shift yesterday.)

I can notice the way this shows up the internalized hate and hurt that was acted out on us throughout the most traumatic episode in our history, slavery. I can notice the increasing harshness of racism and other oppressions and that we suffer the consequences of these oppressions as Black women, Black men, Black Baptists, Black young people, Black elders, Black leaders—that we wear the hurt in our minds and on our bodies. I can notice how the oppression also drives our global-majority brothers and sisters of East Indian, Syrian and Lebanese, and

Chinese descent to the safety of being apart from us.

I can also notice that Co-Counseling continues to be key in my remembering my connections, the joy of sharing and teaching music and being active in cultural spaces and events, and the general hopefulness that is life.

I am noticing that the less I say in my sessions, the more I can get to that deep-seated hurt that I can’t describe because it’s been there for so long. I am so glad we were able to think as a community at BLCD¹ about physical counseling² and figure out how to use it together as part of our counseling artillery. Barbara³ reminded us that we get to use the complete artillery of counseling skills to discharge, so that the hurts from our continuing mistreatment just fall off.

We get to be clear that our lives matter, we get to remember that our connections are there, we get to be fit and healthy and loved.

Chantal Esdelle

Tunapuna, Trinidad and Tobago

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

¹ The International Black Liberation and Community Development Workshop, in Massachusetts, USA, in July of this year

² “Physical counseling” is counseling in which a counselor, who has been trained to do it, provides aware, thoughtful physical resistance for a client to push and fight against.

³ Barbara Love, the International Liberation Reference Person for African-Heritage People and the leader of the Black Liberation and Community Development Workshop



EUREKA VALLEY CAMPGROUND, STANISLAUS NATIONAL FOREST, CALIFORNIA, USA • NANCY LEMON

Speak Out

Today we are all affected by the growing visibility of the targeting (killing) of Black people, especially in the United States. It is an issue for all humans and certainly for us as women.

We have just been made aware of the unjust, inhumane, and brutal death of Sandra Bland, an African American woman in Texas, USA.¹

People are debating whether it was suicide or murder. That is irrelevant. Today, because of modern technology, we can see what actually happened

¹ Sandra Bland was a twenty-eight-year-old African American woman who was found dead in her jail cell in Waller County, Texas, USA, on July 13, 2015, after being arrested for a minor traffic violation. Videos recorded on the arresting officer's dashboard camera and a bystander's cell phone revealed the violent, mean-spirited way the officer had treated her, and how she had spoken out against it.

in her arrest. She was pulled over by a white male trooper for a minor driving offense. Most important, she was outspoken in her resistance to the authoritarian, mean-spirited treatment by this officer. It was reported that she did not stop crying when she was in jail (good for her). She refused to give in to the oppressive society. That is why she died. She was targeted. She was an outspoken Black woman.



TRICIA CLARKE

All women need to challenge going silent, and we who are white cannot ever hide behind Black women or any woman who stands up (and then is labeled "uppity"² as if it's a negative thing).

It is important for *all* women to take a stand here. Go into sessions and fight with your voice. Do the same in support groups. Speak about it, write about it on blogs (Sandra Bland challenged racism in a blog), and more. I would love to hear about your not going silent.

Diane Balsler
International Liberation
Reference Person for Women
Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts, USA
Reprinted from the RC e-mail
discussion list for leaders of women

² "Uppity" means arrogant, presumptuous.

"Being Visible with My Voice"

When I heard Sandra Bland's strong and courageous voice on the tape,¹ I could hardly feel anything but frozen numbness. In sessions since, I have been able to notice the grief and the fear. At BLCD² recently, in almost every session, I discharged on being visible with my voice and on the recordings³ that had come in. So I write this to acknowledge Sandra Bland's and all Black women's stand against racism, sexism, and male domination and to say that I will keep fighting through this material.⁴

Ironically, I think my first posting to an RC e-mail discussion list was to this women's list some years ago, after attending a Southern women's workshop. The depth of my fear about putting my voice out was evident (and surprising and shocking to me) when

¹ Sandra Bland was a twenty-eight-year-old African American woman who was found dead in her jail cell in Waller County, Texas, USA, on July 13, 2015, after being arrested for a minor traffic violation. Videos recorded on the arresting officer's dashboard camera and a bystander's cell phone revealed the violent, mean-spirited way the officer had treated her, and how she had spoken out against it.

² The International Black Liberation and Community Development Workshop, in Massachusetts, USA, in July of this year

³ Distress recordings

⁴ "Material" means distress.

after pressing "send," I grabbed my head with both hands and screamed, "I am dead, I am dead!" I have a bit less fear today. But writing this has taken some discharge and some wonderful encouragement and counseling from my class of people of the global majority, who wanted to hear my voice on Sandra Bland and wanted me to share it. I went from "I have nothing to say" to "I do and I will."

My mom's fears led her to train her daughters to be quiet. She was worried about our safety if we were too "uppity,"⁵ "sassy," "out of line."⁶ We grew up during segregation time in the U.S. South, in Georgia, and she witnessed firsthand how important keeping a low profile⁷ was to Black females at that time

I will keep discharging, and being visible with my voice.

Marion Ouphouet
Seattle, Washington, USA
Reprinted from the RC e-mail
discussion list for leaders of women

⁵ "Uppity" means arrogant, presumptuous.

⁶ "Out of line" means inappropriate.

⁷ "Keeping a low profile" means avoiding attracting attention.



Nothing Changes If I Don't Speak Up

Part and parcel¹ of being female and Black is being silenced. I have been aggressively silenced by family members, male or female, and at work, school, and so on. Even at home with my partner, I find myself thinking, “Never mind. She’s too thin-skinned² and I won’t be heard here,” and going silent.

Lately I have been trying to write—write all manner of things. I can tell³ how difficult it is to keep writing because it has gotten to the point where I will silence myself before anyone else can or will do it for me.

Sandra Bland⁴ was a brave woman. My partner said, “She shouldn’t have talked back to the police. It’s dangerous.” I said, “She died for standing up for her dignity and who she was. Nothing changes if we’re silent.” That’s my takeaway⁵ from Sandra Bland’s death. Speaking up may kill me, but nothing changes if I don’t.

Anonymous

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

¹ “Part and parcel” means a basic part.

² “Thin-skinned” means easily offended, sensitive to criticism.

³ “Tell” means notice.

⁴ Sandra Bland was a twenty-eight-year-old African American woman who was found dead in her jail cell in Waller County, Texas, USA, on July 13, 2015, after being arrested for a minor traffic violation. Videos recorded on the arresting officer’s dashboard camera and a bystander’s cell phone revealed the violent, mean-spirited way the officer had treated her, and how she had spoken out against it.

⁵ “My takeaway” means what I am taking away.

A Call to White Sisters

Sandra Bland¹ was a courageous woman in refusing to be subdued and silenced. Tragically, she died as a result of defending herself and her right to be treated with the dignity and humanity she deserved.

I have many questions about how to talk about this to my workmates and friends and on social media. What questions could we pose to people about this? How do we comment on it without switching people off into numbness or distancing? I know my tone of voice shouldn’t

reflect my old personal tragedies. (I will get to discharge on them in my next session.)

During slavery, explicitly written “slave codes” carefully spelled out reprisals for Black people’s resistance. Among other barbaric acts, a brutal iron tongue restraint was clamped around the mouth of those who protested against their mistreatment. We need to face how barbaric it was. The current ruthless criminal “justice” system has its roots in these slave-owner codes.

It took a long time to abolish slavery because forty-six thousand slave owners all over the world (almost fifty percent of them in Britain) were hardwired into it² due to the massive

financial gains. Many white women were bystanders to the brutality of slavery, and many became slave owners themselves by way of inheritance when their husbands died. Many of the latter wrote letters begging for compensation when they had to set their enforced labourers free.

White sisters, let’s discharge our bystander distress. We have turned away from our Black sisters’ cries in pursuing our own material gain. How can we reclaim our voices and integrity and not hide behind Black women’s protests but have some of our own?

Belinda French
Bristol, England

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

¹ Sandra Bland was a twenty-eight-year-old African American woman who was found dead in her jail cell in Waller County, Texas, on July 13, 2015, after being arrested for a minor traffic violation. Videos recorded on the arresting officer’s dashboard camera and a bystander’s cell phone revealed the violent, mean-spirited way the officer had treated her, and how she had spoken out against it.

² “Hardwired into it” means firmly and deeply attached to it.

Key Issues for Elders, and Future Elders

When I was in my early twenties, I was in a car accident. In the emergency room the doctor said aloud in my presence that he didn't think I would make it.¹ I was unconscious for three days in the intensive care unit, and I nearly died. When I regained consciousness, I realized that I'd heard what the doctor said and I made a decision that I was not going to die. I got the chance to make a decision to live—and I took it.

Many of my bones were broken, including in my back, but I recovered. Later on I was told that since my back was broken, I would eventually be in chronic pain and would be bedridden in my sixties. I am seventy-one now, and I'm in great shape.²

I found Co-Counseling at age twenty-nine, and I knew immediately how valuable it was. Later on, out of necessity, I started to work on feelings about pain. I spent many years discharging on the accident and recovered many memories. And over the years I was getting better, not worse. I was also learning how to counsel others on physical distresses.

Below are what I now consider the key issues for elders.

Health: I worked in health care all of my working life. My last job was to help patients find good information about their own medical conditions. Over time I realized that along with needing good health information, we need to discharge the feelings attached to physical conditions. Eventually I began leading RC workshops on health and well-being and started editing *Well-Being*, the RC journal for exchange of information and ideas about health.

Elder oppression:³ U.S. society, along with many others, devalues and ignores people as they get older. As the years tick by⁴ and we go through our twenties, thirties, forties, and fifties, we continually get the message that elders are less valuable. By the time we are sixty we have internalized the message.

We need to figure out elegant ways of contradicting the oppression. If we can't stand up for ourselves, how can we expect others to do it? Also, we want to end all oppressions, so this one needs to be included. In my elders' workshops I have people come up with⁵ elegant ways of interrupting elder oppression.

¹ "Make it" means survive.

² "Shape" means condition.

³ "Elder oppression" is a more accurate term than "ageism."

⁴ "Tick by" means go by.

⁵ "Come up with" means think of, create.

Enlisting allies: Interrupting the oppression is much easier for those who are outside of it. Also, by interrupting it, allies are preparing for their own future. Along with young people's oppression, elder oppression is the only oppression that all people will experience (if they live long enough). So if you are not an elder yet, become an ally to elders. You will also be becoming an ally to your own future self.

I began supporting elders without planning to or realizing it. I simply liked them, and we were good Co-Counselors for each other. In my thirties and forties I counseled regularly with the only two elders in my Community. During that period it was difficult for elders to get sessions, but I enjoyed counseling with both of them. Our Co-Counseling relationships continued for at least twenty years, until I moved out of state.

The following is an example of how attitude (a direction against distress) can not only cut through internalized oppression but also lead to physical improvement:

In 1981 a group of elders in their seventies were invited to be in an experiment. When they arrived at the study—some shuffling in, some bent over, some with canes—they walked into a house that was decorated completely in the style of 1959 in the United States. The artwork on the walls was from that time and the furnishings were all from that era. Songs by Perry Como were playing on the radio, and the Ed Sullivan Show was on, on a black-and-white TV. They were instructed to act as if it was actually 1959.

After a week, they showed marked improvement in physical strength, manual dexterity, cognition, and more. The conclusion of the study was, "Age can be a mindset." Imagine what it would've been like if discharge had been added to the mix!

A direction to try: I will disregard the negative images, beliefs, and impressions I have acquired about ageing and live my life the way it was intended to be: happy, healthy, and productive, now and forever.

Pam Geyer
International Liberation
Reference Person for Elders
Bellaire, Texas, USA



KK

Highlights from the Arab-Heritage Workshop

Dear Azi,¹

Here are some of my highlights from the Arab-Heritage Workshop.²

- Your talk about treating each other with respect and kindness—which is different from being “nice”—and how you wanted us not to use sarcasm, because it’s hurtful to people. It reminded me of when my friend’s daughter was five or six and her father had said something sarcastic to her. She was angry and asked, “What is that thing you just did?” He told her it was sarcasm, and she said, “Don’t do that; it’s bad for children!”

- Your flexibility—giving us enough time to play, connect, and rest—and all the mini-sessions.

- When you switched plans on Saturday afternoon and said we were going to have a short nap. We scattered like mice, afraid you might change your mind. I came back so refreshed and happy.

- Being at a workshop at which I wanted to have a session with every single person. And I did have at least one—sometimes several—with all but one person (we’ve planned a mini-session for next week).

- Being restimulated by people’s sessions, because of the similarity of their distresses to my own, and then having really heavy sessions on my early hurts and being very present afterward—until the next time.

- Discharging shame. On Saturday night I went to bed intensely restimulated, feeling feelings of shame that

kept me awake a good part of the night. On Sunday morning I came down to the meeting room a few minutes early, still feeling terrible. A Co-Counselor said good morning and asked if I wanted to do a mini before the meeting started. We saw people assembling, so we only took ninety seconds each. She gave me such loving attention, and I cried hard about feeling “too stupid to live.” The shame vanished and, remarkably, still hasn’t returned. I had never discharged shame so easily and cleanly. How hopeful!

- Our Saturday supper—the thirteen of us sitting around the table on the patio, talking about our families’ favorite dishes as we shared a feast of Mediterranean food delivered by an ally from the Albuquerque RC Community. As we sat there talking and laughing with everyone—with the mountains in the distance and quiet flashes of lightning behind the puffy clouds in that huge, blue, New Mexico sky as the afternoon sun faded and the air cooled—it felt like a big, loving family meal, and I didn’t want it to end.

- Yours and Amin’s³ talk on the initiative on ending classism,⁴ followed by the working-class panel. I was thankful that you gently interrupted the discussion about who is working

³ Amin Khoury (or Victor Nicassio), the Area Reference Person for the Eastside Los Angeles, California, USA, RC Community

⁴ See “A New Initiative on Ending Classism,” by Dan Nickerson, on page 8 of the July 2014 *Present Time*.

class and had us do another mini-session before the panel started. Harvey⁵ once told me, “You are a true daughter of the working class.” Yes, I am.

- How kind you were to people, but not to the patterns.

- Your talk about the need for unity among all RCers if we want to share RC with at least three million people to “tip the balance” and change the world.

- How you trusted us on Sunday morning for “counsel the leader.” I hope you felt how much we love you.

- The support and love from our allies in the Albuquerque Community.

- Falling in love with you and each person there as we showed our strengths and struggles.

- How much we all laughed and were relaxed with each other.

I *knew* that I belonged. (Oh, that just made me cry.) Thank you, Azi.

With love and respect from your newest *habibti*,⁶

Carol Joseph Essa
Austin, Texas, USA

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

⁵ Harvey Jackins

⁶ *Habibti* means “loved one” in Arabic.

The RC Arab Commitment

In total respect for the beauty, generosity, and wisdom of my people, I cheerfully promise that I will cherish my culture and language, their diversity and unity, and remember how delightful and important we are to all human beings and that the world is a safe place for me to be my full human self.

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

² A workshop led by Azadeh Khalili in Albuquerque, New Mexico, USA, from July 31 to August 2, 2015

Women and Physical Power— “The World Is Ours”

I went to a phenomenal Women and Physical Power Workshop this August, on the East Coast of the United States, led by Teresa Enrico¹ and her team. There were so many highlights, most of them related to the contradiction² of many women getting to use their bodies in a personal and collective fight against sexism and male domination.

Roughly a third of the ninety-five women were women of color and younger women. Teresa met with us one day early, which allowed us to assume a centrality in the larger workshop and focus on ourselves as females without the distractions of racism and young and young adult oppressions.

On Saturday evening Teresa talked about sexual exploitation, laughing with us for a good ten minutes before going into details. We had spent the day playing football and basketball, doing coached wrestling and weightlifting, and having a “regular” session. All that, along with Teresa’s humor, allowed us to really be able to hear³ her talk.

She said there was a continuum of sexual exploitation, from sexual harassment to date rape to pornography, and that all of us had experienced some form of it—which could make it difficult for us to pay attention to our health and our relationships. She also said that we could not end sexism without addressing sexual exploitation and that we had to face what had happened to us as girls in order to look at how the collapsing society, via the sex industries, has made sexual exploitation pervasive. Two statements she made rang true for me: “Capitalism has advanced, but so have we,” and “The world is ours; it doesn’t belong to anyone else.”

As the workshop organizer, I asked for help from a number of women. It was a contradiction for me, a female who is Black, to get to lean on them.

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

¹ Teresa Enrico is the International Liberation Reference Person for Pacific Islander and Pilipino/a-Heritage People.

² Contradiction to distress

³ In this context, “hear” means take in, absorb.

A New Beginning

I attended the Women and Physical Power Workshop,¹ led by Teresa Enrico.² As an older African-heritage female, at first I did not feel that this was a workshop for me. But I found that it was just right for me! I was able to discharge some of the old discouragement I had carried around for years. I could tell³ where the oppression of older women had stored in my body and where I had given up on playing and being physically active.

Teresa asked us what games we remembered playing as girls. She also asked us at what age we’d had to give up on playing. These questions helped me think about the oppression that has held me captive and kept me from discharging old hurts related to physical fitness. The more I discharged, the better I thought about allowing myself to play and be more physical, and the more I could tell that I have a body that is just right.

Despite the oppression of older women, I was able to stay connected to others and make the workshop work for me. I have been able to use it as a new beginning in being more involved with my body and reclaiming my ability to be physical and play.

Anne White
Harlem, New York,
New York, USA

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

¹ A workshop held this past August on the East Coast of the United States

² Teresa Enrico is the International Liberation Reference Person for Pacific Islander and Pilipino/a-Heritage People.

³ “Tell” means notice.



BRIAN LAVENDEL

More on the Women and Physical Power Workshop

I was so glad to be at the Women and Physical Power Workshop.¹ Having Teresa² lead us as a mixed-heritage Filipina working-class Catholic woman was powerful. I am a mixed-heritage Japanese American woman, and it was the first time I had been led by an Asian female at such a large and mixed-race workshop. Hearing her strong and clear thinking, and seeing her be fully female and physically powerful, opened up a space for me to be more visible, vocal, and strong myself and to discharge how it has been hard to do that.

On Saturday morning, Teresa asked several women to share their thoughts about how sexism and male domination have affected our different constituencies. Though there are differences in the ways we've been targeted—as African-heritage, Asian-heritage, Latina, Indigenous, Catholic, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Jain, Protestant, working-class, middle-class, owning-class, young, young adult, and elder women—all of us have been distanced from our own bodies and strength, and from each other. It was useful to both acknowledge the differences and see the struggle we all wage against the accumulated hurts.

On Saturday afternoon, every woman counseled and was counseled by another woman in a physical counseling³ session. We put our minds together to figure out how to challenge ourselves and one another to try, fight, and push as far and as hard as we were able.

On Saturday evening I led a topic group on "Beautification, Body Image, Physical Power, and Health." In seeing one another's struggles, we were able to see the breadth of how the beautification industry has impacted us as females—how sexism has affected our



MOLOKAI, HAWAII, USA • TIM JACKINS

body image, understanding of our own bodies, and sense of physical power and how all of that has affected our ability to think about our health and well-being. Our struggles have been so private, even when they've been quite visible. We laughed while playing a game of noticing all the beautification products in our lives.

On Sunday morning, my support group of East and South Asian women got to do weightlifting. When it was my turn, I didn't even lift the weights. I just lay on the weight bench and noticed our coach and the support group and my body lying there. I cried and cried and was so angry—absolutely furious. I noticed being connected to my physical self, and not being alone.

Over the course of the weekend, we all got to play basketball and football and try out weightlifting. It was fun to learn about these sports, which I'd had little access to growing up, from a team of women who were determined to have our learning be connected and possible. There was a lot of laughter. My favorite sport was football. The team had us add the different parts of it together, step by step, until we could try a whole part of a game. We hiked,⁴ threw, ran, blocked, and tackled. I absorbed and understood more about football than I ever had before and walked off the field feeling pleased with my body and my mind.

Throughout the weekend Teresa and the team kept saying to us, "Okay, so now you can see how to teach this to folks, right?" Teresa emphasized that at the base of physical power work is discharging on the early messages we absorbed (even in utero) about our female bodies and minds, and facing our early defeats. I've noticed in the week since I've been home that I've been able to go a little farther in doing that.

Alix Webb

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA

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

¹ See previous article.

² Teresa Enrico, the International Liberation Reference Person for Pacific Islander and Pilipino/a-Heritage People

³ "Physical counseling" is counseling in which a counselor, who has been trained to do it, provides aware and thoughtful physical resistance for a client to push and fight against.

⁴ In this context, "hiked" means put the ball into play.

Classism, and Blame for Racism

In the United States, the finger-pointing and blame for racism (directed at the South, the police, soldiers) is part of a deeply embedded classism in which those in oppressor roles (the North; the financial and political institutions, which are dominated by the owning class) avoid their responsibility in the institutionalization of racism.

The blaming angers white working-class people, and sadly many of them adopt defensive and reactionary positions. White working-class people in the North may even have the Confederate flag on their car or truck, along with other right-wing messages blaming immigrants or people on welfare for the problems of a destructive economic system.

The blaming of working-class people, based on classism, has created a huge backlash that has thwarted progressive moments in the United States for decades—at least since the university-based anti-war movement of the 1960s and '70s, which was hugely classist: “Soldiers are baby killers,” “Police are pigs,” (and if you are rich, your children will never have to be ei-

ther). Both the right-wing and the “liberal” media have been content to exploit this false characterization of the problem and to avoid taking responsibility for it by blaming working-class “ignorant” people. And every Democratic “liberal” now feels that he or she has to be a hawk (pro-war) and promise to cut taxes and reduce the government (except for the military) to get elected.

The “liberal” middle- and owning-class-dominated Democratic Party does not know how to speak to working-class people. The term “working class” is rarely even used. We are now all referred to as “middle class.”

A huge source of confusion in U.S. culture was the anti-Communist and anti-Jewish attacks on trade unions in the years following World War II, which drove the people who were educating the working class about classism out of the trade unions. The major political parties have had a hard time articulating anything sensible about classism and the economic system ever since.

One of the reasons for my proposed “New Initiative on Ending Classism”^{*} is my hope that RC will see itself as one of the progressive institutions that will play the important role of educating working-class people about the true nature of the economic system.

But getting back to racism: I have been successful on Facebook with my Northern (and some of my Southern) right-leaning friends and relatives in saying that each of us carries a piece of racism (how could we not?) and that it has wound itself into all of our institutions; that cleaning our house of racism means not just pointing fingers at those whom we think created the dirt. Regardless of who created it, there is no denying that it is there and that we each need to play a role in cleaning it up. This message wins the support of many of my right-leaning white working-class friends.

Dan Nickerson
International Liberation Reference
Person for Working-Class People
Freeport, Maine, USA

^{*} See “A New Initiative on Ending Classism,” by Dan Nickerson, on page 8 of the July 2014 *Present Time*.

All Our Policies Are Draft Policies

The fact that all our policies are draft policies, that all of them are subject to continual revision and improvement, gives us a unique approach in dealing with issues. We have unleashed an enormous strength, an enormous willingness on the part of people to think hard and reach agreement—if only they can participate in the process of revision, if they can be listened to on their distresses, their best thinking encouraged, and their rational contributions accepted with willingness.

Harvey Jackins
From *The Benign Reality*, page 379



KAISLI SYRJÄNEN

The International Catholic Liberation Workshop

This April, fifty Catholics from throughout the Caribbean and Latin America (Chile, Colombia, El Salvador, Mexico, Puerto Rico, Trinidad) and from South Africa, England, and the United States gathered for an International RC Catholic Liberation Workshop, led by Joanne Bray.¹ Below are a few personal highlights from an extraordinary workshop.

Joanne encouraged us to give up (in Co-Counseling sessions) blame, moral superiority, and separation. I've begun to notice how easy it is for me to feel like I'm better than people whose political views are different from my own and oppressive toward others, and to blame them for my country's problems and then feel justified in keeping separate from them.

This package of blame, moral superiority, and separation also runs² internally among Catholics of different beliefs, practices, and experiences with Catholicism.

Joanne did demonstrations with a diverse group of Catholics, some of whom had experienced Catholicism as an institution that had greatly helped them and their families, some as an institution that had nearly destroyed them and their families, and others as everything in between. With each demonstration that made the invisible visible, we got to listen deeply to one another's stories. The closeness, respect, and compassion grew among us in the midst of all our diversity (in race, class, gender, and Catholic experiences).

I left feeling hopeful about our pioneering RC project. I want to keep figuring out how to bring the power of listening, discharge, and healing to our families and our communities and to keep building our unity and solidarity with all people.

Ellie Hidalgo
Los Angeles, California, USA
Reprinted from the RC e-mail
discussion list for leaders of Catholics

¹ Joanne Bray is the International Liberation Reference Person for Catholics.

² "Runs" means is acted out.



KK

Finding My Catholic Home

Joanne Bray¹ opened the International Catholic Liberation workshop with the facts that only six percent of the world's Catholics live in the United States and two thirds of Catholics worldwide are colonized people, primarily of the global majority. She said we need to make the invisible visible, and we proceeded to make that happen for the entire workshop. I felt immediately recognized after feeling invisible my whole life—as a Catholic who is a Lesbian, a light-skinned mixed-heritage Black woman, and a raised-poor daughter of an immigrant.

The global majority people were put at the center, visible and vocal, from the start and throughout the workshop. That created a safe space for us to be more of ourselves. It enabled me to stand up on the first morning and honestly say how I felt as a light-skinned African-heritage woman and a Lesbian, to take my rightful place at the center of this Catholic community. I felt seen, accepted, and loved.

We were given the direction to stand against blame, moral superiority, and separation—to give it up no matter how comfortable it has felt, to stop blaming others: "I may feel bad, but they are worse than I am." That thought separates me from so many people. I used the direction to reach through my restimulated distress for a white woman, and she reached back. As a result I was able to see her humanness and where her distress was coming from. No more separation!

I feel I have found the church community that I have longed for and searched for my entire life and that my family always wanted. I felt the power and the love of all of the good, caring, generous, passionate, and intelligent Catholics who were there. That was a *tremendous* contradiction² for me.

I have found my home, a base from which I can continue to become more and more myself every day. What a blessing! I am so excited and hopeful about the possibilities and challenges that lie ahead, knowing I have this home.

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

¹ Joanne Bray is the International Liberation Reference Person for Catholics.

² Contradiction to distress

Más sobre el Taller de Liberación de Católicos

Como país colonizado por España y la religión Católica, México tiene una cultura llena de grabaciones¹ sobre el genocidio. La Iglesia ha jugado un papel importante en mantener estas grabaciones y no ha ofrecido un espacio para trabajar en ellas. El taller Internacional de Liberación para los y las Católicas, liderado por Joanne Bray² el pasado abril, me ha ayudado a ver el trabajo que necesito hacer para recuperar mi mente.

Puedo ver más claramente cómo la opresión nos pega a las mexicanas. Se nos ha entrenado para ser calladas e invisibles, para obedecer sin cuestionar o pensar, a sacrificarnos a nosotras mismas por el bien de los demás. También puedo ver el racismo internalizado – por ejemplo: cómo las personas con piel más clara tienen ciertos privilegios y pueden actuar de manera opresiva en algunas ocasiones. El sexismo y la dominación masculina nos separan unos de otras. La homosexualidad es un tema tabú en la Iglesia. Hablar de sexualidad en general es tabú. Y siempre me he preguntado. ¿Por qué, si los hombres y las mujeres fuimos hechos iguales a los ojos de Dios, nosotras las mujeres no podemos oficiar una misa? Hasta la fecha, no he recibido una buena respuesta.

La oportunidad de hablar en este taller sobre estos temas me abrió un espacio para poder sentir y recuperar mi pensamiento, un espacio para hacer las paces conmigo misma. En una demostración alguien tenía que “matar al Jesús colonizador”. El hacer esto en una sesión de Co-escucha me permitió separar mis creencias ya después del desahogo, de la Institución como Iglesia. En el taller

pude sentir lo que en algún momento pensé que era el ser una verdadera católica: estar juntas y juntos conviviendo, apreciándonos aunque tuviéramos diferentes maneras de pensar y de ser.

Fue un gran regalo el poder estar al frente traduciendo. Me gustó poder escuchar las diversas historias de las que estábamos ahí y traducir el pensamiento de cada persona y traducir a Joanne. Me gustó cómo Joanne lideró en una forma tan fácil y con tan buen humor. Fue muy bueno poder hablar de temas difíciles como la sexualidad.

Algo que también me encantó del taller fue trabajar en el sentimiento de “la superioridad moral”. En mi caso, me he dado cuenta de que lo uso como bandera para culpar a otros y esto se convierte en una separación de las demás personas. Creo que está tan internalizada la crítica, que muchas veces no me doy cuenta de que lo que estoy haciendo es juzgar a las personas y de que, de alguna u otra forma, las condeno por sus patrones, dejo de ver a la persona y me confundo.

Cuando Joanne nos pidió que trabajáramos en esto, sentí que si no tenía superioridad moral, entonces, ¿cómo me iba a diferenciar de los demás? ¿cómo iba a saber que realmente soy una buena persona? Ahora que lo escribo, me da un poco de risa, pero así se siente. En algo tengo que ser mejor que los demás. Y este sentimiento está bien inter-

nalizado como católica, porque de alguna forma se trata de sentir que tengo algún poder. Acompañado de la sesión sobre este tema está el no culpar ni permitir la separación. Pues puede pasar que donde yo veo sólo las diferencias, pueden haber muchas más coincidencias y la oportunidad de tener una conexión con alguien que, gracias a ser diferente, me puede mostrar otros caminos de ser y pensar.

Después del taller, he tenido sesiones y he seguido descubriendo cosas, tales como, por ejemplo, qué tanto me gusta estar viva y cómo me gusta este mundo. Tuve una dirección de “Nací queriendo cosas”, porque algunas veces me siento muy cansada por esta carga de “tener que hacer las cosas por obligación o tratar de llenar las expectativas que las personas tienen a mi alrededor”. La dirección me hizo regresar a un lugar muy temprano, tal vez en mi alumbramiento. Conozco la historia y sé que pasé muchas horas en trabajo de parto con mi madre y también sé que usaron anestesia.

Conozco el sentimiento de desear que pasen ciertas cosas, y el de querer a la gente, y el de querer una vida como la que he imaginado. Sé que sólo vi la punta del *iceberg*, pero siento esperanza de saber que tengo a mi gente cerca y que puedo continuar haciendo este trabajo.

Dulce Cisneros

México, D.F., México

Tomado de la lista de discusiones de líderes de Católicos



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¹ Grabaciones o recuerdos angustiosos.

² Joanne Bray es la Persona de Referencia Internacional para la Liberación de las y los Católicos.

English translation of the preceding article:

More on the Catholic Liberation Workshop

As a country colonized by Spain and the Catholic religion, Mexico has a culture full of recordings¹ of genocide. The Church has played an important role in keeping these recordings in place and has not offered enough space to discharge them. The International Catholic Liberation Workshop, led by Joanne Bray² this past April, helped me look at where I have to work to recover my mind.

I could see clearly how the institutional class-supported religious oppression (vs. liberationist Catholic perspectives) falls on us as Mexicans of Catholic heritage. We are made to be quiet and invisible, to obey without questioning or thinking, to sacrifice ourselves for the well-being of others. I could also see the internalized racism—for example, how people with a lighter skin have some privileges and can act oppressively. Sexism and male domination separate people from each other. Homosexuality is a taboo topic in the Church. To talk about sexuality in general is taboo. And I have always wondered why, if male and female are made equal in the eyes of God, we women can't preach. So far I haven't received a good answer.

The opportunity at the workshop to talk and discharge about these topics opened a space for me to feel and recover my thinking, a space to make peace with myself. In a demonstration someone got to "kill [recordings] of Jesus or God as the colonizer." Doing this in a Co-Counseling session allowed me to separate my re-evaluated thinking and beliefs from the institutional recordings of the Church. I was able to feel what I must have known at some point about being a real Catholic—about being together, sharing and appreciating the differences among us in our ways of thinking and being.

It was a gift to be in front doing the interpreting. I loved listening to all the different stories and interpreting the thoughts of all, including Joanne. I liked how Joanne led in an easygoing way and with such good humor. It was a good way to talk about hard topics, such as sexuality.

I also liked working on the feeling of "moral superiority." In my case, I have used this to blame others. When I do it, I separate myself from others. This is so internalized that I'm sometimes not aware of it. When I judge people around me and condemn their patterns, I stop seeing the people and get confused. If I didn't have "moral superiority," what would be left for me? How would I distinguish between others and myself? How would I see that I'm a good person? I've had to be better than others in some way; it has made me feel some power. However, making connections with people who are different from me could enrich my life and show me other ways of thinking and being.

I keep discovering things, such as how much I like life and being in this world. My direction is "I was born wanting." I have felt so tired from having to do things out of obligation or trying to fill the expectations of people around me. This direction has made me go early, maybe to the moment of my birth. I know the story: I spent many hours trying to get out of my mother and also had anesthesia.

I know what it feels like to want things to happen, to want people, and to have my own thoughts about life. I know I've only seen the tip of the iceberg, but I feel hopeful knowing that I have people, my people, with me in this work.



Dulce Cisneros
Mexico, D.F., Mexico
Translated by Dulce Cisneros
Reprinted from the RC e-mail
discussion list for leaders of Catholics

¹ Distress recordings

² Joanne Bray is the International Liberation Reference Person for Catholics.

Immigrants and Children of Immigrants of the Global Majority

I started the Immigrants and Children of Immigrants of the Global Majority Workshop¹ by reminding people of their close connections and that the recordings² of feeling on the outside, unwanted, unwelcomed, and targeted were all part of immigrant oppression. We began reclaiming the languages that had been stolen from us by introducing ourselves in our native languages. It was powerful.

On Saturday morning, we continued to reclaim our languages, cultures, and connections and to contradict the effects of assimilation that have separated us from our cultures, our people, and each other.

After lunch we worked in constituency groups on the internalized oppression, lies, and misconceptions that have kept us separated. On Saturday evening, we chose people from different cultural groups and told our life stories in four-way sessions. We then had a fabulous and raucous culture-share to end the night.

On Sunday morning, we shared what it had meant for us to tell our life stories and what we had learned about being allies.

The following are reflections from some of the participants.

Cheng Imm Tan
Boston, Massachusetts, USA

¹ A workshop held in Framingham, Massachusetts, USA, in October 2014, and led by Cheng Imm Tan, an RC leader in Boston, Massachusetts, USA

² Distress recordings

I am sharing what feel like insignificant and unintelligent thoughts, as I step out of my distress and fight for my mind, voice, and space.

I can still remember everyone's faces and caring and our connections, similarities, and differences. It reminds me that the struggle is not just my struggle, that I am not really alone or isolated.

Being in a diverse group in which English was not people's first language, or not their parents' first language, created understanding and safety to work on language oppression, assimilation, and internalized oppression. Being surrounded by people who did not speak English perfectly and were not as assimilated created a safe space for me in which things didn't have to be done perfectly. This was a huge contradiction³ and allowed me to show myself more. There was a space to breathe and just be. Because of the safety, I could feel an underlying terror about being all grouped together in one space—like maybe we would be targeted, or something would go wrong because there were no white people around. It reminded me of the huge impact assimilation has had on me. At the same time, I got glimpses of the true me shining bright underneath. My language, my culture, and my thinking may be a little rusty but are not lost.

We had the time and space to introduce ourselves and tell everyone the meaning of our names and where we were from in our "heart" tongue. This allowed us to notice how diverse and unique we were within each ethnic and

³ Contradiction to distress

racial group as well as how similar we were even across ethnic groups.

Since the workshop I've worked on an underlying terror related to being visible, accepted, and understood that seems to have come from when I first came to this country and assimilated to the language and culture and rejected my own. I have decided that the only way I am able to go against what seems to be my biggest struggle is to just do it, to show and share more—not to think too much but just do it, mistakes and all—and discharge as I go.

Each time I participate in the Immigrants of the Global Majority Workshop, I am reminded that I am actually a fine human being, just the way I am. I can clearly see how the oppressions make us feel marginalized and smaller than we truly are. It is a great contradiction for me to see this as a systemic occurrence. (Because it happens so subtly and in isolation, I tend to blame myself for not being able to do something about it or figure it out.)

I can still remember everyone's faces and caring and our connections, similarities, and differences. It reminds me that the struggle is not just my struggle, that I am not really alone or isolated.

Thank you, Cheng Imm and Kinara,⁴ for making this special and unique space available for me, so I can "catch my breath."⁵

Lotus Lien
Manchester, New Hampshire, USA

continued . . .

⁴ Kinara Yang is an RC leader in Quincy, Massachusetts, USA, and was the organizer of the workshop.

⁵ "Catch my breath" means get some space to breathe.

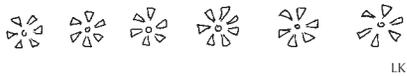
LIBERATION

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With every week that passes, the workshop's relevance has only grown for me. I reflect back on it when I think about the extraordinary protests happening now in the United States, particularly around the message that "Black lives matter."

I just got back from a two-week trip with my parents to China. I had to think hard about what it would take for me to really show myself to my family and show how much I care for them. A lot of internalized oppression is still in the way, but I can be closer to them because of the work I started to do at the workshop.

Will
Boston, Massachusetts, USA



I appreciated the opportunity to introduce myself at the workshop in Malayalam, the language I grew up speaking in South India. It brought up an incredible amount of embarrassment. For me, speaking Malayalam was the most direct way to show that I am an immigrant.

When I immigrated to the United States in the late 1970s, there were no other immigrants in my public school classes and none of my classmates or teachers seemed interested in knowing about my culture. I felt a great deal of pressure to learn English, and to speak it grammatically correctly and without an accent, in order to be accepted. So I worked hard at learning English. But in the process I forgot my language and erased a part of myself.

Since the workshop, I have been trying to do sessions in Malayalam in my RC class (which is all white). This has been terrifying and embarrassing. In the beginning I could

only say, "My name is Rashi," over and over again. But as I have continued, I have been able to recall more and more words. I can tell⁶ that I am reclaiming myself. I feel more authentic and whole. I have a glimpse of what it would look like to show myself fully and be totally pleased and proud to be an immigrant.

Rashika Mathews
Arlington, Massachusetts, USA



The Immigrant Workshop was particularly hard for me this year. Heavy feelings tend to come up at the workshop, as immigrant oppression and the topics surrounding it are so integral to most of my chronic distresses. I'm constantly in fear, worried about money and career, and on top of that feeling isolated and alone, even when I'm with people! I also feel like I never quite "fit in." All these feelings came up, and the best part of it was knowing that I'm not the only one who feels this way. It was good to be able to discharge the feelings with other people who get it.⁷

⁶ "Tell" means notice.

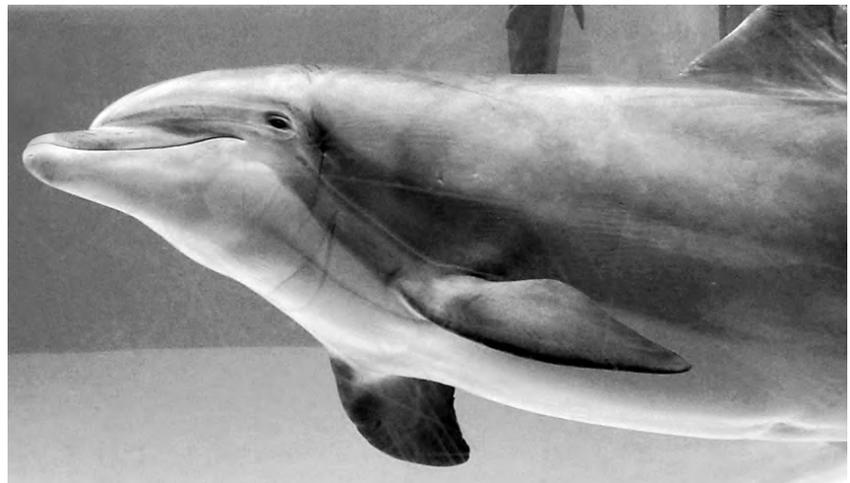
⁷ "Get it" means understand it.

I wholeheartedly enjoyed introducing ourselves in our languages. Of course I was terrified. I was afraid that I'd be judged by the other "native" Spanish speakers. I have lost a lot of confidence in speaking Spanish, and it was good to take a look at the terror that came up. I was also proud and happy that I was able to say a few words in Taino (Tainos are the Indigenous people of Puerto Rico, Vieques, and Haiti) and remind people of the complexity and richness of Latino/a heritage(s) and our Spanish language(s). Moreover, I was able to be visible as someone who speaks an Asian language—an "identity" that I'm shy about. What a great thing to be visible, period,⁸ and take up space!

Cheng Imm, our awesome leader, read an excerpt of the Willie Lynch letter.⁹ It was hard for all of us to hear, but unfortunately it is a reality for us Black people. We have suffered from so much oppression, which has resulted in heavy internalized oppression

⁸ "What a great thing to be visible, period," means what a great thing simply to be visible.

⁹ Willie Lynch was a British slave owner in the West Indies. In 1712 he delivered a speech, in the form of a letter, to the slave owners in the colony of Virginia (now in the United States) in which he described how he controlled enslaved people by dividing them and turning them against each other.



MATT WEATHERFORD

among Black folks. It was important for others to recognize and remember that. I worked on how I didn't want non-Black people to pity us but rather to stay connected to us, so we could all work together and free our minds from the racism that confuses us about staying close to each other as people of the global majority.

Because of the sharing of the letter, I felt for the first time that there was space for me to work on slavery and my African-heritage identity in terms of immigrant oppression. Enslaved Africans were immigrants to the United States but did not come here by choice. It's hard being African heritage and a U.S. citizen. U.S. citizenship and history have blocked all discharge of the anger, sadness, confusion, and resentment we feel as Black people about having been forced out of our home, transported to a new land, and forced to assimilate into a new culture.

White-run U.S. policies have desperately attempted throughout the years to assimilate Black people to "whiteness." But even as much as we have assimilated (by straightening our hair, lightening our skin, having "white" names, adapting our culture and speech to that of the mainstream United States, and so on), we are still treated as second class—even third class—citizens in our own country. So in a sense we can never truly assimilate.

I need to be able to discharge the resentment I feel about my people having been taken to the Americas and how I am by default a U.S. citizen but still not given equal rights or treated with dignity. I want to have space to say, "I want to go back home," "I'm not really an American," or at least, "I don't like 'xyz' about the United States." It's hard to do that when so many people risk their lives to come to the United States. But I felt that it was possible to create this space at this workshop.



LANZAROTE, CANARY ISLANDS • ELENA MOSES

Similarly, it was nice to have the chance to work on being an immigrant who had come from U.S. territories (Puerto Rico and St. Thomas). I hope that I can continue to fight for space to work on my anti-U.S. sentiment and my resentment at having my lands colonized and controlled by the United States.

Thank you for making this happen, Cheng Imm and Kinara! You've pushed my re-emergence so far with your love and care!

Tatiana Williams-Rodriguez
Malden, Massachusetts, USA



Cheng Imm, your tackling such difficult and "heavy" material this past weekend took much courage. A lot of us are not so aware of our society's ills. You have taught us to become more conscious of them and to be more thoughtful of our fellow Co-Counselors. I was gratified that during those few short hours I could at least attempt to be a conscientious "buddy" to the less experienced RCers. I do intend to follow up on your suggestion that I "go after"¹⁰ some Co-Counselors who are not from my own constituency.

Tai
Newton, Massachusetts, USA

I have never had an easy time writing, but it is so important to contradict my chronic feelings of being insignificant, not *enough* of anything, and isolated. I have a voice and I will share it.

It helped so much to have four other African-heritage people at the workshop this year—the first time we have had that many of us. I was able to work more deeply in the support group because of my connections to all of them.

The work on internalized oppression among the races was revolutionary. We must do this work to have each other and ourselves more fully. Telling our life stories in four-way sessions with people of different ethnicities was such a contradiction to the distress that separates us from each other. When people shared on Sunday what they had learned from it, the commonalities were so striking. We are more alike than we are different.

I remember telling my life story in my fundamentals class thirty years ago and feeling that my story was boring. Of course it wasn't. It is always such a rich experience to hear others' stories and to hear my own retelling of my story. It brings us so much closer. I am excited that our four-way will get together every few months.

"Serafina"
Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts, USA

continued . . .

¹⁰ "Go after" means reach out to.

LIBERATION

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I feel so supported and validated to realize that I am not alone in my struggles against the oppression imposed on me and others like me by people who think they wield power.

The issues of immigration are complex. At the heart of these issues are human beings who seem to be on opposite sides of the fence—"us" versus "them," "legal" versus "illegal."

I discharged feelings that I have kept under control all my life, including some I did not know existed. I was a little surprised at how strongly I felt about my and my family's experiences, and the experiences of other immigrants like me.

Lynne May Lim
Newton, Massachusetts, USA



I have spent my entire life in a ninety-eight percent white environment, including in my current RC class, Area, and Region.¹¹ To be among people of the global majority—to see *our* faces everywhere I looked, to hear *our* voices everywhere I turned, to have *our* thinking be the only thinking that mattered, even for just that weekend—was a seismic contradiction to a lifetime of marginalization.

As a biracial person of Asian and European heritage, the workshop was also a contradiction to the entrenched

¹¹ An Area is a local RC Community. A Region is a subdivision of the International RC Community, usually consisting of several Areas.



NEW YORK, NEW YORK, USA • AMANDA MARTINEZ

belief that I never would or could truly "belong." My biggest fear about the workshop was that I would be viewed as an intruder and an outsider—that I would stick out like the proverbial sore (and in this case, white) thumb¹²—and thus be prevented from getting to truly connect to anyone.

I was challenged the first night about my right to be in attendance. It could have easily wrecked the entire weekend for me—but that didn't happen. Instead I found myself gently though assertively contradicting someone's confusion about me and speaking up for my right to belong, even though I didn't actually believe it at the time. By the end of the weekend, I had come to feel that I *did* belong, that I had a people I could claim and who would claim me—something I have wanted all my life but given up hope of ever having.

To say that the workshop was transformative is a huge understatement. I have taken away from it the knowledge that there is a place for me among other human beings. And whenever I begin to doubt that, I can return to those moments during the workshop when I was actually seen, and wanted, and not alone, and be reminded that "otherness" is not my lot in life.

I gained a clearer understanding of how the immigration experience—with

¹² "Stick out like a sore thumb" means be very conspicuous because of being different.

its marginalization, racism, classism, and pressure to assimilate—has affected me and my entire family. I was able to connect with and show myself to others in my Southeast Asian support group and know that my presence was appreciated and helpful. I could connect with and show myself to those of other racial and ethnic backgrounds and see firsthand how our oppressions (and means to liberation) mirror and intersect with each other. I learned how to be an ally to other people of the global majority, despite any perceived differences.

Elizabeth Gordon
Fitchburg, Massachusetts, USA



I re-evaluated about the relationship between my living on Indigenous land, the colonization of the Americas, and the genocide of Indigenous people and my parents' immigration from China to the United States.

The Europeans tried to enslave the Indigenous Americans. They killed many off via disease and then found that the survivors refused to work for them. So they captured West Africans, imported them, and kept them in an enslaved condition in the United States until the Emancipa-

tion Proclamation in the mid-1860s. After that there was no more captive labor force, but the United States needed to build railroads. So they took advantage of poor conditions in Ireland and in Asian countries, especially China, and got a labor force that way.

That is at least part of the genesis of Asian American immigration, which actually began much farther back than that with Pilipino/a people, some of whom are believed to have arrived in the Americas on Spanish ships in the 1600s.

Even though I want to have the illusion that I am “not involved,” my being here is the result of historical forces and individual choices that make me complicit in and make me collude with the colonist and imperialist attitudes and actions of Europeans in the past, which remain in the form of racism and anti-immigrant oppression in the United States. Heavy thought!

Francie Chew
Somerville, Massachusetts, USA



Immigrants’ liberation has always been near and dear to my heart. My entire identity has been rooted in the immigrant experience. Being a refugee becomes a part of you—like how cotton was made into my favorite t-shirt. I guess that is just how oppression works.

I am a Khmer-Cham¹³ refugee female. After years of discharge, I made a commitment to live with more intention, and attention in the present. That meant that my heart had to be fully open and my mind fully functioning. And that meant

¹³ The Khmer and Cham are two ethnic groups in Cambodia.

that I had to take myself seriously and take a stand in all the places where my distress patterns make me confused, lost, dumb, quiet, numb, small, silent, passive, polite, insignificant, and invisible. It felt almost impossible, and I quickly lost sight of the commitment as the isolation consumed my vision and made me see myself as not capable and the fight as too much to bear.

Being the organizer for and attending the Immigrants and Children of Immigrants Workshop this year gave me the clarity and strength to take on¹⁴ once again the commitment to live my life big and bold! The connections, safety, topics, and leadership were the missing piece of the grand puzzle of my liberation. Working on assimilation, and internalized oppression within and between groups, was just what

¹⁴ “Take on” means undertake.



COSTA RICA • CAROL FRINTNER

I needed to push me over to the other side of my distresses—where I could see my significance and that I do have the space to be fully human and powerful.

Since then I have quit my job and traveled to Thailand to celebrate my sister’s matrimonial union and I have visited Cambodia with my younger siblings (who were all born in the United States) to reclaim my people and land despite our war history. I was unemployed for several months (terrifying for a refugee) before making a long-time-coming move to Brooklyn, New York, USA.

Discharging on the terror and insignificance connected to genocide and war has made these decisions possible. All the connections and safety built around me by each and every person at the workshop have had a huge impact on my living and loving this big, powerful life I am building. Thank you all, and may we continue this partnership toward our liberation and re-emergence!

Kinara S. Yang
Quincy, Massachusetts, USA



What makes the Immigrants Workshop so special to me is the closeness and connections with people. It contradicts my deep isolation and creates a safe environment to not only show my feelings but to work on them as well. I also love that everyone is so different. We come from different backgrounds, yet we all share one commonality—we are all either immigrants or children of immigrants—and this *from the start* makes me feel closer to everyone, which makes it easier to work on internalized oppression.

I can still feel the connections I made and remember people, and it’s

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LIBERATION

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been over a week since the workshop. This almost never happens for me after a workshop. I left feeling connected, less isolated, and it made all the difference in how my week went at work and at home. What I've been holding on to is noticing my goodness. So simple, yet so effective!

Yen Huynh Kortua
Boston, Massachusetts, USA



The Immigrant Workshop is significant to me because it brings up many feelings about family. Immigrant families have special ways of being close—really *really* close—and that closeness is replicated in our workshop. The feel-

ings that come up for me and that I get to discharge are, "Leave me alone! Get away from me!" I get to discharge directly on dismantling my isolation.

Cheng Imm said that when we feel really safe, we start to feel like crap (she might've used different language, but that's what I heard). I felt like crap most of the weekend, because I felt so safe and loved. Funny¹⁵ how that works. It's made me rethink the other places I feel that way—like sometimes in my relationship with my girlfriend.

Which brings me to another highlight! I got to work directly on being Queer and an immigrant. My

¹⁵ "Funny" means it's strange.

Queer identity becomes *invisible*, because being an immigrant is already so hard. There is no room for it, because I have many more pressing things to address. My family and others have also seen Queerness as a U.S. "thing" or as assimilating. So affirming my Queer identity has meant negating my cultural heritage. Claiming being an immigrant Guatemalan Queer woman brought up lots of terror for me. It also made me hopeful that one day I might not have to hide any piece of myself, in RC or in the wide world.

Thank you, Cheng Imm, for encouraging us to write, reflect, and reconnect! I miss you all.

"Ella Maria"
Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA

Forced to Accept Misinformation

Young people continue to be told "this is so" without being encouraged to check on it by their own observations. This is part of the process of oppression, part of the process of preparing us through the oppression of young people to be victims of not only young people's oppression but all of the other oppressions.

In some cases, human beings are forced to accept misinformation for lack of any other information. If you can't look into a room yourself, and somebody else sticks their head in there and says, "The room is full of water," that is as good a fact as you have. But if the person is for some reason intent on deceiving you, it is not a very good fact. If you accept it, it may lead to lots of wrong conclusions.

Or, if the person is in the grip of restimulation, such as a terror of drowning, and sees water everywhere because the recording* is playing, then you have some false data, false conclusions, false generalizations.

A great deal of the re-evaluation that follows our discharge consists of spotting, sorting out, and throwing away these falsehoods that we were told were true, and had little choice but to accept as true, but which have interfered with our functioning and ruined our perception of reality ever since we accepted them.

Harvey Jackins
From *The Benign Reality*, page 23

* Distress recording



AMANDA MARTINEZ



LINDSAY ISLANDS, VICTORIA, BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA • DAMIEN COOK

A Letter to My Newborn Child

Welcome to this amazing world.

We are so glad you are here.

I want to show you the orange color of the sun as it hits ancient desert mountains at sunrise

The beauty and simplicity of the half-moon as it hangs in the light-blue, clean sky, preparing for its exit as the day begins

The sweet smell of honeysuckle sprinkled in green bushes

The roar of a waterfall as it pours over the rocks and begins its descent to the pool below

The loving gaze of one human being to another, a hand caressing the other's cheek in a moment of comfort and understanding

The girth and dignity of a redwood tree along the northern California coast

The aromatic taste of nana¹ in a warm glass of tea, drunk in the cool evening desert air

The ecstatic release of the heart at the beginning of Beethoven's *Ode to Joy*

The grandeur of the snow-capped peaks of the Rocky Mountains as you approach from the Central Plains²

The warm embrace of another human

The silverback gorillas of Eastern Africa

The depth and majesty of our ancient Jewish tradition

The satisfaction of overcoming what you thought you couldn't do only to reveal ever deeper levels of your own power

The thrill of riding waves³ at sunset

The sweet hour when the sky turns from full of stars to the light of day as the sun pops over the horizon

The ecstatic joy of play

The power of using your body

The joy of glimpsing divinity in a Tosafot,⁴ and gazing upon a palace in a Rashi⁵

The vulnerability of your heart, open in love for another

The diversity of the many human cultures on this planet

The confidence that comes from knowing that you have yourself completely.

David Jaffe

Sharon, Massachusetts, USA

¹ Nana is a mint-like herb found in desert areas in Israel.

² Of the United States

³ "Riding waves" is another term for body surfing.

⁴ Tosafot is the name of a group of Jewish scholars from Medieval Europe. "A Tosafot" refers to one of their commentaries on Jewish law.

⁵ Rashi is Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki, a Medieval Jewish scholar. "A Rashi" refers to one of his comments on the Bible or Jewish law.

In May 2015 there was a gathering of Co-Counselors in Boston, Massachusetts, USA, at which thirty of the International Liberation and Commonality Reference Persons talked about their work. The following are five of the talks. (Seven others were printed on pages 60 to 64 of the July 2015 Present Time.)

The International Liberation Reference Person for Pacific Islander and Pilipino/a-Heritage People

Mabuhay! That is a Tagalog¹ word meaning many different things, but particularly “long life.”

My name is Teresa Enrico, and I am the International Liberation Reference Person for Pacific Islander and Pilipino/a-Heritage People. I get to talk to you about three of my favorite groups in the world—Pilipinos/as, Pacific Islanders, and Koreans. Yay! Those three groups represent over a hundred and fifty million people in Asia and the Pacific Islands plus a few million more in

¹ Tagalog is the first language of about a fourth of the people in the Philippines and a second language of the majority.

the diaspora around the world. We’re in a lot of places—doing a lot of work, a lot of things.

Just like you, we are precious and significant, and we matter. We are humans, and we are fine examples of humans. We have very different cultures and languages, and there are many complexities in what we have figured out to do in the face of living life under harsh oppressions. Our oppressions have been the result of histories that have included colonization, racism, attempted genocide, war, and militarization. Gosh,² it’s such a

² “Gosh” is an exclamation that expresses wonder or surprise.

great list. And it also includes the sex industries, which have to do with³ sexism and male domination, of course, but also war, militarization, and imperialism. We are an amazing group of people, who in the face of all this have thrived the very best we could. With the RC tools we have, and that you will share with us, we have an opportunity to change the course of our history and our lives. And I look forward to doing that with you.

Part of my job is reminding our people that we are significant and that we matter. As I prepared this talk, I kept running up against a sense of insignificance and the feeling that we don’t matter. The way the recordings⁴ go is that I can’t tell⁵ that if we disappeared tomorrow it would matter.

And along those lines, one of the things we are facing is climate change. In the Pacific Islands, climate change is not something of the future. Many Pacific Islanders have had to leave their islands already. They are climate refugees. It’s not a thing of the future, and it’s something that a lot of people don’t know about.

And so with that, I’d like to say that I invite you to come and join me in thinking about our future. *Salamat.*⁶

Seattle, Washington, USA



LYNDALL KATZ

³ “Have to do with” means are related to.

⁴ Distress recordings

⁵ “Tell” means perceive.

⁶ *Salamat* means “thank you” in Tagalog.

The International Liberation Reference Person for Native Americans

(Read by Dan Nickerson, as Marcie Rendon was unable to attend the gathering.)

I'm Marcie Rendon, the International Liberation Reference Person for Native Americans.

The story of Native people is not in the past. Each one of you can find a Native person within an hour of you, no matter where you are on this continent, who would be happy to learn RC from you.

In our work as Native people, we recognize the distinction between racism, which means the exploitation and sometimes enslavement of people for their labor, and the genocide of Indigenous people, which means the killing of Native people or the erasing of Native identity and sovereignty for the purpose of exploiting the resources of the land we live on.

The genocide is active and ongoing today, and our goal is to stop it. Native people, in and out of RC, are successfully organizing with allies to stop the state-enforced adoption of Native children into white families and to establish our sovereign right to protect the lakes, rivers, and oceans upon which all life depends.

Recently our work in RC has been clarified to include workshops for Native people who were raised white; white people with Native ancestry; people raised in other identities but with Native heritage, such as Chicano/a people or people in Latin America; and Indigenous people of other continents who have immigrated to North America. The goal of all of this is to reach Native people who are currently living within their culture. In other words, all of us are discharging on genocide and the Native identity so that we can reach out to this exceptionally important group of people in the world. Thank you.

Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA

The International Liberation Reference Person for Allies to Young People

I'm Jenny Sazama, the International Liberation Reference Person for Allies to Young People, and I love my job. I want to talk to you about four things that I think young people need from us:

First, they need us to be alive. They are alive, and we need to come out here and match them and not just enjoy the lives they have.

Second, they need us to be connected. They reach for us, and they want us to be connected with them. They also need us to think about racism, because racism is the main thing that stops people from being connected to each other.

The third thing they need from us is a planet. *(laughter)* And we have a lot of work to do. Last month we went to 406 parts per million of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, and 350 parts per million is what is sustainable. We are not too busy for this. We feel overwhelmed in dealing with the oppres-

sive society, but we've got some work to do. Young people are leading us here. Let's stand by their side and have a planet.

The fourth thing they need is for us to use RC well for ourselves and to share RC with them.

I want to end with a story. A few years ago, a good friend of our family got murdered. At the funeral I was playing with his niece and nephew, a three- and five-year-old, and people thought, "Oh, they must not understand if they are playing at the funeral." I took the young people aside and asked them how they were, and they cried with me. They knew exactly what had happened; they had seen the casket in front of the church.

I think that's how we would be. We would pay attention to present time, except when there was resource.

Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts, USA



The International Liberation Reference Person for People Raised Poor

Hi. I'm Gwen Brown, the International Liberation Reference Person for People Raised Poor. So that's for most of the world's people, unfortunately.

If we're ever going to have the kind of world we want—if we're going to save our species, and the other species on the planet—we have to get really smart about raised-poor people.

Two of the things we have to wrap our minds around are that poverty is completely unnecessary and that we can do something about it.

We also need to completely understand that poverty, and the struggles that go along with it, are not a personal failure. They result from policies, social and economic policies, that have been paid for with the labor of workers. Owners have paid workers as little as they could possibly get away with and taken most of the wealth the workers have created not only to live extravagantly but to put in place policies that promote continued and increasing income inequality. We need to communicate to raised-poor people, over and over and over again, "You did not do this to yourself." The self-blame is huge and just plays and plays and plays.¹

And remember that raised-poor people will bring incredible strengths to your RC Community, and your Community to them, so get them involved and figure out how to support them.

For help with this, and to help you, and others, move through your own class distresses, look at our new Raised-Poor Draft Policy Statement. I spent twenty years not being able to write it, and finally, thanks to the discharge process, I was able to. Once I got it written, many raised-poor leaders made contributions. We think it is a good policy for us raised-poor people, as well as for people from all class backgrounds. It's on the RC website.² You can use it in your classes and even in your work outside of RC. Besides providing an overall class analysis, it lists the class-based distress recordings we raised-poor people need you non-raised-poor people to work on, as well as what we need to work on. We hope that you will help us stand up to the feelings that we can't move through alone—most of all, our humiliation, and all that keeps us from being the great leaders we were born to be. Thank you.

Wilmington, Delaware, USA

¹ "Plays" as in how a recording plays

² www.rc.org

The International Liberation Reference Person for People with Disabilities

I'm Marsha Saxton. I'm the International Liberation Reference Person for People with Disabilities. My constituency also includes people with chronic illness and people with bodies. (*laughter*) That's anywhere from six hundred and fifty million to seven billion people.

In the 1950s I was the little girl in the classroom with the metal leg braces. It was a time when people with disabilities were treated with pity and charity. One of the features of disability op-

pression is "don't ask, don't stare, shhhhhhh," which keeps everyone stupid and clueless about understanding and challenging the stereotypes of people with disabilities, which include that we're ugly, we're stupid, we're a burden, and we're better off dead.

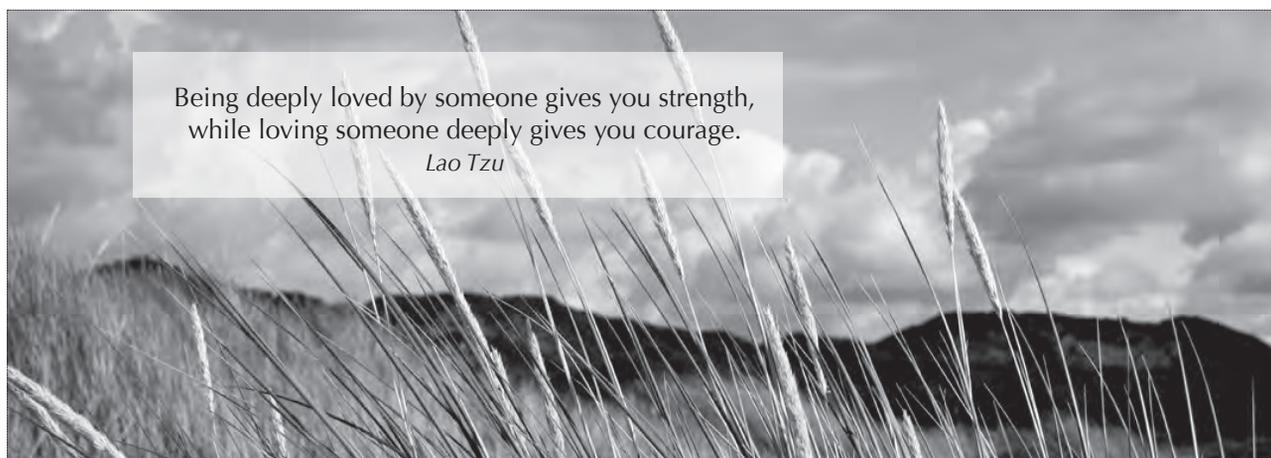
The oppression is very harsh and affects people with disabilities profoundly. And it not only affects people who happen to have different bodies, doing what they do, but also everybody and

their bodies. It keeps all of us scared and confused and from being proud about moving and having wonderful aliveness in our very being.

Since I first got involved in the disability rights movement, there has been a tremendous shift. In a groundswell movement around the world, people with disabilities are using social media and all manner of other things to connect with others. There is a proud worldwide movement of disabled people organizing to challenge their oppression in regard to employment, access to education, access to the life of the community, architectural access, and access to everything that everybody else enjoys. We now have the United Nations treaty on the human rights of people with disabilities, which is a tremendous success. And of course we have so much yet to do.

This is what I'd like to offer you, as people with bodies: If you are a person with a disability, come join this proud movement of human beings who model resilient and creative living. If you are an ally or a potential ally, come learn to use the tools of RC to get past that silence, that awkwardness, that fear of saying the wrong thing or showing your ignorance, which is not your fault but due to how you have been kept from real information about and connection with this incredibly lovely, resilient group of people. And if you're somebody who struggles with health, come learn to use the tools of RC. My slogan is "Bring your body to session." (*laughter*) So, bring your body. See you later!

El Cerrito, California, USA



Being deeply loved by someone gives you strength,
while loving someone deeply gives you courage.

Lao Tzu

AN TRA MOR, COUNTY DONEGAL, IRELAND • ANET MOORE

We Are Winning!

Hello everyone!

Here are some victories from the South Asian Liberation Workshop:¹

- By the end of the workshop, I could tell² I was connected. It was subtle—like something that had always been there that I was finally able to feel a bit more.

¹ A workshop led by Azadeh Khalili, near Boston, Massachusetts, USA, in July 2015

² "Tell" means notice.

- I could tell that I have more of my mind than in the past and that my struggles aren't an individual failing. I decided again to learn Hindi, the language of my family, and this time it actually feels possible.

- It was great to notice the gains I have made with my South Asian family. The despair and hurt of our isolation due to colonization is still there, but I can tell that I have them more than I did before.

- I am more aware of how assimilation hurts me and hides information about who I really am from my allies.

The internalized oppression is strong and will quickly bring up early hurts when South Asians are together. We don't need to step over these feelings. Azi³ encouraged us to discharge early.⁴

continued . . .

³ Azadeh Khalili, the leader of the workshop

⁴ "Discharge early" means discharge on early hurts.

LIBERATION

...continued

One moment crystallized the workshop for me. In a mini-session I assumed that my counselor was criticizing me. Rather than go silent, I spoke up gently and requested that they shift their counseling technique. They were surprised and asked if they could speak to that. I said yes, ready to feel bad. They said, "You are a joy. I so enjoy being with you. That's why I laugh. Not to criticize or dismiss you. It's just what I feel when I'm with you." For the rest of my turn I sobbed and screamed in their arms. I felt deep sadness for how my patterns keep me from seeing what is objective reality, and rage at whatever happened to me

in the past to keep me from assuming my power, significance, and connection. It was a beautiful moment.

Many of us have been treated harshly. Gentleness and connection are a huge contradiction.⁵ I have been conditioned to believe that life is only struggle. It is liberating to notice moments of joy, lightness, and being with people in fun. I have had more moments of connection and laughter with my South Asian family. This is tremendous. I hadn't believed it was possible.

⁵ Contradiction to the distress

The work of discharging our early terror and other hurts is not fun! But it is key to noticing how amazing it is to be alive now, and what more is possible. The victory is having more of myself, and my people, and the world. Doing this work as a group is absolutely necessary.

This is what I feel right now: Wow. We are winning. We are winning.

Anu Yadav

Washington, D.C., USA

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

My Story of Loving Muslims

I decided to write this because I hear so much bad being said about Muslims and I wanted to show that what I know and experience is very different.

I have led a few topic groups at workshops and struggled to know what to call them. I have used the word "Islamophobia" but really struggle with it. I have all these questions: Why are we being encouraged to hate Muslims? What is Muslim oppression? What does it mean to be an ally? How can we learn about Muslims and Islam? What is Islamophobia? Who are Muslims anyway?

Alima Adams, a middle-class English Co-Counsellor with African Muslim roots, encouraged me to continue with this exploration, and it is my connection with her that has helped me to think bigger.

I recently attended a wide-world-change workshop led by Julian Weissglass¹ and concluded that human close-

ness is the most important "weapon" against oppression and war. In my life I have had the most human closeness



STONEHENGE, WILTSHIRE, ENGLAND • DIANE SHISK

from Muslims. Here is my story:

The day I moved into my neighbourhood, I was greeted on my doorstep by Z—, age twelve, carrying a plate of somosa (pastry triangles filled with spicy vegetables). I was so hungry after physical work, I cried. It was one of the perfect moments of my life.

I had loads of physical things to do each day after work, but it didn't take long for Z— and her cousins to come 'round² with offers of practical help. Aged twelve, ten, and nine, they were willing and strong and capable. They

knew how to paint better than I did and turned up³ every night for weeks until the whole house was painted.

They had witnessed many times in their Pakistani-Kashmiri families that whenever anyone is in trouble or needs help, people gather 'round in numbers. They couldn't let me—all alone, away from my family in the north and isolated due to the demands of work—do it alone. What's more, they seemed to enjoy themselves.

I got to know their families and was told by Granddad that every day around six there would be food to share and that I should consider myself one of the family. That was hard to accept, but it has been a wonderful thread of stability in my life ever since.

I got to know all the family and have had some of my most close and relaxing times in their homes. The children wanted me to sleep with them, and to lay and roll on the floor with them,

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

² 'Round means around.

³ "Turned up" means appeared.

which I wasn't used to but was good preparation for family work!⁴

They have big gatherings after babies are born. This has been a mighty contradiction⁵ for me. (Born into a poor, working-class family that was anxious about being able to afford me, I bore the brunt of their survival fears and violent, abusive frustrations.) Everyone wants to hold the baby. He or she gets passed around to all the generations of relatives visiting from far and wide. Weddings, funerals, memorials always involve lots of people gathering, too.

When my Kurdish-Muslim partner's mum died, we had visitors every day for several weeks. They brought pans of food and bought extra glasses and everything else we needed to make it possible to feed large numbers of people. I don't know who paid for it; they take that burden away from the grieving family.

It would take a book to tell you about all the times I have shared with this family over the past twenty-four years. They have been so open and generous to me. They have always "lent" me their children and told me that I am one of the family. I have taken them out for treats and holidays, for cultural exchanges, and to share the beauty of the British countryside. I have been to their village in Pakistan, which is equally green and beautiful. I remember walking with them on the coast path in Wales and coming to a big, open green space and their saying, "This looks like our village in Pakistan!" I was shocked at my ignorance; I had thought that Pakistan was all sandy and desert-like.

⁴ RC family work is the application of Re-evaluation Counseling to the particular situations of young people, and families with young children. It entails young people and adults (both parents and allies) interacting in ways that allow the young people to show and be themselves and not be dominated by the adults.

⁵ Contradiction to distress



BURMA • MAURA FALLON

Likewise, Kurdistan is very green in springtime, and full of wild flowers and waterfalls. This is northern Iraq I'm talking about, and what do we see portrayed on our television screens about that part of the world? My partner went to university in Baghdad (Iraq) and reminisces about it being a paradise of nightlife along the river Tigris.

ANTI-MUSLIM OPPRESSION

Anti-Muslim oppression is all around us. It's so blatant and obvious. We are fed image after image of Muslim terrorists or Muslims who are allegedly promoting terrorism. Anyone who is Muslim or perceived to be Muslim is treated with suspicion.

We are not told about how Muslims are acting with courage, kindness, generosity, and integrity in their communities in the face of war and austerity. We are not encouraged to share the grief of the many Muslims who have lost relatives and homes due to war and invasion.

I am a member of a women's group in my community called Women Heroes. It includes a number of Muslim women from Somalia, Eritrea, and Sudan—places disrupted by war. I have encouraged listening rounds. What the women have been through is heart rending—so much loss and separation. We often cry.

I teach classes on prejudice and racism to working-class women as part of their work training, and I always do an exercise on images in the media. I recently decided to include images of Muslims, and it was difficult to find any positive images at all. One young woman said that she was "fed up" with Muslims,⁶ that she had given up on them after a bad experience in a relationship with a Muslim man. I told her about my "family" and about my partner who is Muslim and a great supporter of women's power. She was shocked. It made me think that I need to tell my story. I am frightened that people are "giving up on Muslims," or giving up on anybody!

We need to counter the impact on both Muslims and non-Muslims of all the negative media attention. I encourage us all to have a session on what comes up when we hear or say "Muslim" or "Islam."

I work in a community with a majority of Somali Muslim families. When I first came, it was run down with drugs and crime. Now it is peaceful, clean, and more vibrant. People walk more safely. There is a lower consumption of alcohol too (in Islam alcohol is forbidden). But there has been little recognition of the Somali families' contribution to raising the standards in the area.

I am learning more about Muslims. They are in many nations across the world—in Europe from west to east, all over Asia, and in North America, Africa, and South America. The largest population is in Indonesia. I have learned that the Muslim faith came from a cry of the oppressed for equality and that it advocates the sharing of wealth. I have noticed that my Muslim friends are not afraid of money; when someone needs some, they quickly pull out cash to give.

continued . . .

⁶ "Fed up" means disgusted.

LIBERATION

... continued

LISTENING TO MUSLIMS

The following are some things Muslims have told me in answer to, "What do you like about being a Muslim?"

- Peace—how we live our lives accepting everybody. We are not allowed to backbite.⁷ We are not allowed to hurt people's feelings.

- It's good to be modest as a woman; you don't need to show off all your body. Also, we fast and grow to understand those who have less than we do.

- I see Islam as about being good, praying five times a day from your heart. Other people say you should wear a scarf. I don't, because it doesn't come from my heart. My dad was a good Muslim and he always said, "Follow your heart."

- It's good Muslims don't drink; we are more in control of driving and

what we are talking about. We don't get judged in the same way about our clothing; we have our own fashion.

- We believe that if people are in trouble, we need to help them. When there are appeals from homeless people in Syria, or people needing help anywhere in the world, it is our duty to give.

- I used to be a businesswoman travelling all over India. I met an Englishman without shoes and bought him some; it was an honour. Now I have come to England and feel I have to take, but it is difficult for me.

- We didn't come here to take; we came because we were in trouble. I lost a beautiful home with a swimming pool. I used to have parties every week and invite all my friends and neighbours to eat. Now you accuse me of taking jobs and housing, but all I want to do is give!

I also want to ask Muslims what is hard, but I know I will have to be prepared to listen long and hard and get support for myself.

What will it take for us non-Muslims to be able to listen to Muslims—to be able to notice and acknowledge their suffering, their greatness, and their needs? What in our early lives was similar or different? Are all oppressed groups similar in how they've been blamed in order to distract us from economic oppression and exploitation? What is our past relationship to blame?

I would love you to join me in uncovering parts of our minds that we have feared to go to. I also want to keep sharing positive news about Muslims. How can we do this? Please join me!

Belinda French
Bristol, England

⁷ "Backbite" means say bad things about someone when she or he is not present.



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I Can Claim This Identity with Pride

Women! I am excited to finally compose a report on the Middle-Class Women's Workshop.^{*}

I can now share, with no shame, my story as a middle-class woman. I can claim this identity with pride. Before the workshop, the idea of being a proud middle-class woman was a joke to me. I considered being middle class a circumstance that I should spend my whole life apologizing for. My best tactic was to cover it up as best as I could. That kept me very alone.

As a young adult schooled in campus-based activism, I learned to feel bad about the benefits a middle-class upbringing had afforded me. That kept me from acknowledging and feeling gratitude for them. I could only discharge on them as a grand and public apology for my people and the horrible things they had done to provide me with the life I had.

^{*} A workshop held in Baltimore, Maryland, USA, in February 2015, led by Diane Balsler, the International Liberation Reference Person for Women

I now understand the circumstances under which my family moved into the middle class, as white working-class Irish, Italian, Portuguese, and French-Canadian Catholics. I shake as I write this. Now I will not allow anyone to speak disparagingly of the middle class, especially my own middle-class people. I can keep in my mind a profound respect for the life and decisions of my mother, and her mother, while mourning the loss of connection and compromise of integrity that middle-class assimilation entailed. The compromises made by my people are not permanent. I can honor the experiences of my family, and live a female middle-class life full of integrity and connection, with no limits.

At the workshop I led a topic group on violence. Violence in middle-class families and communities is often kept secret in an effort to look good and all right. As young people we had to reconcile the lie that "everything is

okay and good" with the violence we witnessed and experienced.

The story of violence and women is often told with women as victims and survivors, but this is not the whole story. As girls we were angry. Many of us had and have violent feelings. Many of us have acted out these feelings on others and ourselves, directly and indirectly. It is not our fault that we have these distress recordings, it does not make us bad women, and we deserve a place to work on them and find relief.

I took time to discharge while leading the group. Acknowledging when I am scared, not pretending to be "fine," is a big part of my liberation as a middle-class woman. I was able to show all the fear and still respect myself and my intelligence as I led.

Amy Calandrella

Holyoke, Massachusetts, USA

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

● ● ● ● ● ● ● From a Korean Middle-Class Female ● ● ● ● ● ● ●

I went to the Middle-Class Women's Workshop near Baltimore, Maryland, USA.¹ It was a struggle having to manage how white it was. I didn't even realize how much I had to do in my mind to keep working around that fact. It's what I do every day—try to ignore or keep at bay the pressures to assimilate and the feeling that I have to do things the way everybody else does, like speak English all the time.

Like many women of the global majority who were raised middle class, I grew up in a predominantly white environment, so this feels "normal" and also very restimulating. I've worked on my internalized racism to where I can be open to relationships with white women, and white people in general. Still it's hard to be fully myself in white environments. It's hard when racist things happen, like they did at

¹ A workshop held in February 2015 and led by Diane Balsler, the International Liberation Reference Person for Women

the workshop. I'm not sure people even realized what they were doing. My conditioning to be nice, and immigrant stuff about not understanding what's happening, has made it difficult for me to speak up and openly challenge racism when it occurs.

Diane did a piece on celebrating the victories of middle-class women. Even though it's not enough that the gains of second-wave feminism² in the United States were largely gains for middle-class women, they were still victories that we can celebrate. We cheered for the women in the room

continued . . .

² Second-wave feminism was the feminism that began in the early 1960s and continued through the early 1980s. While the first-wave feminism of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries focused on women's legal rights, such as the right to vote, second-wave feminism addressed every area of women's experience, including family, sexuality, and work.

LIBERATION

... continued

who had gotten higher degrees, were doctors and lawyers and in other male-dominated professions. I usually feel embarrassed about having gone to an elite university, but figuring out how to “succeed” in the U.S. educational system when my immigrant parents couldn’t help me at all was a victory both as a female and as an immigrant.

I got a chance to tell my story in a demonstration. I felt like I was taking a lot of time, but Diane thought it was important to look at U.S. imperialism and the middle-agent role.³

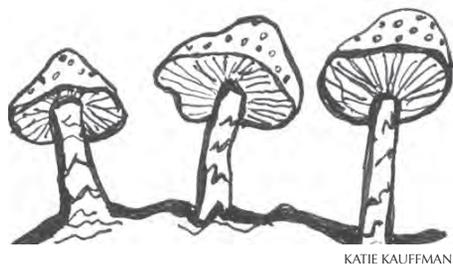
When World War II ended and the Japanese colonial powers withdrew from the Korean Peninsula, Korea was divided by the occupying military powers of the United States and Russia. The Korean War from the point of view of (some people in) North Korea was about reunification of the peninsula. From the point of view of the United States (and many people in South Korea), it was one of the first global fights against communism. Diane pointed out how the anti-communism in the United States at that time scared the growing middle class into compliance.

My mother was raised middle class, my father owning class, and both of them were young people during the Korean War. Because of the U.S. involvement in Korea, my parents, like many South Koreans, immigrated to the United States, where our family was set up to play a middle-agent role.

In Korea, both of my parents had gone to university. My father had gotten a bachelor’s degree, and my mom both a bachelor’s and a master’s degree (but all in the context of a male-dominated society—her bachelor’s degree was in home economics and her master’s was in costume history). My dad had been in the South Korean diplomatic corps for the first nine years of my life, but then he quit and wanted to go to graduate school in the United States, so my mom worked.

Like many Asian immigrants who were middle class or professionals in their home country, my mom didn’t have access to professional jobs in the United States. She got a

³ “Middle-agent role” means role of being a visible agent of the oppressive society.



job at a friend’s store in a poor African American neighborhood in the south side of Chicago. Later she bought the store and ran it for thirty years until she retired. Hers was the sole income for our family, because my dad basically never worked again.

Through our Korean church and her network of school friends, my mom had access to information and support from other Korean immigrants running small businesses. She didn’t bank in the neighborhood where the store was located, she hired Korean managers, and we lived in a different neighborhood—first one that was mainly immigrants and later in mostly white suburbs.

I felt bad about the store. I felt like we were in a privileged position and an oppressive role toward the people whose neighborhood we were in. I didn’t have information about the middle-agent role. I didn’t know that we were not just oppressors, that we were also being set up to occupy a niche in the middle—both benefiting from the situation and benefiting others.

(Some people might not know that U.S. immigration laws were changed in 1965 in a way that initially favored middle-class professionals. Thus a lot of immigrants from Asia in the 1970s and 1980s were highly educated and/or middle class in their home countries. In the United States, Asians were pitted against other people of color and held up as the model minority, but their economic “success” was partly due to this stacking of the odds in immigration laws.)

Partly because I saw my mother do all the unpaid work of parenting and housekeeping and then all the work of earning an income, I’ve always thought that women do all the work. Diane’s piece on unpaid labor was very helpful. It helped me see that capitalism runs on women’s unpaid labor. Any struggle for class liberation has to address unpaid labor and value unpaid labor. We all get to value unpaid labor.

I liked the emphasis on collective action. Middle-class conditioning makes us separated and isolated, and the oppression of women tells us that our problems are individual, so it’s doubly important to organize collectively.

I also liked the idea that things don’t happen without a struggle and that we have to learn to fight, including in relationships. We can stop being “nice” and “good” and decide to take on⁴ fights.

JeeYun Lee
Chicago, Illinois, USA
Reprinted from the RC e-mail
discussion list for leaders of women

⁴ “Take on” means engage in.

Information, Perspectives, and Challenges

I attended the Middle-Class Women's Workshop¹ last weekend, and my mind is still buzzing with the information, perspectives, and challenges.

Diane² talked about how as middle-class females we have had to compromise our integrity. She insisted that we be fully honest with ourselves about the compromises we have made to have a middle-class life or to earn middle-class wages. It is not our fault that we have compromised—everyone is compromised under this system—but we cannot move forward until we allow ourselves to see and admit the truth.

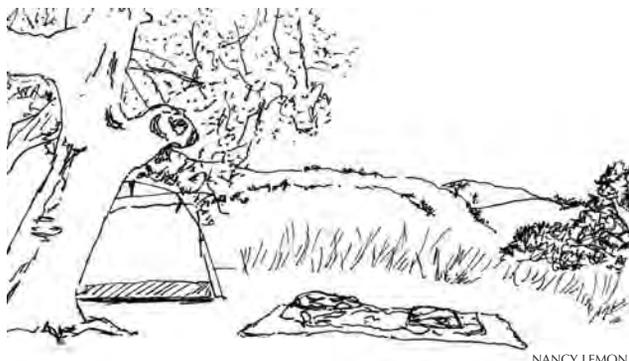
She spoke frequently about individualism—how it's the price we pay to be, or remain, in the middle class. She talked about how individualism makes it hard for us to have people in close, or even notice when they are. It makes us settle for individual gains or comfort instead of holding out for collective gains in collective struggles.

Diane insisted that working to eliminate classism and working to eliminate sexism and male domination can't be separated. The oppression of females was set up as a prop to support classism, and the two oppressions have remained intimately intertwined ever since. I have spent much of my time in RC doing middle-class liberation work—learning, leading, organizing—all completely disconnected from women's liberation work. I am unwilling for this divide to continue, *and* I don't have much of an idea about how to do things differently. I will continue discharging and thinking to sort this out.

Leslie Kausch
Greensboro, North Carolina, USA
Reprinted from the RC e-mail
discussion list for leaders of women

¹ A workshop held in Baltimore, Maryland, USA, in February 2015

² Diane Balser, the International Liberation Reference Person for Women and the leader of the workshop



NANCY LEMON

Not Easy but Good

This was a hard workshop¹ for me in many ways. I am a mixed-heritage Black and white USer, and women of the global majority were less than ten percent of the workshop. In such a white group I had to face the pain I have experienced around assimilation. I have had to do a lot of pretending, hiding myself, and other difficult things to grow up and function in mostly white environments. Because I now live in a place with a lot of Black people, and have a lot of Black friends in my life, I hadn't realized how much more there is for me to discharge here.

It helped so much that Diane² kept issues of racism and imperialism central. That made it safer for me to be honest—to stop pretending that I am “fine,” as I was taught to do. Because there were mostly white middle-class U.S. women at the workshop, I was able to notice how hard I am on myself for not being more “successful” or upwardly mobile. It was good to get to be honest about these feelings and to have other women of color to share them with.

I was able to discharge about being a mixed-heritage woman born in the 1970s. From a young age I felt tremendous pressure to be an example for my race, to do great things, and to succeed. I am now in my forties and divorced and have no children, so as a middle-class woman I feel like I must have an impressive job or career or I am truly a failure.

It was interesting to discharge about unpaid work. I realized that I actually feel guilty for not doing more unpaid work, due to the same message that somehow I am not doing enough as a woman.

Being at this workshop forced me to consider that I must be a completely good woman, even if I never achieve or accomplish anything again and even if I never have a partner or a child. I think it will change everything for me if I can know how good I am, and really like myself, just how I am—totally independent of these things.

It was not easy work, but it was good work, and I appreciate Diane and everyone else who helped us get started.

Alysia Tate
Chicago, Illinois, USA
Reprinted from the RC e-mail
discussion list for leaders of women

¹ The Middle-Class Women's Workshop, held in Baltimore, Maryland, USA, in February 2015

² Diane Balser, the International Liberation Reference Person for Women and the leader of the workshop

From an Indian-Heritage Woman

I felt a mild confusion, numbness, and disconnectedness at the workshop.¹ I kept wandering off and had to remind myself to keep in close with specific people. I figured it must be middle-class patterns surfacing, because of the workshop and because I was with predominantly white Protestant women, a group I grew up around.

I noticed women smiling a lot when it didn't always make sense to me. When a white Protestant woman got to discharge her rage about sexism, it made me feel safe. I wanted that for every woman in the room—to fight that big.

I am an Indian-heritage User in my thirties with a mixed-class background. After Diane's² demonstration with a woman in her thirties on marriage, I realized that I had never really believed I could choose not to get married. The demonstration reminded me

that I could decide to not get married ever, and live a full, great life. It reminded me how much sexism attempts to dictate how I feel and think. I still carry heavy recordings³ from the false message that as a woman my life is not complete unless I enter into the institution of marriage.

Diane asked this large group of women, "Who here has done work as an activist on the unpaid labor of mothers?" Not one woman raised her hand. Wow! It highlighted how severely sexism and internalized sexism make us dismiss the value of our and other women's work. Our economic system relies on the unpaid labor of mothers. If all the mothers on the planet organized together to fight this oppression, the system would crumble. It could not survive.

My middle-class patterns have not "protected" or "saved" me from being poor. There were times at the workshop when I felt bad about my current poverty and being one of the few women there

who were poor. But my mixed-class background and experience also helped me notice more clearly the confusions we middle-class women have about what it means to have a "good life": economic "security," upward mobility, and not working hard. In reality, there is no real security, work is inherently good (not oppression, but work), and upward mobility isolates people from each other.

I interrupted racism a few times; it felt safe enough to do that. And it was awesome having an Indian-heritage support group to discharge with. I felt urgent sometimes about "protecting" other women of the global majority from white women's racism and "fixing" or interrupting other oppressions. I get to discharge on the terror underlying the urgency and figure out how to trust my mind and show up, mistakes and all, while still being close in with my fellow women.

Anu Yadav

Washington, D.C., USA

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

¹ A workshop held in Baltimore, Maryland, USA, in February 2015

² Diane Balsler, the International Liberation Reference Person for Women and the leader of the workshop

³ Distress recordings

Female, Jewish, and Middle-Class

I was privileged to lead the Middle Class Women's Liberation Workshop.¹ It was the first of its kind, and all of us were at the edge of our material.² Here are a few of the things we did and talked about:

We put class and female oppression at the heart of the workshop, and each group of us worked from where we had experienced these two oppressions.

Class exploitation underlies all oppressions. Sexism and male domination have been a primary prop

of class societies. Anti-Jewish oppression has served as the model diversion from ending class oppression.

Women's work in the home, including reproduction, is unpaid. Jewish women have also been responsible for the survival of the Jewish people and under great pressure to get married and reproduce.

Women targeted by racism talked about how they'd become middle class to try to escape from the brutality of racism only to endure a different kind of racism, and were open about the compromises they'd had to make.

¹ A workshop held in Baltimore, Maryland, USA, in February 2015

² "Material" means distress.

My white Jewish parents entered into the middle class for safety and security, to escape from the destructive patterns resulting from the Holocaust. The price our family paid was disconnection from who we really were, and a kind of isolation.

I had all the women be proud of their accomplishments as middle-class women (school, jobs, and so on). Many of the accomplishments had been made possible by the women's movement and the fight of Jews to not be excluded from U.S., Canadian, Australian, and Mexican societies (the countries of the women who attended the workshop).

Most of the women were white Gentiles (a lot of them Protestants). They worked on their middle-agent female jobs³ as social workers, teachers, administrators. The pretense and patterned unreality were heavy. In one demonstration a woman had to scream, cry, and fight

³ "Middle-agent" female jobs" means female jobs as visible agents of the oppressive society.

to pierce her way through the picture she'd had that she was "doing good" in her jobs, to see that in fact she had taken them to earn a decent salary for her family and that in doing them she was controlling and covering up society's destruction of poor and working-class people and people targeted by racism.

Middle-class people, including middle-class women, are not supposed to rock the boat.⁴ Many Jewish middle-class women have become activists and stirred the pot⁵ and have thus been considered not truly female, as that is not what females are supposed to do.

*Shabbat shalom,*⁶

Diane Balsler

International Liberation

Reference Person for Women

Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts, USA

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

⁴ "Rock the boat" means upset the status quo.

⁵ "Stirred the pot" means stirred things up.

⁶ *Shabbat shalom* means "may you have a peaceful Sabbath."



Already Thinking More Clearly



I am a white Gentile USer. In the weeks before the Middle-Class Women's Workshop¹ I couldn't remember my connections to any of the women who would be there. When I got there, I felt alone and feared it had been a mistake to come. I was reminded of middle school, where internalized sexism had divided me from other middle-class females through pressure about our appearance, fighting over boyfriends, and so on. On Saturday I discharged heavy terror, and by that night I could tell² that I liked the other women and felt close to the group. I laughed a lot.

In the end, being with a hundred and thirty middle-class women—including women from Mexico, Canada, Australia, and the United Kingdom; women of the global majority; and many young adult women—contradicted the early isolation that is the basis for my agreeing to give up my mind and integrity as a middle-class woman. (However, as Diane points out, none of us can have complete integrity under capitalism, because the system lacks integrity.)

Diane did a demonstration with a white Gentile U.S. woman about her job and the middle-agent role³ that many of us middle-class women play. It showed how our early material⁴ sets us up and how we can face it, discharge it, and give up pretense about our role in the world. My mind now has some space to look at my role as support staff at an owning-class university, where my work helps people to stay or become owning class.

Diane held out that we can decide to completely value women's work and unpaid labor, including the work of RC leadership. This is helping me to be in charge of my agenda and efforts in the world and to value myself and my female mind, which will make me more effective in fighting for liberation. I am already thinking and communicating more clearly, directly, and powerfully.

Sarah Harre

Somerville, Massachusetts, USA

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

¹ A workshop held in Baltimore, Maryland, USA, in February 2015, led by Diane Balsler, the International Liberation Reference Person for Women

² "Tell" means notice, see.

³ "Middle-agent role" means role of being the visible agents of the oppressive society.

⁴ "Material" means distress.

Mujeres Católicas de Clase Media

En el Taller de Mujeres de la Clase Media¹, lideré una mesa para mujeres católicas.

En la mesa, hablé sobre como veo que el material católico² se colude con el de la clase media, sobre todo en lo que se refiere a cometer errores. Cuando cometemos un error es común tener sentimientos de vergüenza, miedo y culpa. Le pregunté al grupo. ¿Qué pasaría si sesionáramos sobre nuestros errores y dijéramos con orgullo nuestros errores más grandes? Hubo muchas risas por la propuesta.

También hablamos de nuestro material como opresoras. Una forma de trabajar sobre este material es observarlo sin tratar de justificarlo e ir a los recuerdos más tempranos en que actuamos de forma opresiva y cambiar la decisión de actuar opresivamente. Comenté que, a menudo, al actuar nuestro material opresor, hemos experimentado una sensación de poder y que debemos regresar a esos momentos en nuestras sesiones y desahogar estos sentimientos para poder pensar mejor y no asumir posiciones incorrectas que nos hagan actuar de forma opresiva.

Cuando hicimos una ronda sobre el tema, pude observar cuántas veces justificamos el actuar de forma opresiva. Casi todos los recuerdos que compartimos fueron sobre etapas tempranas de nuestra vida, de situaciones con nuestras hermanas y hermanos. Muchas de nosotras dijimos que, al hablar de estas cosas allí, nos sentíamos como si fuéramos a confesarnos, pero haber tenido la oportunidad de compartir nuestras luchas y “confesarnos” entre mujeres fue una gran contradicción³ a cómo nos hemos sentido solas con estos sentimientos de vergüenza y culpa.

Dulce Cisneros
México, D.F., México
Tomado de la lista de discusiones de líderes de Católicos

¹ Taller que se llevó a cabo a las afueras de Washington, D.C., EE.UU., en febrero de 2015

² “Material católico” significa nuestras angustias como católicas.

³ Contradicción a la angustia.

English translation of the preceding article:

Middle-Class Women Catholics

At the Middle-Class Women’s Workshop,¹ I led a table for Catholic women.

I spoke about what I see in Catholic material² that colludes with middle-class material, specifically in regard to making mistakes. When we make a mistake, common feelings are shame and fear of blame. At times we don’t want anyone to know about our mistakes, precisely because of those two feelings. I asked the group, “What would happen if we went over³ our mistakes in sessions, if we proudly stated our biggest errors?” There was a lot of laughter.

We also talked about our oppressor material. One way of working on it is to observe it without justifying it and then go to the early memories of acting oppressively and change our decision to act that way. I said that we had often experienced a type of power when we had acted out our oppressor material, and that we have to go back and discharge the feelings so we can think better and not take the incorrect position of acting oppressively in the future.

We then did a go-around about this, and I observed that many times we justified acting oppressively. Almost all of the memories we shared were early ones, with our brothers and sisters. Many of us felt in the sharing like we were going to confession. But showing our struggles and “confessing” among women was a big contradiction⁴ to how we had felt alone with the feelings of shame.

Dulce Cisneros
Mexico, D.F., Mexico
Translated by *Dulce Cisneros*
Reprinted from the RC e-mail discussion list for leaders of Catholics

¹ A workshop held in Baltimore, Maryland, USA, in February 2015

² “Material” means distress.

³ “Went over” means talked about.

⁴ Contradiction to distress



KATIE KAUFFMAN

A Groundbreaking Workshop

At first the Middle-Class Women's Workshop* felt heavy and hard. But when I began to realize how terrorized we all have been as middle-class women, it got easier. And we were all there together, working on it with such a courageous leader.

Diane was surprised that we had tried to do the work on class oppression without including the work on sexism and male domination. I realized that I must look at my life as a female first and then at how the middle-class oppression came in on top of that. She pointed out that middle-class women's gains have mostly been individual. We haven't had a collective voice because of our isolation. We have to prioritize connecting and doing the work together, and we have to look at internalized sexism in order to do that.

Each demonstration showed a different part of middle-class women's oppression and how complex and varied middle-class women are as a group. The demonstrations with global majority women made me think about how deeply colonization and assimilation have hurt me and my people. Looking at them through the lens of middle-class oppression makes sense. They are weapons of the class system, and the middle class is there to enforce them.

We heard about the history of U.S. imperialism in Korea, and I thought about my West Asian family and how U.S. and European imperialism forced them to leave Syria and Lebanon. They were part of the middle class in Egypt, agents of the French colonizers. When they arrived in the United States they were forced into the working class, and they worked hard to get back into the middle class, which they saw as their means of survival and the way to avoid racism. The pressure on me—as one of the next generation, born in the United States—was immense. They sacrificed “everything” for me to “succeed.”

It was a groundbreaking workshop, and I am happy to be part of this brave and loving group of women.

Mary Toutonghi
Seattle, Washington, USA
Reprinted from the RC e-mail
discussion list for leaders of women

* A workshop held in Baltimore, Maryland, USA, in February 2015, led by Diane Balser, the International Liberation Reference Person for Women

More Reflections on the Middle-Class Women's Workshop

So much happened at the Middle-Class Women's Workshop¹ that it's taken me a few days to decide what I want to say.

I am a woman who's been leading middle-class liberation work for twenty-five years, and it has been a shock to realise how much I have *not* addressed women's liberation and to what extent I have kept the two sorts of work separate.

At the workshop, women introduced themselves standing up in front in groups: women targeted by racism, young adult women, Jewish women, Catholic women, women from outside the United States, then white

Protestant women. Because I had gone with women from outside the United States, I was sitting and watching when the white Protestant women stood up. I looked at that line of powerful, intelligent women and noticed as they introduced themselves that most of them muttered and did not look pleased or proud. Most importantly they looked alone, as if they were talking to themselves. Heartbreaking. Later I got together with a small group of white Protestant women to think about how to go forward. We had rounds to clarify our thinking. I said that we needed to discharge oppressor material² in order to get back our pleased faces. When we are able to

continued . . .

¹ A workshop held in Baltimore, Maryland, USA, in February 2015, led by Diane Balser, the International Liberation Reference Person for Women

² “Material” means distress.

LIBERATION

... continued

be pleased with ourselves, we will be a contradiction to internalised anti-Jewish oppression and internalised racism. Jews and people of the global majority will feel a lot safer around us. They will have a bit of hope in our ability to listen.

In watching demonstrations on the cost of upward mobility, I was struck by everyone's honesty and what the people of colour, immigrants, and women raised poor or working class had had to do to get into the middle class and stay there. It was awful to hear about all the one-way listening (to ignorant people like me) they had had to do.

Diane said that one of the earliest distress recordings many women carry is the feeling that we don't exist. Our caretaking and pleasing-others role is often predetermined before we are even born. Then when we grow up and are in oppressor roles, we can fall into making others invisible.



LANCE CABLK

When we are in middle-agent roles³ in the service sector—whose purpose in the capitalist system is to contain and manage the damaging effects of oppression—our training as women makes it hard for us to notice that we have been co-opted. All we can see is that we are trying to help. In fact, she said, “Our job is to be fighters.”

Diane said that middle-class material can disconnect us from our own struggles, since to be in the middle class we are required to look as if we aren't struggling. In some ways I have fallen for that,⁴ putting my liberation as a woman aside to “get on with the job” (a common white Protestant recording⁵).

A piece of the work on class has to be discharging on unpaid labour. Diane talked about how capitalism has always depended on the unpaid labour of women. As capitalism disintegrates and becomes more openly cynical and punishing, women are under pressure to do even more unpaid work. She reminded us that the RC Communities are mainly female, that women do an enormous amount of unpaid work in RC, and that we need to value it.

She also said that part of becoming middle class is disconnecting from oneself as a worker. When I was a union representative in a university, I noticed that when members were in trouble with management they were always surprised and hurt, because they didn't realise they were workers. This was especially true of the women.

A woman at the workshop who was a nanny had difficulty seeing her job as a real one. This was partly because of the low pay, lack of feedback, and no contract (very much like being a mother).

So it now seems to me that I have learnt two important things from this workshop: (1) that the work on class must include thinking about women's unpaid labour—how to both value what we do and resist the inequality and oppression that usually go with it, and will probably increase as capitalism disintegrates, and (2) that my commitment to end class oppression cannot and must not be separated from my commitment to end my oppression as a woman. If I allow a wedge between the two, sexism and male domination will rush into that gap, as has so often happened in past revolutions.

Caroline New
Bristol, England

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

³ “Middle-agent roles” means roles of being the visible agents of the oppressive society.

⁴ “Fallen for that” means allowed myself to succumb to that.

⁵ Distress recording

Women Are Key to Transforming Society

Before the Middle-Class Women's Workshop,¹ I imagined that men would be the major characters in transforming capitalism into a system based on what humans need. Diane² helped me realize that it will be females acting collectively that will make things right. We will be key to the transformation. We have the knowledge, will, and connections.

I love picturing all of us women around the world standing up and saying what needs to happen. To do

¹ A workshop held in Baltimore, Maryland, USA, in February 2015

² Diane Balsler, the International Liberation Reference Person for Women and the leader of the workshop

that effectively, we can no longer dismiss or ignore women's liberation. I was surprised to once again face how much I want to ignore it.

We can start by valuing unpaid work. (Diane clarified the difference between appreciating unpaid work and valuing it.) We often regard RC work as "extra." This is an effect of capitalism—work is seen as less important if it doesn't make a profit. It's also a function of sexism, because much of the work in the RC Communities is regarded as "women's work."

It can be hard for men to value the work we do as RC leaders, because to play their role in capitalism they have been heavily conditioned

to believe that paid work equals value.

It would be another step for us to communicate that the RC work we do is not just important to us individually; it's at least as important to our families and communities. When I describe RC and my RC work, I can say that I play an important role. I can help people value it. I can even tell them that they benefit from my work! I will need sessions on my internalized oppression.

I have many more thoughts—but also a lot of unpaid work to do!

Holly Jorgenson

Madison, Wisconsin, USA

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

A Composite of All the Languages

My conjecture would be that the human beings of the future will all speak one language but that it will have five thousand times as many words as any language has at this point because it will be a composite of all the languages. I think that each present language has in it such beautiful inventions, such exquisite achievements, that we cannot afford to part from them, and I think that happy children in our liberated future will soak up a thousand languages with great ease.

We know that languages do not remain static, that they are in continual change, and that what are often scorned and called dialects are really new languages in emergence. This world language will be a composite and will continue to grow and change.

I don't think that there is any one language in sight that would suffice. I think they are all too rich to give up. But that is only my guess, and I am no linguist.

Harvey Jackins

From *The Benign Reality*, pages 45 to 46

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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, 2014, and 2015 four-CD sets are also available to anyone, for \$25 per set, while supplies last.

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the perspective of ending racism

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BETH CRUISE

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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 are hurt into playing a destructive role, and how they can recover their full humanness using Re-evaluation Counseling.

“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.”

\$3.00
plus postage and handling

Ordering information on page 110

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

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/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>. 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.

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

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/sustainingalllife>.