

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.

Welcome to another excellent issue of *Present Time*—with articles by and about Muslims, Black people, elders, young people, and many other groups and on topics ranging from class issues to connection, from climate change to Ebola.

We'd like to hear from others of you! For the April *Present Time*, please send us articles and poems by Tuesday, February 17. If you have changes to the back-pages lists, we'll need them by Monday, February 23.

Lisa Kauffman, editor

719 2nd Avenue North, Seattle, Washington 98109, USA • publications@rc.org

CONTENTS

Moving Working-Class Issues Forward in RC, Tim Jackins, 3-5
Counseling Practice—6-22

A Time for Hope, Barbara Love, 6

A Dose of Reality, Tresa Elguera, 6

Connection, Disconnection, Reconnection, and Liberation, Xabi Odrizola, 7-11

How to Be a Hero (poem), Jim DuBois, 11

A discussion about responsibility, several people, 12-14

Applications Flexible and Creative, Harvey Jackins, 13

No Substitute for Thinking, Harvey Jackins, 14

When in War—Play!! שחקו! – במלחמה, Tal Mizrahi, 15-16

The Ebola Crisis, Anne Greenwald and Steve Bromer, 17-18

Thinking and Discharging About Ebola, Marsha Saxton, 18-19

"Hearing Voices," Diane Shisk and Janet Foner, 20-21

A Diaspora Sister's Caring, Becky Shuster, 21

Love Others First, Harvey Jackins, 21

Quiet Thinking Time, Richard Kramer, 22

Patterns Make You Forget, Harvey Jackins, 22

Keeping in Contact with Young People, Tim Jackins, 22
Liberation—23-52

The First RC Muslim Workshop, Nazish Riaz, 23-24

A Deep and Precious Gift, Khadija Shaw, 24

A Great Space to Feel Safe, Persheng Vaziri, 25

My First All-Muslim Workshop, Leyla Modirzadeh, 25

From a Muslim Man, Anonymous, 26

Quote by Harvey Jackins, 26

Giving Up a Life-Threatening Addiction to Sugar, Susanne Langer, 27-29

I can't breathe (poem), Dr. Rodney Coates

Discharging Humiliation, Steve Brown, 29

Creating a Clear Vision for Our Liberation as We Eliminate Racism, Gregory Lipscomb, 30-31

Facing Sexual Objectification, Alima Adams, 32

"It Revealed Myself to Me," S.J. Shashikala (Shashi), 32-33

Staying Counselor, Harvey Jackins, 33

Tackling Classism Together, several people, 34-36

A Great Web of Falsehood, Harvey Jackins, 36

An Elders' Liberation Workshop, Pam Geyer, 37-38

"Here Come the Elders!" Laurie Summers, 38-39

My Goals for Elders, Pam Geyer, 39

A Wonderful Young Jews Workshop, "Bobby Tamara," 40-41

Young Jews Challenging Internalized Oppression, Alana Eichner, 42

Women and "the Middle East," Stephanie Abraham, 43

Creativity, Harvey Jackins, 43

Making RC Accessible to Young People, Mari Piggott, 44-46

Realizing the Effects of the Camps, Mary Ruth Gross, 47

Working on Oppressor Material, Karl Lam, 47-49

Wisdom from a Raised-Poor and Working-Class Workshop, Deb Icely, 49

Facing and Discharging on Sexism, Erin Mansell, 50

Calling on All Catholic Women of the Global Majority! Bo-Young Lim, 51-52

Wide World Changing—53-71

Organizing Domestic Workers, Jennileen Joseph, 53-56

Keep Putting Out Good Policy, Harvey Jackins, 56

The People's Climate March, Dorothy Marcy, 57-58

Following the Leadership of Native Peoples, Jack Manno, 59

Things Are Changing, Jenny Szazama, 60

A Favorable Situation, Harvey Jackins, 60

A Listening Project at the Bristol Climate Change March, Caroline New, 61

This Is How a Movement Is Built! Nancy Faulstich, 62-63

Answering the Question "What Do You Do?" Dan Nickerson, 63

The Healing Power of Action, Rosa Blumenfeld, 64

Speaking Up, "Lucy Lupo," 65

Ready to Fight, Harvey Jackins, 65

Perhaps We Could Do Something Big, John Braxton, 66-67

Sustaining All Life, Ending Classism, Ending War, Julian Weissglass, 67-68

'We Can Do This!' Nancy Faulstich, 68-69



The Origins of Oppression and the Discipline of Hope,

Brian Smeaton and Dan Nickerson, 69-70

Listening, Learning, and Discharging, Christine Selig, 71

Cooperation More Effective, Harvey Jackins, 71

Appreciating *Present Time*—74

Teaching, Leading, Community Building—75-84

What to Think About as We Set Up Our Lives, Jamie Irwin, 75-77

Reaching People in Time, Harvey Jackins, 77

"A Wonderful Weekend," Apollo Ssemwogerere Vvubya, 78

Gratitude for RC, Joyce Herman, 78

Moving Forward by Discharging Old Disappointments and Defeats, several people, 79-80

Thinking About the Group as a Whole, Harvey Jackins, 80

A Workshop on Israel and Palestine, Elizabeth Shefrin, 81

Technological Devices at Workshops, Julian Weissglass and Mari Piggott, 82-83

Whom Should We Invite? Harvey Jackins, 83

"Let's Do It," Michael Levy, 84

Action Needed, Harvey Jackins, 84

RC on the Internet—86-88

Information Coordinators—89-91

Publications—92-98, 100-104

Translation Coordinators—99

CDs—105-106

Videocassettes and DVDs—107-109

Ordering Information—110

Present Time Subscriptions—111

Reference Persons for Organized Areas—112-115

International Reference Persons, International Liberation Reference

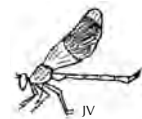
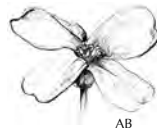
Persons, International Commonality Reference Persons, and the Re-evaluation Foundation—116

Teachers in Developing Communities—117-122

Re-evaluation Counseling Contacts—123-124

Workshops—125-126

Index—127



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Moving Working-Class Issues Forward in RC

From a talk by Tim Jackins¹ at a small working-class workshop in Seattle, Washington, USA, November 2014

Welcome. You are here because you have thought about or been connected in some way to the working class. Of course you are not the only people who could be in this group—there are at least two or three times as many. And though you are wonderful, picking this group wasn't about selecting "the best"—it was about having a solid, good group that could begin this work.

You are experienced people committed to RC, committed to using RC ideas and not allowing distress to stop your mind. You have that theoretical commitment and you put it into practice, almost always. Because you have this background and some experience with, connection to, and commitment to class issues, you are a good group in which to figure out next steps together.

We've talked about class from early on in RC. All of us have tried to work on it, and all of us feel less than happy about the efforts we have made. We want to figure out more. We want to figure out how to be more effective—in particular, how to think more clearly about working-class issues.

CHALLENGING CLASS OPPRESSION

We live in a well-developed state of capitalism that depends on class distinctions. And, here in the United States, we live in a version of it that tries to muffle and blur those distinctions, as if they are not important. At the same time, capitalism has developed all these other oppressions, all these other ways of mistreating people, that keep people hurt, restimulated, and alienated from each other. Over the years we have come to better understand many of these oppressions and have figured out how to take them on.² We still have a lot of work to do, but we're not so confused. We know the work is not done, but we know we are going to do it. We know how to continue. That the work will be done is assured at this point.



LANCE CABLK

The other oppressions have made class issues hard to grapple with. We are aware of the issues, and yet we all have difficulty. In particular, we have difficulty building working-class RC. How do we get RC ideas to the people who function in the working class every day? How do we build an RC Community with these people at its center? There have been successes, and everyone has played good roles or we wouldn't be this far, yet we want more.

I have a hard time thinking about it, and it looks like just about everybody else has a hard time thinking about it, too. What I notice about our confusion is that we simply don't know what to do next. We wait for something—something better, some better situation, someone else.

One of the problems for this group comes from having been in RC a long time. We're all already committed to certain pieces of the project. Our time is overcommitted. If we were starting with class issues and it was thirty years ago, something different would happen. It may be late for us to fully take this on. Maybe the next generations of RCers—people who haven't yet fully made their time commitments, who aren't yet fully obligated to things they care deeply care about—need to do it.

If other people take leadership of this project, what role can we play to support them? We have knowledge, experience, and the ability to provide backing³ in many ways. What role can we play? Maybe we have to put aside things we are already good at and do things we are not so good at. There are a lot of different questions. I think we have to figure out what gets in the way of our minds on this issue. What are the distresses that have us here at this point and not further along?

The reason a lot of us have working-class issues in our minds at all is because of my father.⁴ Working-class RC

continued . . .

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

² "Take them on" means confront and do something about them.

³ "Backing" means support.

⁴ Harvey Jackins, the founder and first International Reference Person of the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities

... continued

exists as clear as it is because his mind was clear about it. He had no doubt about it—because of his experience, because he had actually been part of class struggles. He had faced and lived through them and learned to handle them in a way that was crystal clear. He could communicate about them and not waver. I don't think that's as true for a lot of us. We know about and believe the ideas, but we haven't lived them in the same way. We have tried to duplicate something for which we haven't had as solid a foundation in our lives. We haven't known the same things or had the same experiences my father did. We have tried to bridge over our distresses and lack of knowledge to make something happen. Sometimes we have tried to do more than we knew how to do, because we wanted it to be done.

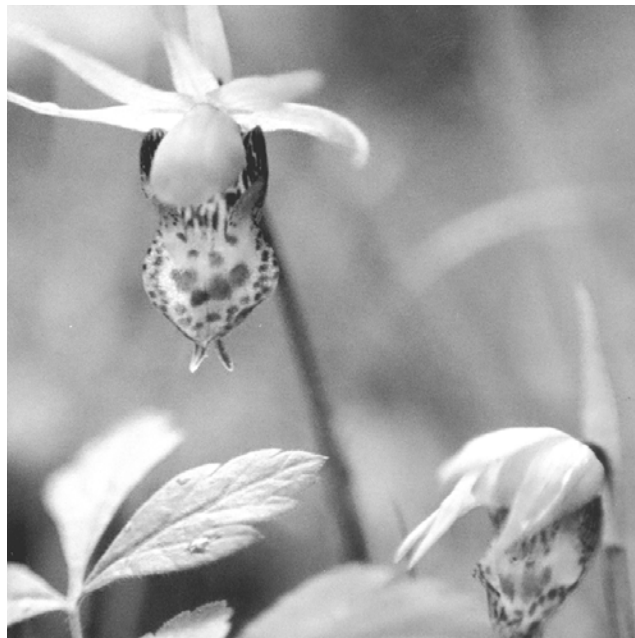
It's not surprising that class oppression is hard. It's the fundamental oppression in our society. We've all lived in it every single day of our lives. All the other oppressions are built on top of it. We understand some of these other oppressions fairly well, but we still don't think well about class. This weekend I'd like us to look at everything, every piece of distress, that stops our thinking about it. It will mingle with all the other oppressions—with racism, with genocide toward Native peoples, with sexism, with anti-Jewish oppression—because those oppressions are there to support it.

SHOWING OUR MINDS

As we explore this, we will need all of our minds fully involved and out in the open. We're not used to functioning with others without being careful about what we say, without hiding our difficulties. It's fine that we have difficulties. It's fine that we have oppressive material.⁵ It's all right not to hide our distresses here. None of us is terribly vulnerable, no matter what distresses anybody else has. We can all get restimulated, but nobody is in danger here of being mistreated. We need a space to show our minds and not have to pretty up everything⁶ or our thoughts won't get out fully. It's all right that we don't know things. It's all right that

⁵ "Material" means distress.

⁶ "Pretty up everything" means make everything nice and unthreatening.



BETH CRUISE

we struggle with things. It's all right that we have faulty ideas. We all do. It's part of thinking to have ideas that don't work. And we need the chance to try them out or we won't learn what works well. We actually have to go ahead and make mistakes.

It's still difficult for us to deal with behavior that is restimulating to us. We have a tendency to be upset at people's distress and use it as an excuse to act out our own material. Some of us, at least for a moment, end up feeling like we hate the person because he or she has been hurt and showed us the hurt in a restimulating way. This is a big confusion. It affects our relationship with that person and our picture of him or her. Nobody is to blame for the distresses he or she wears. *No relationship is going to work well unless we are delighted with the existence of the other person.* We can't build much unless we are delighted with that person's existence, even in the distressed form it is in. We have to take it all. And we have to be able to do that in order to fully show our minds to each other, and also have sessions fully. It has to be safe in that particular way—and it hasn't always been, particularly when oppression issues have been involved. So the first order of business here and now is to use the discharge process in that direction. We need to be able to trade thoughts openly in order to move working-class issues forward in RC. Let's do a mini-session.

LIVING IN AN UNWORKABLE SOCIETY

We live in a class society. Societies so far have always been class based, even when people tried to make them otherwise. They still ended up there. Even though individuals made good efforts, the distresses locked a structure in place so that nobody could think. No group has ever been able to think about everyone, or had the power to make things move in the interests of everyone. There have been good experiments, but distresses have always gotten in the way.⁷

In class societies, the group that produces all of the things necessary for life is controlled and exploited by another, much smaller

⁷ "Gotten in the way" means interfered.

group. The workers never receive a significant portion of the value they generate by their work. It goes somewhere else. As long as a capitalist society is expanding—pulling in more people to exploit, producing more things—it looks like it works. In an ever-expanding market, there is always somebody new to sell to and somebody new to exploit. Eventually, however, everybody has been exploited and there is nobody new left to squeeze, so the existing people have to be squeezed harder (our present-day situation). More people are forced down into poverty, and a smaller group rises higher and higher. This turns out to be⁸ unworkable. It simply cannot go on indefinitely—not because it’s hard and unjust and unfair and oppressive (which it is) but because it just doesn’t work. It doesn’t matter whether it is good or bad for any individual; the system itself has inherent built-in problems.

Our society is getting to this point. The difficulties are showing more and more clearly. More and more people are being driven closer and closer to the edge of survival. A large number of people are being pushed out of the working class into chronic unemployment and poverty.

FACING WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO US

All of us here have had some connection to the working class somewhere in our lives, and we have the patterns that come with being in that position. To enforce class divisions, certain distresses have to be installed on people so that they accept their position. They don’t have to be happy about it—they may be grumbling—but they have to accept their position. There aren’t enough guards to guard everyone unless the people guard themselves to some extent. All of us have been hurt in ways that keep us from going out of bounds, from challenging things past a certain point.

When we are young, we may think we can get away with going out of bounds.⁹ We are not tethered to lots of things, and we think we have time. Then, as we build our lives, we have more and more that we feel committed to, or trapped by, and it seems less possible to step free of those things and start clean. Few young people feel constrained in this way, but most older people do. How much is distress and how much is a new circumstance? It’s not clear, but it’s part of what we have to look at.

I want us to look at everything that has happened to us because of being working class, everything that has made us stop thinking about the big changes that need to happen, including in our individual lives. Things that

we have counted on having the rest of our lives, we may not have. It may be necessary to step away from a lot of things. My father, out of his revolutionary background, wanted young people to be the revolutionary cadre. That was what had always happened before, because the older people had been too burdened with distress. Young people remain the primary group able to push for change. However, we are the first older generation that has any choice in this. We’ve arrived at this age in good enough shape¹⁰ to play a different role than any large set of elders has before us. Can we play that role, or support the young people to play it? Well, if we can get these distresses moving, I suspect we can.

So where is your mind hampered by class material? It’s hard to face what we gave up on early. It isn’t just hard to face the feelings, it’s hard to show someone else how badly defeated we were. We’ve had to hold a defensive pose. This means that some heavy distress hasn’t gotten worked on fully, and a piece of that is about class.

¹⁰ “Shape” means condition.



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⁸ “Turns out to be” means results in being.

⁹ “Get away with going out of bounds” means successfully, without serious repercussions, go out of bounds.

A Time for Hope

These times that we live in are markedly a time for Hope.

The failure of grand juries in New York (New York, USA) and Missouri (USA) has served to highlight the continuing injustice provoked by racism in the United States.¹ Media attention to the treatment of people of the global majority, with a focus on immigration and the killing of Black men, has served to heighten the consciousness of many people of every race of their intention and desire to live in a society free of racism, a society characterized by justice, a society that works well for everyone.

Rather than being pulled to despair by the failure to indict, we get to remember that we still have a tool with which to heal the hurts of racism. This is a particularly good time to share this tool with other people. White people in particular want to be listened to about race and racism. Black people in particular want to be listened to about race and racism. People of every group want and deserve to be listened to about race and racism, about their individual history and the history of their group related to race and racism.

All of us get to discharge the hurts that keep us from noticing that we are in better shape² today than we have ever been in this country on the issue of race. I will not stack up the evidence to support this claim here. I encourage each of us to discharge what gets in the way of our own ability to notice the truth of this.

We have many reasons to be hopeful at this particular time in our history as a people. We each get to discharge whatever gets in the way of noticing this and being hopeful today.

*Barbara Love
International Liberation Reference
Person for African-Heritage People
Amherst, Massachusetts, USA*

¹ The two grand juries were convened to address the killings by white police officers of two unarmed Black men—Michael Brown, in Ferguson, Missouri, and Eric Garner, in Staten Island, New York—and both failed to indict the officers.

² “Shape” means condition.

A Dose of Reality

I’ve been thinking about Ferguson¹ and our listening projects.² Yesterday morning I went out and made contact with people, and I was pleased but also wanted to do more.

Then a Co-Counselor sent me a text of himself in a shirt that said “Black Men Are Good.” He had made the shirts to raise money for a black men’s project. I decided to make a donation and bought a whole bunch of them. And this morning my best friend and I each wore a shirt over our winter coats and gave them out to people as we walked our children to school.

Oh, the looks on people’s faces. Older black men, in particular, picked up their step a bit. The second grade teacher I went out of my way to find looked like he would’ve burst into tears if his class hadn’t been standing there. I wish I could afford a million of these shirts and give them out every time I walk down the street. They created a nice opportunity to listen to people, but mostly they just offered a contradiction³ and a dose of a reality.

*Tresa Elguera
Brooklyn, New York, USA
Reprinted from the RC e-mail discussion
list for leaders of wide world change*

¹ Ferguson is a suburb of St. Louis, Missouri, USA. Last August, a white Ferguson police officer shot and killed an unarmed black teenager. This led to many protests in Ferguson and around the country against that killing as well as the ongoing police brutality directed at black people. In November, a county grand jury failed to indict the officer, which led to further protests.

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

³ Contradiction to black men’s oppression



OIL PAINTING “VIEW FROM WHITE MOUNTAIN PEAK” • NANCY LEMON

Connection, Disconnection, Reconnection, and Liberation

*From talks given by Xabi Odriozola¹ at a series of workshops
on the East Coast of the United States, in summer 2014*

Some of us are people who understand the world, who love, who dream, who cry, who feel, who think, who shake, in languages different from English. And we are part of the RC Communities. You need us with you as much as we need you with us, because this project, which saved your life, lives in different languages, in different minds, and in different hearts, at the same time.

So we have interpreting not because someone doesn't know English, or because you do not speak Basque, my language, but because of something bigger than that. It is because all of us need to have everyone's mind, in the same rhythm, on the same road, at the same time, working on these same subjects together, if we want to move as a group in a certain direction. It is indispensable for the re-emergence of this group at this workshop that all the minds involved here have the same ideas to work on, the same information to think about, and the same time to discharge and re-evaluate, so that each of us can become a useful and real resource and contradiction² for the rest of us.

This is the important work of inclusion: not leaving anyone behind. It goes exactly against capitalism. If we understand it, we will move forward in new ways. Thanks to all of you, to all of us, revolution and re-emergence will happen today.

I will share something about my background. My main clan is the Bear; my tribes are Autrigoiak, Karistiarrak,

and Baskoiak. My father's lineage is the wolf and the strawberry tree, and my mother's lineage is the fir tree on the stony ground. My main totem is the Eagle.

I think it's a good choice to have a session about the Indigenous people that lived here; or about you having chosen me, an Indigenous man, as your leader today; or maybe about my English. Some of you know that I am the International Commonality Reference Person for Languages and Interpreting. You can see that I can't speak English correctly or fluently (and you can discharge about the possibility of my not needing to manage English in order to be your reference today). Some of you might expect me to be like the kind of leader you have in the United States—like Tim, Diane,³ and so on—and perhaps a lot of things you expect to happen will not happen today. Different things will happen that you will not like so much. (*laughter*) But they probably will change your perspective about the world from now on.

Why do I think it could be important that I share my perspective with you? Because I think it may be a little bit different from yours. Why do I think this? Because my people in my Indigenous country haven't been as interested as your people in conquering other countries. (*laughter, gradually, from the group*) We have been more occupied with figuring out together how to survive and share what we have than with how to take from others. I have learned from my culture what it is to be in community. I have a sense of knowing that prioritizing the group's needs before mine is a good strategy for survival.



BETH SHORTER

It's not that we don't have patterns. We do. But we've had enough connections between us and with Mother Earth to feel that what we have could be enough—enough for us not to go outside and take incessantly from others.

This doesn't make us better. But we know something about connection that may be interesting for people who have been forced to get disconnected, who have been longer and more deeply exposed to capitalism's and imperialism's patterns, who have needed to be disconnected in order not to feel how they've oppressed others. Or it may be interesting to people who have been strongly forced to assimilate in order to get disconnected so that they would not oppose oppression, which is in capitalism's interest.

continued . . .

¹ Xabi Odriozola is the International Commonality Reference Person for Languages and Interpreting and is the Regional Reference Person for the Basque Country.

² Contradiction to distress

³ Tim Jackins, Diane Shisk

COUNSELING PRACTICE

... continued

I want you to continually check what I say and decide what part of it is applicable to your life. If there is something useful, you can take it and use it. If not, if there is nothing helpful for you, this can be a nice way to spend a Sunday together.

CONNECTION AND REALITY

These are some of my ideas about the world from my Indigenous point of view. The way I understand, experience, live, and think about life comes from my parents, my ancestors, and other Basque Indigenous thinkers. You do not need to follow or accept my ideas. I prefer that you create your own and follow them.

We Basque people believe that what we call *Ortzi* (the Whole Universe) is passed on to us in the moment of conception. It includes a deep sense of being important and meaningful, of belonging to someone and to a species, to a group, to a place, and also a sense of being indispensable to the Whole Universe. This feeling of connection is the basic vital impulse we will use to bring to life the big decision to exist, and then it stays with us forever. (I can feel it every day, and every time I visit my mum and dad. They are still able to make me feel and notice this ancient certainty of being completely wanted, loved, appropriate, and important—to myself, to them, to the world, and to the Universe.)

I believe that this basic vital impulse is stored in our minds and can work as a reminder of the feelings from that crucial moment. I use it as an endless source of love, solidarity, power, courage, honesty, and compassion with which to go through life and to face everything that is going to happen. I think it provides us with the ability to transform every single situation into a re-emergent one.

The fewer distresses we accumulate, the easier it is to feel this impulse and this connection with everything.

What is the result of being connected? It's a smiling face. That's the way connected people feel inside: happy, satisfied, at peace. Connection gives us the intelligent capacity we need to accept a perspective about reality that does not include one single distress. We have defined reality as something *real*—something real that surrounds us and tells us that everything is just fine and logical. If we cannot experience this, it is not because the definition does not work but because some distress is in our way of noticing reality as it is: real. I think reality is what we experience when we are connected. And being connected can be a decision that we make consciously.

Before disconnection happened to us, early in our lives, we were naturally connected, to someone or to something. This means that we had an idea of what

love (connection is a component of love) can mean. We feel loved, or we love, feel solidarity, feel joy, and it's not an effort; it's something that comes out of us. It's a deep, natural happiness. We feel that we are all right, we are okay, and that people around us are okay, too. We feel like we want to be alive. And if we are dying, we would like to repeat life again. That's the situation of connection. We feel powerful and adequate in every situation. While connected, we feel that life is easy. It's something made for us, not something we need to do to get something. Life is easy and full of opportunities, not full of difficulties. (Difficulties become options, choices, or opportunities.)

When we are connected, it's difficult to confuse us about ourselves and difficult to manipulate us into doing things that are not human. We don't like to oppress anyone when we are connected, first of all because we don't accept oppressing ourselves. When we are connected, we don't accept any kind of bad treatment of ourselves or, as a result, of others. We feel that we are the creators, the designers, of our lives. Everything goes the way we want. We understand that all the things that happen are exactly right, are exactly what we need to learn about in order to grow more and more. When we feel connected, we don't believe our distresses! (*Everyone laughs joyfully.*) Actually we, and everyone, are just exactly fine and only have to connect to know our distresses are not true. I believe that all of us were this way before oppression came in.

I think that connecting with our basic vital impulse, getting it back and using it in our daily lives, can be a keystone for our moving forward as a group without any hesitation about who we really are and how deeply we care for each other.

How long is it that you haven't felt this way? Two minutes, two weeks, two years?



LANCE CABLIK

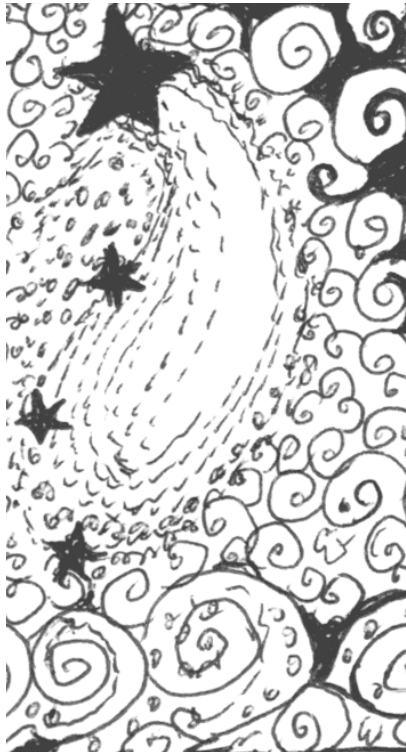
How long we can focus our attention on our basic vital impulse and use it (not only to contradict any distress but to stay in touch with human awareness and connection while we are living each second of our life) will determine if we live in reality or disconnected from it.

DISCONNECTION

Unfortunately, the process of growing up in a capitalist society is about disconnection. The process of socializing, that is to say, making us be a member of a society like this, is about making us into a profitable consumer-producer being. If we keep our sense of connection, this process cannot work at all, so the first priority of the oppressive society in relation to us is to disconnect us from our inherent connection.

This happens through the suppression of our discharge process. If we had been able to discharge after every single attack on our connection from the very beginning, we would not accept disconnection as the way things are, as the normal human situation. But disconnection happened so early, so systematically and frequently, and without the chance to discharge, that we did not have any option to avoid it and it became “normal.” It became part of our life and daily experience until it became our “second skin.” It’s the way it is with fish: the last thing a fish notices is the water surrounding it; it gets so accustomed to it that it doesn’t ever think about it. We do not think about our disconnection because it covers us every minute.

When we are disconnected, life is not something we want to live—it’s something we want to get through quickly. If we are dying, we don’t want to repeat life again. When we are disconnected from who we are, life is not a set of opportunities; it is a set of difficulties. We don’t feel powerful; we don’t feel adequate. The opportunities become difficulties—challenges that we don’t



KATIE KAUFFMAN

want to have because we do not feel like we can overcome them.

The most serious effect of being disconnected is that we are easily manipulated by capitalism, by oppression. It is much easier to convince us to accept oppressive or oppressed roles and endure hierarchy, injustice, and inequality. Then we reproduce the system, because we have lost our connection to ourselves, to our people, to our land, and to reality. The only way to be connected with reality is to be connected with ourselves. If we are not connected with ourselves, we will hardly see reality. And which kinds of policies will we build from disconnection, from something different from reality? We will collaborate with oppressive policies without realizing that we are pushing a disconnected plan. We will collaborate with capitalism.

When we are disconnected, we tend to think that the only way life can be different is by trying to change life.

But only trying to fix the “outside,” thinking that the problem only exists out there, does not address our disconnection from our real selves and from reality. Society continuously makes us forget that one of our main jobs is to try to switch from disconnection to connection (by decision and/or by discharging). Almost all of the conflicts in the world would not happen in the way they do if we remained connected. Most of them are a reflection of the distresses we humans carry inside our minds.

Question from the group: What does disconnection look like in most USers?

Xabi: I may be wrong, but here is my sense of it, in case it resonates with something in your mind and you can work on it:

- The rhythm of capitalism is faster than the rhythm connection requires.
- They have made you believe that it’s not correct to really look one another in the eyes.
- It’s also hard for you to be silent. You make noise so as not to feel the lack of connection.

EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP

Once we find the way to remain in connection, our perspective on ourselves, life, and the world changes. Our perspective on leadership changes, too. We understand that it is vital that we discharge on being disconnected if we want to be an effective model of facing the separation that people experience as human beings. We will be trusted and inspiring leaders if we work on our disconnection—one of the main reasons for the isolation that keeps us reproducing the oppressive system.

Life needs us connected, because the real power of being human lies in our inner connection.

continued . . .

COUNSELING PRACTICE

... continued

This has nothing to do with numbers or rushing or hurrying. It has to do with acknowledging that we are exactly right, and that reality is exactly right, and that we need to make this idea ours and anchor it in our minds and hearts so that we can lead effectively in the world. When I lead from this position, I notice that my theory and practice are not separate, and are not incoherent or confusing to my people, in or out of RC.

ASSIMILATION

A strategy the system uses to disconnect you is to delete your cultural legacy or background by making you forget where you came from and telling you that your history began at the point when you came here, to this imperialist country. The system claims that your memories before that moment are not important, that the welfare of the society starts in this system, and that the more you cooperate with the system and forget the past, the more important you'll become. Capitalism claims that if you are in this system, it is because you are superior to the people who are not.

But if you focus your attention and your sessions on your people and your roots, you will start to notice the disconnection that the system is trying to force on you. Something can't fit in your mind. For the system to fit in your mind, you need to be a slave to it. You

need to find a way to fit in that small "box." You cannot do both. You cannot be in this system and at the same time feel connected all the time. You may often feel that the system doesn't fit you, or that you don't fit the system, but you are conditioned to believe that this feeling is wrong and that not fitting is your fault, that the problem is you.

With the help of "mental health" oppression ("if you do not fit in this society, it is because there is something wrong with you"), you are conditioned to accept assimilation. You are conditioned to give up on who you really are and who your people are and adopt a new identity (which is inside the "box" of accepting the oppressive structure of society), with the delusion that in this way oppression will not fall on you. You start trying to look as similar as possible to the people of the society so that nobody can tell that you are different, or come from another place, or have another culture. The period of hiding your real self has begun.

I live in a corner of Europe: the Basque Country. My people, my ancestors, my grandmother's and grandfather's parents and their people, went through torture, Inquisition, burning, killing, because they decided to keep their language, their culture, and their homeland present in their hearts and minds.

Not all the people decided to do that. Some decided to leave Europe, seeing what was happening there. But they didn't know what was waiting for them in other places. When they came here, the assimilation process started as soon as they stepped on this land.

The first things that people, from all over the world, who came here by choice in the last four hundred or so years had to do were forget their background, deny their heritage, and defend the new system. If they defended it quite well, they could become a "good citizen," with some rights—the right to be disconnected, for instance. (*laughter*) The message was something like, "This is the best place on the planet. The more you assimilate, the better off you will be."⁴ (These immigrants, of course, had also brought with them from their homelands many other distresses—including oppressor ones, since they had suffered oppression.)

In this room, only one fourth of you said that you could speak some of the language of your ancestors, and almost all of you raised your hand when I asked if your ancestors came from Europe, Africa, or Asia. In a land based on a substratum of genocide, this is how you are required to live. "Forget it. Do not look back at it." Once they obligate you to forget your past and

⁴ The better off you will be" means the better your position will be.



MARGO HITTLEMAN

accept forgetting the genocide that happened here, you are more prepared to accept racism.

I encourage you to reclaim your homeland(s) and to distinguish between homeland (your “heart home,” the place you really belong to and that is waiting for you) and “houseland” (the place you live in); to reclaim your language(s) across the oceans and to distinguish between your first language (the first one you learned) and your “heart language” (the one that belongs to your ancestors, and to you, and that you have probably forgotten or lost).

I also encourage you to discharge about this idea: reclaiming me as your Indigenous European brother.

CONNECTION AND POWER

Living in connection is inherent and natural to the human being. Nothing and nobody can make decisions for us, or manipulate our distresses for exploitation, if we stay connected with ourselves and with others. Oppression cannot decide anything about us. It can affect us and bother us, but the inner power to make happen what we dream about and really want to have happen rests unalterably in us, in our ability to hold on to our individual and group connections.

I am just asking you to explore this perspective and not to use it for yourselves until, or unless, it is right for you.

Maitasunez eta esker onez (with love and thankfulness),

Xabi Odriozola
Donostia, Basque Country

Addendum

Marcy Morgan⁵ helped me to lead these workshops and gatherings and to compile useful ideas from them and express them in an understandable way. Nancy Wygant and Marjorie Smith⁶ helped by transcribing and summarizing these talks.

⁵ Marcy Morgan is the Acting Area Reference Person for the Spruce Area in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA.

⁶ Nancy Wygant is the Information Coordinator for People Thinking About United States Identity. Marjorie Smith is a Co-Counselor in Providence, Rhode Island, USA.

How to Be a Hero

It's those moments when you make the right choice, and do the hard work, whether anyone but yourself knows it or not.

There might be no fanfare, no reward, no recognition, and maybe the majority of the battle takes place inside your head, where your courage is fighting with your fears.

The world will probably never know of you and your moments of goodness, but you should live like a hero anyway, because that is the nature of your spirit.

Jim DuBois
Northampton,
Massachusetts, USA



RANDI FREUNDLICH

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

Thanks very much!
Rational Island Publishers

The following three pages contain five articles taken from a discussion on the RC e-mail discussion list for leaders in the care of the environment.

Who Is Responsible?

I was recently confronted with the question “Who is responsible?” My partner, T—, has a complicated health struggle and was in hospital for seven weeks. After four weeks some of the problems stabilized and the specialists wanted to send him home. My best thinking was that it was not yet safe. I shared my thinking, and as a result T— stayed in the hospital for a week longer. However, it was still not safe enough. I told the specialists that I did not want to take responsibility for T—’s health getting worse again, and I noticed confusion and worries on the part of the caretakers after bringing “who is responsible” to the table.

T— was sent home and we ran into* some serious mistakes with the medication. Again I confronted all involved, including the pharmacy, with, “Who is responsible?” After that T— stayed in a health-care center close to home for another two weeks. His condition slowly improved to where it was safe for him to continue healing at home.

In July I led a wonderful RC care-of-the-environment workshop ten kilometers from my home in Fryslân, the Netherlands. I was close enough to T— to be able to be quickly at his side in case of emergency. Things went well

* “Ran into” means encountered.

enough, and with our children helping to care for him, I could put my full attention on the workshop.

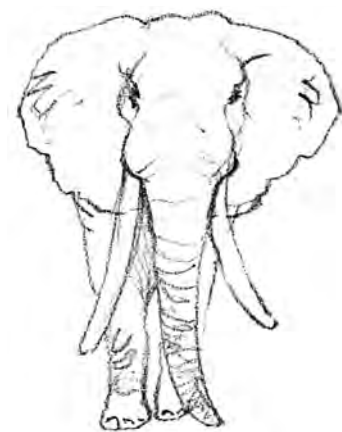
At one point in the workshop I talked about who is responsible and how much we try to escape from being fully responsible. We like to hold the government, companies, our boss, the church, the bank, teachers, our parents, industries, technology responsible for all that is irrational. Our societies are set up to make us confused about who is responsible, and as a result much of our rational responsibility is stolen from us at an early age.

I would love to have a discussion about who you think is responsible for things like your health, your life, global warming, litter on the street, classism, racism, and so on. I would love to hear any thoughts that might help us think about responsibility and how to discharge on preferring not to be responsible. If we become clearer on and discharge the distresses connected to responsibility, we might be closer to taking charge and ending all forms of oppression. Please write!

*Wytske Visser
International Commonality Reference
Person for the Care of the Environment
Ljouwert, Fryslân, the Netherlands*

Separating Two Questions

I find it useful to separate the question “Who is responsible for creating this problem?” from “Who will take responsibility for solving it?”*



ANNE BARTON

The first question is useful not for the purpose of blame but to be clear about the nature of the problem. For instance, it is important to understand that problems that feel like personal failures are usually the result of oppressive structures in society. It frees our thinking to understand the actual history of a problem.

Separating the two questions makes it easier to understand that anyone can take responsibility for fixing a problem and to decide if any particular problem is one we want to take responsibility for. It also makes it easier for people to take responsibility without feeling like they are to blame.

*Aurora Levins Morales
Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA*

* The author is referring to the previous article.

Responsibility and Accountability

Your posting on responsibility* reminded me of something a Co-Counselor wrote about a long time ago. She talked about the difference between responsibility and accountability. My understanding of it is that as human beings we are each responsible for (in charge

* See the first article on the previous page.

of) everything in our universe but not necessarily accountable for certain things.

Accountability has to do with agreements we make with each other to divide the work, to think about and act on different aspects of the environment. One person cannot do it all in a limited amount of time, but a large organization

of people can do a lot in that amount of time. So we assign resources, attention, and labor to different tasks, and we are each accountable for completing those tasks that we agree to. This has been a useful thought for me.

Victor Nicassio

Los Angeles, California, USA

“Taking Responsibility for What Matters to You”

I, too, have been struck by¹ how often people “try to escape from being fully responsible.”² For example, people (especially government officials) often use the passive voice to avoid responsibility. They say things like, “Mistakes were made,” without identifying anyone who made the mistakes. I would prefer that they say, “X—, Y—, and Z— made the following mistakes.”

Politicians often use the passive voice for political reasons. Recently the U.S. President, Barack Obama, was quoted as saying, “Some folks were tortured,” in reference to the Bush³ Administration’s policy of torturing people. It would have been more accurate to say, “CIA⁴ officials tortured people during the Bush administration.”

About twenty years ago I started a project that funded ten teachers to take leadership at their school to

improve mathematics education. I called these teachers “teacher leaders.” They objected to the term. They said they did not like to be referred to as leaders because leaders in their experience had acted without integrity and in oppressive ways. We had an interesting and emotional discussion. Finally someone said, “Oh, what you mean by leadership is taking responsibility for what matters to you.” That became our definition of leadership. It is not the same as Harvey’s⁵ definition (seeing to it⁶ that everything goes well), but it made sense to the teachers.

We have the ability to respond to any situation we care about. And, as Victor pointed out,⁷ we cannot do everything at once, so we need to discharge and think about how to allocate our resources wisely. I have found that to be challenging.

Julian Weissglass

Santa Barbara, California, USA

¹ “Struck by” means impressed by.

² See the first article on the previous page.

³ George W. Bush, the President of the United States from 2001 to 2009.

⁴ Central Intelligence Agency

⁵ Harvey Jackins’

⁶ “Seeing to it” means making certain.

⁷ See previous article.

Applications Flexible and Creative

Re-evaluation Counseling has a rigorous, integrated theory that should guide all applications of counseling, but the applications themselves should be flexible and creative. The technique that is just right for the particular client or the particular session is the one that you *invent yourself* just that moment, not the one that you borrow from something you’ve read.

Harvey Jackins

From *The Human*

Situation, page 198



Choosing Responsibility and Getting Help

What an interesting question! I start from the assumption that blame is a useless concept. Putting attention on what others or we should have done in the past doesn't encourage powerful thinking about the present and the future—though it can be a great way to start a session on early hurts!

If some individual or institution failed to be responsible and it impacted our lives, we get to decide on our attitude in the present. Options include challenging the individual or institution, opening space for apologies or reparations, doing the job ourselves, and gathering help to get the job done.

I don't think I'm the only one who has trouble discerning what is fine to carry on my shoulders and what is unrealistic, or too much, or not mine to carry. I've been noticing the importance of having the ability to choose. Recently when I had just completed years of work in a leadership position, a whole group of people assumed that I would take leadership in another place, because they knew I was capable. I was mad at that assumption and resisted.

After several months of stubborn resistance, I realized that I actually had a vision for that group, very different from how it had functioned in the past. I saw that I was in a position to give a gift that had value to me, and I offered to take leadership if the group would join in my vision, which they did. Now that I have freely chosen the responsibility, from a position of power, my whole attitude about the work involved is completely different.

There's a lesson here about choice, about taking off of our shoulders the responsibilities that don't belong there (that were put on us by others when we were young, or taken on² because there seemed to be no other choice) and taking on³ what we choose in the present, based on our best thinking, our abilities, our love, and our vision for the future. I've had some useful sessions on what is from my childhood and what is in the present, and I'm getting a little clearer.

² In this context, "taken on" means assumed.

³ In this context, "taking on" means undertaking.

Sometimes we find ourselves with too much on our shoulders in the present and no way to refuse to handle it. In these situations, another big lesson is about getting help. That was often the key missing ingredient when we were young, and I would guess that many of us struggle with responsibility because we can't imagine getting enough help.

For example, when faced with a bureaucracy that is demanding something difficult of me, I find myself trying to avoid the responsibility (not even opening a letter, for example), because I feel so helpless. I've recently realized that my feelings of being totally alone with the challenge—clearly from my childhood—are at the core of this response. I'm trying to hold the direction now, as soon as I recognize that familiar feeling, of reaching out to break the isolation.

The challenge for me is to keep discharging on early isolation and over-responsibility and to keep remembering that I have the power to make choices and get help in the present. I'd love to hear what other people are thinking.

Pamela Haines

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA

No Substitute for Thinking

For a human, feelings are to be *felt*, not *acted upon*. "Good feelings" can be enjoyed, but they are no substitute for thinking.

Harvey Jackins

From *The Human Situation*, page 64

¹ See the first article on page 12.



OFFRE LAKES PROVINCIAL PARK, BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA • SHIRA ROSEN

When in War—Play!

I can now better distinguish between what needs to be done about the present situation in Israel and what is to grieve over. That people have reached this situation is something to grieve over. That my whole country is at this stage is something to grieve over. There is no urgent need to “fix it.” This is where we are. People are *that* restimulated and lacking in correct information. It’s okay that it is *that* twisted. It’s okay to accept this reality. Only if we accept it will we be able to change things really. Otherwise we will act on urgency and will not take rational actions (for example, we will have angry sessions at people instead of lovingly and powerfully giving them information).

I can discharge whatever feelings come up. I can listen to people’s anger about what’s going on.¹ I interrupted a racist conversation in a Jerusalem (Israel) train station. I said, “All people are precious,” and got roared at² by many people all at once. I stayed a counselor and kind of³ enjoyed the situation, telling the people that I respected them and stuff. It was fun actually, now that I remind myself of it.

I see Israeli Jewish people anxiously reading the news and listening to radio news and becoming more angry and isolated from each other by the time the news is done. People are restimulated by the media and given a false image all the time. If they also get isolated from each other, they will necessarily act irrationally because they will not have the resources of closeness and play to think about things flexibly and humanly.

It will be a tremendous resource if we find ways to get close and play, if we show less respect to the distress of discouragement and don’t sit all grumpy and watch the news and refuse to play. The discouraging feelings say, “What’s the point?” It’s okay to feel defeated and still play! Playing takes us out of the believability of distress into present time.

Like,⁴ be willing to be all embarrassed and awkward. It will do miracles for your heavy isolation distress. Play and then have a session; your session will go better. Notice your addictions. Notice your isolation. They’re your response to what is going on. They are

interesting, a clue to your early material.⁵ (Good news: you are not small anymore—you have power, you have allies, you know how to discharge your irrationalities.) You don’t have the needs of a young person anymore. You don’t need other adults to take care of you and counsel you *at every moment*.

It’s a good time to remember how powerful a loving mind is and to discharge and do things we like and be close to people we love. It’s a reminder that living is precious and fun and the most powerful thing to do with people. Don’t underestimate silliness and lightness and fun and an optimistic attitude—especially not now, when everyone, including you, is acting serious and isolated and grumpy and worried (ha ha). The restimulations don’t own us—we can shine, even during war, and remember benign reality.

And lastly: Actually have sessions! Your distress isn’t going to go anywhere unless you discharge it and act against it.

Let us all discharge our fears and aim for a life that’s much closer to others. Let us use this time to change our chronics⁶ instead of believing restimulations of powerlessness. *Amen!*

I had another thought: that the leadership of young people is crucial in our work to end war and to have a powerful peace movement. The reason is that young people are peace gurus. Getting close to people contradicts violence. Young people are masters in this field. Play, creativity—all young people’s fields. You need young people to show you the way. Young people know benign reality. War is trying to create an illusion of hurtful, bad, isolated reality for human beings. Young people know shit!⁷ And you need to listen up and learn from them, especially now in these times of war.

Tal Mizrahi (age 23)

Even Sappir, Jerusalem, Israel
Reprinted from the RC e-mail discussion lists
for leaders of Jews and for RC Community members

¹ “Going on” means happening.

² “Roared at” means yelled at.

³ “Kind of” means somewhat.

⁴ “Like,” in this context, is a word that people often insert into a phrase or sentence.

⁵ “Material” means distress.

⁶ Chronic patterns

⁷ In this context, “shit” means a lot.





Hebrew translation
of the preceding article:

גרסה עברית של המאמר הקודם:

במלחמה – שחקו!

עכשיו אני יכולה להבדיל טוב יותר בין מה שצריך לקרות עכשיו (מה המצב מצריך), בנוגע למצב הנוכחי בישראל, ועל מה נותר רק להתאבל.

זה שאנשים הגיעו למצב הזה, זה משהו להתאבל עליו. זה שכל המדינה שלי הגיעה למצב הזה, זה משהו להתאבל עליו. אין שום צורך דחוף "לתקן את זה". זה פשוט המצב בו אנחנו נמצאות כרגע. אנשים הם עד כדי כך מגורים מחדש וחסרים במידע נכון.

זה בסדר שזה עד כדי כך מעוות. זה בסדר לקבל את המציאות הזאת. רק אם נקבל אותה, נוכל לשנות דברים באמת. אחרת נפעל מתוך דחיפות ולא בהיגיון (למשל, ניקח סשנים כועסים על אנשים במקום לתת להן מידע באהבה ובעוצמה).

אני יכולה לפרוק את הרגשות שעולים. אני יכולה להקשיב לכעס של אנשים לגבי מה שקורה. יום אחד בתחילת המלחמה, התערבתי בשיחה גזענית, ואמרתי "כל האנשים הם יקרים", וקיבלתי שאגות מכמה אנשים בבת אחת. נשארתי יועצת ודי הנחתי מהסיטואציה הזאת, אמרתי לאנשים שאני מכבדת אותם ואלה. זה היה כיף, עכשיו כשאני נזכרת בזה

אני רואה ישראליות יהודיות צופות בטלוויזיה, קוראות עיתון ומקשיבות לרדיו בחרדה, והופכות ליותר עצבניות ומבודדות כשהחדשות נגמרות. אנשים מגורים מחדש מהמדיה ומקבלים מידע כוזב כל הזמן. אם הן גם יתבודדו אחת מהשניה, הן בהכרח יתנהגו בחוסר היגיון כי לא יהיה להם את המשאב של קירבה ומשחק כדי לחשוב על דברים בהיגיון ובאנושיות. זה יהיה משאב אדיר אם נוכל למצוא דרכים להתקרב ולשחק – אם לא נכבד כל כך את המצוקה המיואשת שלנו ולא נשב במרירות מול החדשות ונתנגד להתקרב. הרגשות המיואשים אומרים "מה הטעם?" – זה בסדר להרגיש מיואשות ועדיין לשחק! משחק מרופף את האמינות של המצוקה ומחזיר אותנו לזמן הווה.

ממש תסכימו להרגיש לגמרי נבוכות ומזורת! זה יהיה נס למצוקה הנורא-כבדה שלכן. תשחקו ואז תעשו סשן- הסשן שלכן ילך טוב יותר. באמת תעשו את זה. תעזו!

שימו לב להתמכרויות שלכן, שימו לב לבידוד שלכן. הם התגובה שלכן למה שקורה. הם מעניינים, הם רמזים לחומר המוקדם שלכן. (חדשות טובות: אתן לא קטנות יותר – יש לכם כוח, יש לכן בנות ברית, אתן יודעות איך לפרוק את החוסר-היגיון שלכן.) אין לכן את הצרכים של ילדים קטנים יותר- אתם לא צריכים שמבוגרים אחרים ייעצו לכם ויטפלו בכם בכל רגע נתון.

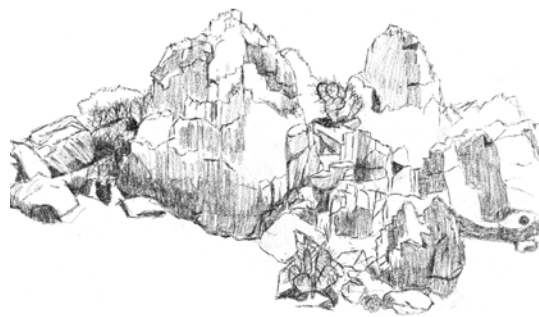
זה זמן טוב לזכור כמה עוצמה יש למוח אוהב, ולפרוק ולעשות דברים שאנחנו אוהבות ולהיות קרובות לאנשים שאנחנו אוהבות. זוהי תזכורת שהחיים יקרים, וכיף זה הדבר הכי עוצמתי שאפשר לעשות עם בני אדם. אל תזלזלו-בשטותיות וקלילות וגישה אופטימית. במיוחד לא עכשיו, כשכולם, כולל אותך, מתנהגות ברצינות ובמרירות.

הגירויים מחדש לא שולטים בנו- אנחנו יכולות להיות לגמרי אנושיות- אפילו בזמן מלחמה, ולזכור את הטבע האמיתי של בנות- האדם.

ולסיום: באמת תעשו סשנים! המצוקות שלכן לא ילכו לשום מקום אם לא תפרקו אותן ותפעלו נגדן. מי תיתן וכולנו נפרוק את הפחדים שלנו, ונשאף לחיים קרובים הרבה יותר לאחרות. מי תיתן ונשתמש בזמן הזה כדי לשנות את הדפוסים הכרוניים שלנו במקום להאמין בגירויים מחדש של חוסר אונים. אמן!

היתה לי עוד מחשבה:

שהמנהיגות של אנשים צעירים היא הכרחית בעבודה שלנו לסיים מלחמות ובבניית תנועת שלום עוצמתית. הסיבה היא שאנשים צעירים הם גוראים של שלום. קירבה סותרת אלימות. אנשים צעירים מומחים בתחום הזה. משחק, יצירתיות- כל אלה תחומים של אנשות צעירות. אתן צריכות שאנשים צעירים יראו לכן את הדרך. אנשים צעירים יודעים את המציאות המיטיבה. מלחמה היא ניסיון ליצור אשליה של מציאות פוגעת, רעה, ומבודדת בשביל אנשים. אנשות צעירות יודעות הרבה! ואתן צריכות להקשיב וללמוד מהן, במיוחד עכשיו בזמנים של מלחמה.



NANCY LEMON

טל מזרחי (גיל 23)

אבן ספיר, ירושלים, ישראל

תורגם על ידי טל מזרחי

הודפס מחדש מרשימת הדיון בדוא"ל למנהיגות של יהודיות ולחברות קהילת יעוץ הדדי הכללית.

THE EBOLA CRISIS

Dear members of the RC Community,

I asked Anne Greenwald, who works as a school nurse, and Steve Bromer, who is the Information Coordinator for Physicians, to think about, discharge about, and discuss the situation involving Ebola. Given the seriousness of that illness, our distresses, the media's tendency to restimulate rather than inform, and the very social nature of RC, I wanted their best thoughts about the situation and what might be required in the future because of it. Here's what they came up with.*

With love and appreciation,
Tim Jackins

Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) is transmitted from human to human through direct contact with the body fluids of the infected person (blood, sweat, saliva, feces, urine, tears, semen, breast milk, vomit). Ebola does not move through the air from person to person (is not airborne). Current thinking is that people with Ebola are only contagious once they develop symptoms, such as a fever, vomiting, diarrhea, or bleeding.

Ebola is currently spreading in several countries in West Africa—mainly Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Liberia. Global capitalism and racism are responsible for this. These countries have suffered from deforestation, drought, food scarcity, a population shift to large cities (due to life in rural areas becoming increasingly difficult), and health-care systems that lack sufficient resources.

The Ebola virus is contagious and is causing serious outbreaks, but we do have enough knowledge to control its spread. The recent outbreak is occurring because of a lack of resources and insufficient health-care infrastructure, not because the virus is too difficult to control. It could have been prevented with a more rational and resourced response to the first cases.

The incubation period of Ebola seems to be from two to twenty-one days. And infected people are contagious for a relatively short period of time—perhaps on the order of weeks—as they don't carry enough of the virus to easily spread it until they have significant symptoms. For these reasons, it is possible, as has happened in Nigeria, to control the infection.

There have now been a few documented cases of Ebola in countries outside the areas of the current outbreak. However, the risk of contracting Ebola in places other than where

the outbreak is currently occurring is extremely low. This situation could change quickly if bigger efforts are not made to stop the disease in the most affected countries.

The most effective way to control the outbreak is to provide treatment in settings with adequate medical supplies. This includes making sure caregivers and health-care workers have access to personal protective equipment. Support, training, and monitoring of health-care workers and others responding to the outbreak also play an essential role in ending the cycle of infection.

A number of governmental and non-governmental organizations have started to direct needed support to the affected countries. Progress is being made in controlling the outbreak, but many more resources are needed to support a rational response to it.

WHAT WE CAN DO IN RC

We all need to think and discharge about our environment. This includes the environment we create at workshops and other RC gatherings. How can we be most thoughtful toward each other? How can we create an environment that keeps us healthy?

We are often physically close to each other at RC workshops and other RC gatherings, which is a tremendous contradiction to isolation for many of us. We can continue to contradict isolation and have physical closeness without compromising our health. This will require being open and trusting each other, and looking at and discharging hurts that have made us afraid to reveal certain things about our health. Most of us have recordings of humiliation about our bodies and how they function. We need to look at how we were treated when we had an illness and how we witnessed other people being treated.

* "Came up with" means thought of.

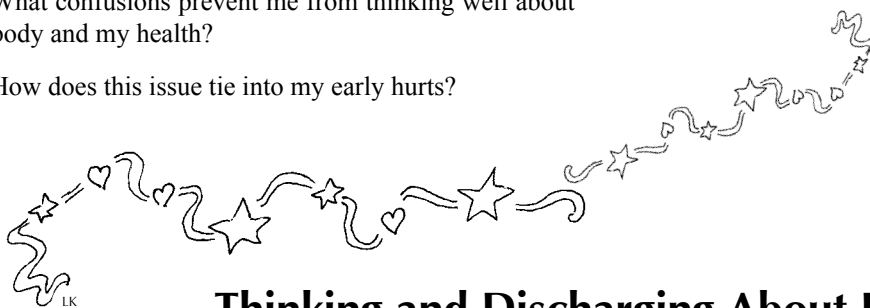
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COUNSELING PRACTICE

... continued

Distresses can cause people to overreact or underreact to life-threatening epidemics. Co-Counselors should learn about Ebola and discharge about epidemics. Here are some questions to consider:

- What do I know about Ebola? How can I learn about it? (Try reading about it in a Co-Counseling session.)
- What was my experience related to plagues or epidemics as a young person?
- What would be a rational policy for preventing the spread of illness in RC settings?
- What confusions prevent me from thinking well about my body and my health?
- How does this issue tie into my early hurts?



Thinking and Discharging About Ebola

Re-evaluation Counseling encourages us to “hold everything up to the light of discharge.”

I was invited to lead a Regional¹ gather-in on discharging about the Ebola crisis. (This Region offers discharge gatherings in “rapid response” to major world events.) I got some Co-Counseling sessions on my feelings about Ebola and contacted a Co-Counselor I knew in Ethiopia for his perspective. I asked him how African countries that weren’t the most directly impacted were being affected by Ebola and about the media representation there. His response included the comment, “Yes, Ebola has become a significant concern throughout Africa, but the international media also tend to portray an exaggerated version of the facts on the ground.” This seemed like an important point.

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

Since this recent epidemic, news reports have restimulated people all around the world—with horrifying statistics, wrenching stories, photos of victims and health-care workers suited up in bio-protective gear, condemning refutations of official information, and accusations that medical resources and survival supplies are being withheld. (I like the suggestion that we read about Ebola *in sessions!*²) I’ve noticed that when people are feeling scared

² See previous article.



“WE LISTEN WITH ATTENTION” • AURORA LEVINS MORALES

If someone is infected with Ebola, he or she should not attend classes or workshops, or have in-person sessions, as this would create a significant risk of transmitting the virus; there are no precautions that would make the situation safe. If Co-Counselors have had contact with an infected person, they should also not do in-person sessions or attend classes or workshops, until at least three weeks after their last contact.

As the situation evolves with Ebola, we will need to keep thinking about what makes sense in each RC setting. This will serve us well as other health-related issues emerge on the planet and as we move RC into all parts of the world.

Anne Greenwald
Brookline, Massachusetts, USA

Steve Bromer
San Francisco, California, USA

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

or urgent, they tend to eagerly, maybe even competitively, offer facts, and more facts, from news magazines, the Internet, television, everywhere—sometimes in a point/counterpoint debate—rather than *offering listening*. Information is important, of course. But as we know in RC, listening and discharge are also greatly needed. And they are the resources that we RCers can best offer each other.

At the gather-in, we discharged on the following:

Our personal histories of illness.

These will have a huge impact on our feelings about an epidemic, whether or not they include a contagious condition.

The history of other epidemics, such as polio, HIV, and the flu.

My great uncle was one of the few survivors of the “Spanish flu” of 1918. This became a family story and seemed to affect our family’s relationship to illness. Since I work in the disability community, I know

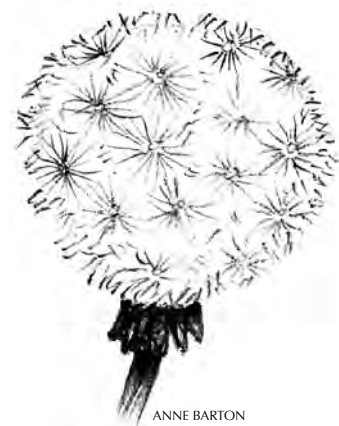
many people who contracted and survived polio. They have talked and written about their local towns' fears and irrational actions. We all have these kinds of stories, from generations back, which affect our thinking and our relationship to illness and recovery. Just imagine the backlog of undischarged feelings we must have about all the diseases that have influenced our cultures and literatures, such as the bubonic plague, leprosy, typhus, cholera, smallpox, and yellow fever. Have we had many sessions about these? At the gather-in, to lighten things up a bit, I brought out my old *Cooties* game³ from the 1960s, which I'd run across⁴ while cleaning out a closet. I believe that in U.S. culture children have used the word *cooties* to client with each other about their parents' fear of all kinds of diseases.

Where and among which populations an epidemic has occurred. Epidemics are often associated with the places and populations in which they first emerged and become connected with certain oppressions. HIV and AIDS, for example, are associated with the Gay community, even though they've had a bigger impact on the broader heterosexual population. The centuries-long history of colonialism and racism in Africa has affected the global reaction to the Ebola epidemic. In our work on Ebola, we need to discharge on racism and colonialism.

Our feelings about the health-care system and its political and economic context. These feelings will get restimulated when we read about the response, or lack of response, to the

Ebola crisis. The U.S. health-care system is deeply distorted by profit and triages resources in an extreme way, often putting health-care workers in confusing and compromised roles. Most of us have been perplexed, if not mistreated, by the health-care system. Many of us who were born in hospitals have early hurts connected with health care and health providers. We may also have unreasonable expectations that health care should have already cured many complex health conditions.

And grief. Grief is a natural human reaction to the death of our close beloveds. A related feeling is *horror*—the shocked way we feel upon learning of many deaths or people dying in terrible ways. When we read about the deaths of people we never met, and imagine the loss of those people's lives and the grief of their loved ones, it restimulates our own losses. I speculate that horror is a combination of grief, fear, and powerlessness. We may feel helpless in the face of others' suffering, tangled with guilt about our distance or privilege. Our grief is deeply affected by "mental health" oppression, which discourages or prevents us from using the discharge and re-evaluation process. When my grandmother died when I was five, I was told that I didn't need to understand, that I shouldn't think about it. This left a distress recording for me of "I can't think about death." I believe that we are always struggling on some level with our earliest losses, including from birth and babyhood. Regular sessions on these losses can help us think with more clarity about other people's deaths. Without "mental health" oppression, perhaps we would as readily join in crying with others as we join in contagious laughter. (Ah! *Good contagion!*) Grief discharge would be a positive experience; it would *feel good* to discharge our distress and reclaim our thinking.



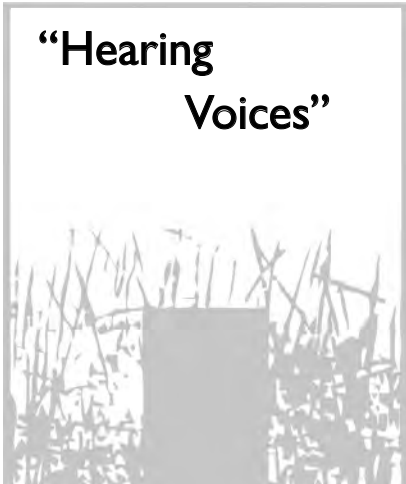
The gather-in participants shared their thinking and experiences. One spoke of the impact vaccines had had on her sense of safety in childhood. Some who had had serious contagious diseases discharged about the isolating quarantine. One participant imagined a world in which people cared about each other enough to reopen hospitals standing empty in Western countries (because of being unprofitable) and fly in anyone ill with Ebola for the best-possible care. Someone else suggested that our whole society, connected and integrated, could function like a body martialing resources for the body parts that were in pain or distress.

The Ebola epidemic is challenging all of us to think and discharge in new areas. We are all leaders. With enough discharge, we can contribute our thinking to challenging areas like travel bans, international health-care economics, and how environmental and health-care issues intersect. We can reach for clarity and offer good listening to others who are caught up in their confusion. We can imagine and reach for a world that works for everyone.

Marsha Saxton
International Liberation Reference
Person for People with Disabilities
El Cerrito, California, USA
With input from Dagnachew
Wakene, Bob Gomez, and others

³ *Cooties* was a table game in which the plastic parts of a bug-like creature were assembled in steps that depended on tosses of the dice. The word has also been associated with head lice. "You have cooties!" is a taunt that children have directed at other children, especially marginalized children. It implies that they are contagious with some bad invisible condition.

⁴ "Run across" means found.



Someone was “hearing voices” and felt that she had a unique link to another reality. Here are letters to her from Diane Shisk and Janet Foner.¹

Dear X—,

I remember you from the workshop. It is good to hear from you again. We in RC agree with you that it is not a disease to hear voices, but we do not think that the voices you are hearing are real.

We think that what is reality for one human is reality for all—that there are not parts of reality that are available only to some people. There is a world that can be seen, felt, and heard by all humans (unless they have a disability or distress recording that is interfering). It is our experience that when people hear voices that others do not hear, the voices are coming from a distress recording. The person is not diseased, and disease is not the cause of hearing the voices. However, there is a distress recording interfering with the person’s perception of reality. That recording, and all distress recordings, can be discharged. It will

help you in discharging the recording if you decide that the voices are not real—that they are coming from a recording of something hurtful that happened to you in the past.

I’m sorry if it makes you feel bad to have me or someone else tell you that the voices are not real. We do not mean to invalidate you. You are a beautiful, smart, and loving person. I remember that. But on this point, the distresses from your past are confusing you and we are not being your allies if we agree with you that the confusion is true. We will have to keep pointing you to reality for you to be able to discharge the old recordings.

I’m glad you will be at Janet’s workshop. I know it will be a good resource for you.

With love,

Diane Shisk

Alternate International Reference
Person for the RC Communities
Seattle, Washington, USA



Dear X—,

Thank you for writing. I have read and agree with what Diane Shisk said in her reply to your letter, and here are some additional thoughts:

“Mental health” oppression is extremely hard on people, particularly those who have been in mental “hospitals” or otherwise involved as “patients” in the “mental health” system. (I use quotation marks because these terms are based on “mental health” oppression, not reality.) The effect of the oppression is to make us doubt ourselves. We internalize it and conclude that something is wrong with our minds. We need to trust our own thinking and experiences, but we also need to be open to noticing and discharging the patterns that have influenced them.

Because we “mental health” system survivors have been so invalidated, we often feel it necessary to try to prove

that we are right. But we are not always right. Discharge and re-evaluation will help us distinguish between what is true and what is not. And until we have completely re-evaluated our experiences, we can trust RC theory as a valid guide. We can also trust RC leaders who have proven themselves trustworthy.

The theory of RC has been developed over the last sixty-four years. In that time nothing has been put into it that has not been tested thoroughly by many, many people. Therefore, it is much more accurate than many theories. I’ve found that I can rely on it to inform my discharge process. I’ve discharged about any piece of it that confuses me or seems to be in conflict with something else I believe, and after I’ve discharged a lot, the theory that was confusing has become much clearer to me. An example is when I first heard RC theory about “benign

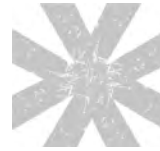
¹ Diane Shisk is the Alternate International Reference Person for the RC Communities. Janet Foner is the International Liberation Reference Person for “Mental Health” Liberation.

reality.”² I didn’t understand what reality was and had never had my attention fully on its benign nature. After lots of discharge, and many attempts to get my attention into the present, I was able to connect with actual reality for the first time.

I think it will be the same or similar for you. If you can discharge on the idea that the voices you hear are distress recordings, it will be easier for you to accept that they might not be real. You can talk in your Co-Counseling sessions about what the voices remind you of or what you think might have caused them to appear in your mind. You can trust your mind. It will bring up exactly what you

need to discharge on. After many sessions, with lots of discharge, it will become clearer to you what these voices are really about.

I hope my thoughts about this are useful to you and that you will try doing this. I would love to hear how it goes. I am looking forward to meeting you at the “Mental Health” Liberation Workshop.



Love,
Janet Foner
 International Liberation Reference
 Person for “Mental Health” Liberation
 New Cumberland, Pennsylvania, USA

² The theory states that basic reality is benign. Anything else, in other words “pseudo-reality,” is the result of distress patterns.

A Diaspora Sister’s Caring

During the recent war in Gaza, I participated in a project, organized by Cherie Brown and Aliza Becker,¹ to offer one-way time² to Israeli Co-Counselors. I was assigned to counsel X—. She and I exchanged e-mails to get to know each other a bit and agreed that I would give her one-way time once each week for the coming period.

I thought in advance about how I might be an effective ally to her,

¹ Cherie Brown is the International Liberation Reference Person for Jews. Aliza Becker is a Jewish RC leader in Chicago, Illinois, USA.

² “One-way time” means listening without receiving listening back.

and she was able to discharge hard throughout the first half hour I gave her. We connected deeply and immediately as Jews, as women, and as mothers. It was beautiful to see how fully she could use the contradiction³ of her Diaspora sister’s caring. Also, being close to her dissolved my numbness. I cried quietly along with her some of the time and was able to discharge my heartbreak about the violence in my own session later. Having one person to think about helped me be more humanly connected to the events in Israel and Gaza.

³ Contradiction to distress

After X—’s sessions and mine, I have been able to pay more attention to the situation and express caring toward all of the peoples of the region—one-on-one with friends and family members as well as in a public forum. I claim X— as my sister, and I claim all of the peoples in Israel and Gaza as my brothers, sisters, and cousins.

Becky Shuster
 Boston, Massachusetts, USA
 Reprinted from the RC e-mail
 discussion list for leaders of Jews

Love Others First

For a person to love us or like us, *it is usually necessary for us to love or to like him or her*, and to communicate this to him or her in the first place.

Harvey Jackins
 From *The Human Situation*, page 34



MURAL, BY IDLE NO MORE, IN RICHMOND, VIRGINIA, USA • PHOTO BY ALISON EHARA-BROWN

Quiet Thinking Time

Sometimes young friends of five or six will ask me a question about how something works. I'm happy to answer, and often I remember to slow down my speech and use shorter sentences and less complicated words.

Most important, I pause after one or two sentences and just look at them. They often fall silent but look at me intently. I quietly give them attention while their brain seems to be sorting the sounds I was just making and cataloging them in useful ways. They will just look at me for a few seconds—much longer than most adults are used to pausing. Once they have fully absorbed my explanation, they will look away, or ask another question, or talk about something else.

I find it satisfying to have this quiet thinking time between us.

Richard Kramer
Berlin, Massachusetts, USA



Keeping in Contact with Young People

For several years the RC Community has been assisting young RCers to keep using RC as they move away from home—for example, to college. Jenny Sazama and Megan Lynes are the two people overseeing this project.

We collect the names of young people who would like an RC ally to be a resource for them as they head off on their own. The ally is to stay in touch with them by phone—taking all the initiative, if necessary, for several months; listening to them; Co-Counseling with them (by phone or in person); helping them figure out how to be in contact with the local RC Community (if there is one); helping them figure out which new acquaintances might make good Co-Counselors; and more. We also have a list of people who want to be allies, and we would welcome more.

Young people and allies are put in contact with each other. Sometimes

they already have a relationship, and sometimes they build one afresh. More than thirty pairs have been set up. Some pairs are quickly and wonderfully useful and some take time—but all are useful.

I would like your help with this project. We want to continue to build both the list of young people and the list of allies, and I ask your assistance in finding people to add to both lists. How about you? Or are there others in your Community whom you could talk with so that they could consider being a part of this?

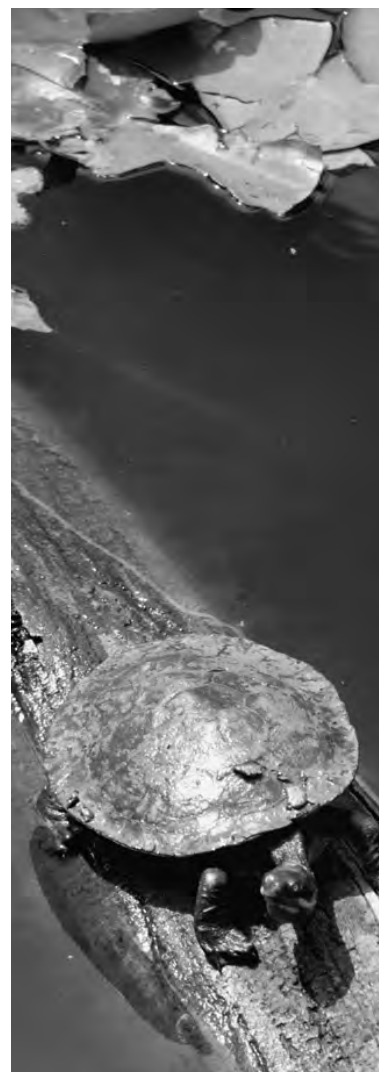
Send information to Megan Lynes, at <meganlynes@gmail.com> or 23 Caesar Jones Way, Bedford, Massachusetts 01730, USA. If you e-mail, please put "Allies to Shifting Young People" in the subject line.

Thank you,
Tim Jackins

Patterns Make You Forget

The only defense that a pattern has to prevent itself from being discharged and overcome, once it is accurately spotted and a direction taken against it, is its ability to make you forget the direction. To write directions down, to create charts, to set up devices for reminding oneself of them continually is essential to win through to full humanness.

Harvey Jackins
From *The Human Situation*, page 110



HELEN PARKIN

The next five articles are about the U.S. Muslim Leaders' Workshop, held in Parksville, New York, USA, in September 2014.

The First RC Muslim Workshop

We made history this past weekend! It was a longtime dream of mine, since beginning RC seven years ago, to have a workshop for Muslims and kick off¹ our Muslim liberation project. Thank you, Azi Khalili,² for leading us in this important work. It was a pleasure to organize the workshop and be part of making it happen.

Finding the Muslim RCers was a project in itself. It is not easy for us to be open about who we are. Even within the relative safety of RC, we sometimes don't bring up our real identity. That's one of the ways that oppression affects us. Thank you to everyone for supporting all the Muslims in our RC Communities to get to the workshop. Being together was such a significant step!

A bit about me: I am a Muslim Pakistani woman with Afghani and Persian heritage. I was raised by a Sunni mother and a Sufi Sunni father. I consider myself a practicing Muslim. I came to the United States eight years ago for school.

There were twenty-one of us at the workshop, from Africa, Asia, Europe, and North and South America. Although we shared a common religious background, our heritages and cultures were as diverse as they come.³ And some of us were practicing Muslims, and some were not. This was a good reminder of what our world is like, despite the usual one-size-fits-all images we see in the media.



EAGLE, IDAHO, USA • ANNEVERMILLION

We started Friday evening with four minutes each in front of the group to share our greatest hopes for the workshop and whatever feelings we had about being together as Muslims. That allowed us to feel connected right off the bat.⁴ A few of us prayed daily prayers in the main meeting room. That was a huge contradiction⁵ for everyone because in recent years praying publically has either not been safe or not felt safe.

The Saturday morning class was about remembering our own humanness and goodness and the goodness of our people. As with RC, a foundation of Islam is that humans are born good. And Islam also specifically says that whatever happens to people after their birth is because of the society around them, and that they continue to be good and can heal and change for the better throughout their lives.

We shared what we liked about Islam or being Muslims. Some of us talked about Islam's anti-classism and anti-capitalism stance. Others mentioned its anti-slavery and women's rights movements. A big piece of our culture and religion is the focus on community and our connection with each other, which is intelligently built into our practices through prayer, fasting, and celebrations. We also talked about Islam's stance against addictions and for caring for our bodies and health.

In a powerful demonstration a client discharged about the disrespect and mistreatment directed at them because of being a Muslim. That helped me and others discharge heavily about the oppression in our lives. I screamed and yelled for my whole session.

I led a support group of practicing Muslim women. It was sweet to connect with each other and discharge our feelings of not being practicing enough or not the right kind of Muslim. We laughed a lot, and some of us had big sessions on sexism and male domination within our community. It is not easy for us to work on the effects of sexism and male domination without feeling bad and worrying that we are participating in reinforcing the prevailing stereotypes of Muslim men.

Later Azi talked about the history of colonization and imperialism in the Muslim countries of South, Southeast, Central, and West Asia, and Africa. The ongoing wars of the last hundred years in these regions have divided Muslims from each other and vilified us in the world. The objective of colonizers and imperialists is to take resources away from conquered regions. To do this they have made us feel bad about our cultures, languages, traditions, and religions so that we stay divided and powerless in the face of the oppression.

Azi encouraged us to remember our humanness and the humanness of all people and not let any oppression confuse us about any group, especially our Jewish sisters and brothers. For me it was important to remember that Jews and Muslims have had a long history

continued ...

¹ "Kick off" means begin.

² Azi Khalili is the International Liberation Reference Person for South, Central, and West Asian-Heritage People and was the leader of the workshop.

³ "As they come" means as they could be.

⁴ "Right off the bat" means immediately.

⁵ Contradiction to distress

LIBERATION

... continued

of living together in peace and mutual respect; that helped me discharge my hopelessness about the current situation in West Asia. A big Jewish workshop was happening at the same site, and it was sweet to be together for meals and cheer each other on.

On Saturday evening I was on a panel of people who talked about the effects of 9/11⁶ on their lives. People talked about the discrimination and racism that came at them as a result of everyone's fear. I was outside the United States on 9/11, yet I was impacted in huge ways. Pakistan was bullied into supporting the war against Afghanistan, and it was (and is) traumatizing to witness and

⁶ "9/11" refers to the terrorist attacks in New York City and Washington, D.C., USA, on September 11, 2001.

indirectly take part in the destruction of a people I respect and love.

The next day we did the most needed and important work. Azi had the African-heritage Muslims be on a panel and share their experiences with racism in the Muslim community. They couldn't have done this groundbreaking truth telling if we hadn't first built up our trust as fellow Muslims. Hearing their stories allowed me to discharge on my oppressor material⁷ and where I get confused about race and class. This was the first workshop at which I'd had huge sessions about my oppressor role, and it was because of the safety and non-judgmental environment. As a person of the global majority, I have a personal RC goal of ending racism

⁷ "Material" means distress.

among different oppressed races, but it can be hard to work on when I feel alone and terrified as a Muslim.

Also awesome were the early-morning (*Fajr*) group prayer, the best culture sharing ever, the language interpretation during the classes, and a big group nap in the middle of the day.

I look forward to another Muslim workshop in a year or so. *Insha Allah!*⁸

*Salaam*⁹ and love,

Nazish Riaz
Bedford, Massachusetts, USA
Reprinted from the RC e-mail discussion list for South, Central, and West Asian-heritage people

⁸ God willing, in Arabic

⁹ Peace, in Arabic

A Deep and Precious Gift

Salaam (peace) to all.

I thoroughly enjoyed, like a dream come true (I could not believe it; my tears came down) a *whole* workshop just for Muslims. Especially when I saw two African-heritage sisters, as well as Muslim women from various countries, wearing their hijab.¹ It was a deep and precious gift. I cry with joy and have hope for Muslim liberation.

Azi² made the concepts, theory, and tools of RC clear while maintaining well the goal of our human connection and providing a safe space in which to discharge our hurts. She kept reminding us gently that we were not there to practice religion or discuss politics, even though lots of hurts had been caused by political issues. We focused on and discharged our hurt feelings. This was (and is) challenging.

My highlight was the panel of African-heritage Muslims. They shared their experiences of racism within the Muslim community. I have witnessed that racism and have felt helpless whenever it has happened. I am *so* relieved to see us working on the oppressor distresses that have damaged and confused us. There is lots of hope. We can heal from them by discharging.

I enjoyed being connected to younger RCers. I enjoyed my ride from Nazish³; we talked in our language, Urdu, which I do not usually have a chance to speak. I appreciate her hard work and intelligence.

Khadija Shaw

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

¹ A hijab is a traditional scarf covering the head and neck that is often worn by Muslim women.

² Azi Khalili, the International Liberation Reference Person for South, Central, and West Asian-Heritage People and the leader of the workshop

³ Nazish Riaz, an RC leader in Bedford, Massachusetts, USA

A Great Space to Feel Safe

The Muslim workshop was a great space for us all to feel safe and look at our hurts and hopes. I was impressed by the range of people and proud that we were a group from so many different backgrounds and races. That's one thing I love about Islam: its diversity and appeal to people from all kinds of worlds.

I was struck¹ by how many of us in that small group of about twenty had been directly affected by war. So many beautiful people's lives (including mine) had been changed and messed up because of war, much of it due to colonialism and its aftermath, which continues to the present time.

Azi² explained how imperialism's focus has shifted in the last thirty years from East Asia to West Asia. Today Islam is under attack in the West. In the United States it seems okay to publicly demonize Muslims and say untrue things about our people in the media. Azi guided us to discharge on this huge hurt and work to make allies in

¹ "Struck" means impressed.

² Azi Khalili, the International Liberation Reference Person for South, Central, and West Asian-Heritage People, and the leader of the workshop

our greater RC Communities. We can be visible and fight these dangerous forms of bigotry.

It was also great to have the racism panel, to become aware of our own racism and reflect on it so that we can embrace everyone without any barriers.

Persheng Vaziri

New York, New York, USA

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



BASH BISH FALLS STATE PARK, MASSACHUSETTS, USA • STEVE BANBURY

My First All-Muslim RC Event

Thank you, Azi,¹ for leading our first-ever Muslim workshop, and thank you, Nazish,² for your wonderful organizing!

My father was raised Muslim in Iran. My brother's wife is a practicing Muslim. I loved going to mosque in Iran with my aunt and sister-in-law, and I love the call to prayer.

The United States has been targeting Muslims in this country and also bombing

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

² Nazish Riaz, an RC leader in Bedford, Massachusetts, USA

countries with large Muslim populations. This has been scary and infuriating. The workshop was my first experience at an all-Muslim RC event. It was exciting but also difficult, since I am mixed heritage. Old feelings of not belonging were up³ and somehow hard to discharge.

Azi worked with those of us who are not practicing Muslims, and we looked at the feelings that come up around that. Panels about post-9/11⁴ life for Muslims in this country and of African-heritage

³ "Were up" means were being felt.

⁴ "9/11" refers to the terrorist attacks in New York City and Washington, D.C., USA, on September 11, 2001.

Muslims were meaningful for me, as was our work on racism within Islam. A highlight was spending time with such a diverse group, which included someone from Palestine and someone from Iran. I also enjoyed seeing an old student of mine (an observant Muslim) finally have a workshop that made prayer time a central activity. Congratulations to us!

Leyla Modirzadeh

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

From a Muslim Man

To say the least, the first-ever Muslim liberation workshop was life changing for me. I have been in RC for three years and have had the luxury to attend about ten workshops. This one was different. This one was nascent and unchartered. And though there was so much to learn from and tell one another, the mere fact that it happened was a contradiction¹ in and of itself.

Muslims have been targeted—they have been driven into hiding and separated from one another. It was eye opening to hear what it took² to find the Muslims in RC and how many Muslims simply don't declare themselves as such, even in RC.

The first thing that struck me³ at the workshop was the diversity of the group. A fellow participant said that it reminded her of Hajj, the annual pilgrimage in which Muslims from all corners of the world convene in Mecca (Saudi Arabia). Yes, it felt like that. Practicing, not practicing, and somewhere in between. Immigrant,

Indigenous, and international. Straight and LGBTQF.⁴ We were all there to reclaim our connections with one another, and to share and learn from one another.

Where are the *men*? For much of the workshop I was the only guy there. It's harder for men to stay in RC, even harder for men of the global majority, and harder still for Muslim men.

We Muslim men have lost our voices. We are all too aware of the fact that Gitmo⁵ is full of men. We have been driven to not stick our necks out,⁶ out of concern for ourselves, and our families who depend on us. It was striking how much more vocal the women on the 9/11⁷ workshop panel

were than the men. And in the wide world, it is Muslim women who are fighting for our liberation.

But our women are also targeted—for example, for the way they dress or the things they believe—and are subject to sexism and male domination. Stereotypes say that Muslim women are more subject to sexism than non-Muslim women, but the truth is that *all* women are targeted—the form of it just differs from place to place and culture to culture. It is racism when one type of sexism is branded as worse than another. All sexism is bad.

The Muslim community is not immune to racism against African American Muslims. It was apparent that our Community needs to work on this, and so we did. Azadeh⁸ led a panel on Sunday morning of African American Muslims. It was one of the most enlightening parts of the workshop! The immigrant and African American Muslim communities are largely separate and separated. But there are so many reasons to love one another, and doing so is part of our tradition. The Ansar welcomed the Muhajirs as they arrived in Madinah a little over fourteen hundred years ago.⁹ We get to reclaim that and take it back to our wide-world Muslim communities.

Anonymous
USA



DIANE SHISK

Any really good solution to a problem is a good solution for every human touched by that problem.

Harvey Jackins
From *The Kind, Friendly Universe*, page 128

⁸ Azadeh (Azi) Khalili, the International Liberation Reference Person for South, Central, and West Asian-Heritage People, and the leader of the workshop

⁹ When the Muslims immigrated to Al-Madinah, the prophet Mohammad established a caring connection between the Muhajireen (the immigrants from Makkah) and the Ansar (those Muslims already living in Al-Madinah). The Muhajireen were in need of assistance in order to start their lives over again, and establishing the connection between them and the Ansar was one of the first things Mohammad did in Al-Madinah. It was one of the cornerstones of building a healthy, strong, successful Muslim nation.

¹ Contradiction to distress

² "Took" means required.

³ "That struck me" means that I noticed.

⁴ Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and formerly one of these

⁵ Guantanamo Bay Naval Base, in Cuba—a U.S. naval base that since 2002 has contained a military prison for alleged "enemy combatants" captured in Afghanistan, Iraq, and other places as part of the "war on terror"

⁶ "Stick our necks out" means take risks and be visible.

⁷ "9/11" refers to the terrorist attacks in New York City and Washington, D.C., USA, on September 11, 2001.

Giving Up a Life-Threatening Addiction to Sugar

I am a large woman and as such am exposed to both sexism and the oppression of being large—in addition to the oppressions of being raised-poor, working class, Catholic, an elder, and more.

Society generally views the effects of oppression as an individual, personal problem, not something that is institutionalized and part of the fabric of an oppressive society. This is particularly true of large women's oppression, an oppression rarely challenged in society. The myth is that a person can just change and the oppression will disappear—that if you experience oppression, it is up to you¹ to change your behavior and then it will stop. Be nice, look like you meet societal standards, assimilate, comply, obey, and your life will be easy. We in RC know that is not true!

As a large woman I am regarded as a failure. My body size is seen as a reflection of stupidity, low self-esteem, and lack of willpower. Large women are viewed as more stupid than average (if we were not so stupid, we would make use of all the “good information” and advice about weight loss).

The oppression has made it nearly impossible for me to engage my mind and focus it on health and living a good, long life. Focusing it on weight loss has distorted my thinking. It has led me to do horrible things to my body, after which I've been praised for the result (weight loss) of the destructive actions.

Whenever I have lost weight, people have liked and appreciated me. This is what sexism does to women. We are encouraged to do whatever it takes² to meet certain unreal standards of beauty—follow stupid rigid diets (often dictated by an industry with an interest in selling specific foods), take harmful drugs to not feel hunger, undergo surgeries that destroy our system, keep smoking out of fear that we will gain weight if we stop. We are discouraged from using our independent and well-informed minds. Instead we are led to follow set formulas in order to avoid oppression.

Large women are seen as a public insult. We are told that we are expensive for society because of the diseases we “bring on ourselves.” All of this reinforces early discouragement. Every attempt to get over the food addiction is seen as a failure if we don't lose weight, because weight loss is the criteria for success. When

we buy into³ this definition of success and failure, we miss the point—that *every step toward reclaiming our full minds and lives is a good and important step.* (We did not start life with “perfect” language and “perfect” walking, running, and dancing.)

I have been large since my teens. As a young person, and for almost twenty years after, I was given drugs both to lose weight and to “feel better.” I realized a year ago that many of the drugs I was prescribed made me vulnerable to overweight and diabetes. (I was diagnosed with type 2 diabetes twenty years ago.) The link between my diseases and the drugs helped me realize that excessive body fat and the related diseases *were not my fault!* I have raged about the drugs for over a year now.

Before I started RC I also smoked a lot and drank large amounts of alcohol every day. I quit the drugs the day before I started my first RC class. I quit the cigarettes when I got my RC teacher's certificate. I quit the booze⁴ completely about twenty years ago. In the last year I have worked extensively on these addictions and experienced a lot of pain in my muscles and joints. I have decided that the pain has to be mostly restimulation and have discharged rage, terror, and grief about it.

QUITTING SUGAR

For ten years I have also been part of the RC Large Women's Health and Liberation Project⁵ and have formed a local support team of allies for myself. Having loving people with me (or rather *realizing* there are loving people with me now) plus the steady, ongoing effort and decision to keep moving on, even when I felt utterly discouraged about the fat not dripping off my body within a year or two, helped me make a decision that was almost a surprise to me: I decided to give up⁶ sugar.

A couple of months ago I got some blood test results. They were terrible; my blood sugar was skyrocketing.

continued . . .

¹ “Up to you” means your responsibility.

² “Takes” means requires.

³ “Buy into” means agree to.

⁴ “Booze” means alcoholic beverages.

⁵ The RC Large Women's Health and Liberation Project started ten years ago, with a small group of large women RC leaders coming together to use RC to move forward the work on their health. The group has met annually since then.

⁶ “Give up” means quit.

LIBERATION

... continued

I heard myself say to the doctor, “I can do better than that,” and when I came home I made the decision never to eat sugar again. That meant no candy, chocolate, ice cream, or cakes, or the less obvious sugar the food industry adds where you don’t expect it—in salad dressings, breads, marinades, sour-sweet sauces, and so on. I decided that I would consider sugar to be as addictive and harmful as alcohol, at least for me. That meant that I would never enter into a debate of “should I or should I not.”

I shared this decision with some of the women on my support team. I was afraid of their response, but they reacted sensibly—not too enthusiastically (“hurray,” “finally”), just with respect and “this is a big decision.”

It is interesting what makes a decision possible. I think it builds up over time. I had often thought that sugar would be impossible to drop. I had also felt resentful of people who had made the decision and stuck to it. I worked on how resentful I felt that they seemed to have easier access to such a decision, that my material⁷ was too severe for me to decide. I also worked on taking pride in the decisions I had made to quit the drugs, to quit the cigarettes, to quit alcohol. (All three were because quitting was a condition for leading in RC.)

I am proud to say that I have stuck to my decision to quit sugar and have done so in spite of many, many demanding political meetings in which there was sugary food in front of me. I have been at an RC workshop with an ice cream shop nearby and watched my beloved Co-Counselors enjoy all that ice cream that I was not having.

I have also cut down on⁸ bread, pasta, rice, potatoes, and other foods that have a relatively quick carbohydrate effect. A mix of nuts and dried fruit was one of my favorites, but I have mostly quit it because it affects my blood sugar in a bad way. I have also been thoughtful about other fruits, limiting them to some extent. I prefer food that is locally grown and in season. I’ve added lots of vegetables that I like—and made sure that I have some oil or butter with them so I don’t feel chronic hunger. (The food industry launched the idea that all fatty foods are dangerous, so many of us think that fat-free is fine. It is not necessarily. We all need a certain amount of fat. What we are after⁹ is thinking, not set regimes.)

⁷ “Material” means distress.

⁸ “Cut down on” means reduced the amount of.

⁹ “After” means pursuing.

One of the hard things about what I am doing is that it hooks into a chronic¹⁰ of feeling different, marginal, and odd in social settings and puts people’s attention on me and my being large. Any feelings I have, however, are just an indicator of where I still need to discharge. Reality is that I am liked, wanted, and respected by many, many people.

Weight loss is not what motivates me at this time, and that is new. I may lose weight, but that is not the point. I’m not giving up sugar to become acceptable or attractive, to please, or to ease the burden of the oppression. I’m doing it for me, for my life. I am also not replacing one rigidity with another. I am *thinking* about what I eat—what I truly need; what is tasty, beautiful, and good for my body.

I have been measuring my blood sugar a couple of times a day to learn which foods have which effect and what is the effect of walking and bicycling. A wonderful thing is that my blood sugar has fallen drastically. I also seem to be over the worst physical cravings.

HOW OUR HEALING PROCESS WORKS

My recent decision is a great example of how our healing process works: the re-evaluation, the understanding, comes after discharge. We don’t know the outcome of a session or a series of sessions until later. What we can do is keep working in the direction we want to go in—keep moving and discharging, no matter how lost and defeated we feel (which is just how lost and defeated we felt back then, not proof of actual failure).

I remember Tim¹¹ saying some years ago that we seem to move at glacier-like speed. It is hard to notice the movement from day to day. But when we look back, we can see that we have moved. I didn’t notice that I had changed until I heard it come out of my mouth—“I can do better.”

We probably underestimate the amount of old discouragement and how easily it gets restimulated. It can feel impossible to do what we’d like to do, and lapsing from a decision can feel like proof that it is impossible. Also, because isolation is a heavy component of old discouragement, connection, connection, connection is key. I am facing the fact that

¹⁰ Chronic pattern

¹¹ Tim Jackins

I am not alone, that there is a “we” and an “us” out there, that now is different from the past. There are people on my side, and I am on theirs, and we are meant to have each other.

MODELS WHO SHOW WHAT IT TAKES

A word for allies: Large women are not the only ones with food addictions! And just because our struggle shows does not mean that we are ignorant about the relationship between food and health. We don’t need information (we know more than most people). We don’t need advice about the newest trend that seems

to be just what we need to finally lose weight. Instead, use us as models who show what it takes to battle chronic material. We have the luck not to be lured into illusions that the battle is over. I consider this an advantage in my struggle to get my full mind back and to have my life for many, many more years than the statistics would predict. (I don’t intend to follow the statistics!)

Susanne Langer

Copenhagen, Denmark

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

I can’t breathe*

*struggling to just stay alive
trapped between lies and alibis
frantically calling out
does anyone hear my pleas?*

*stranded on the corner of distrust
caught up in the tragedy of mistrust
lost within the verb to be
why must it always come down to luck?*

*torn between seven veils
hidden behind the shroud of tales
pimped on the evening news
am i just another reason to flee?*

*responsibility denied, freedom delayed
murder absolved, solicitous duplicity
mundane rehearsals, trivial pursuits
and yet you wonder, still why—
I can’t breathe.*

Dr. Rodney Coates
Oxford, Ohio, USA

* Eric Garner, an African American man, was suffocated to death by a police officer who was arresting him for selling single cigarettes on the street in Staten Island, New York, USA, last July. He repeated, “I can’t breathe,” eleven times before he died. A subsequent grand jury did not indict the officer. “I can’t breathe” has become a rallying cry at protests against the ongoing police brutality directed against U.S. people of color.

Discharging Humiliation

The article on discharging humiliation, by Jay Raymond, on page 19 of the July 2013 *Present Time*, was highly recommended at Dan Nickerson’s* workshop as an important tool for eliminating racism. We white people miss many opportunities for connection and taking a stand against racism because we want to avoid feeling embarrassed or humiliated. Dan asked, “How much energy do you devote in your life to avoiding feelings of humiliation?”

Steve Brown

Colorado, USA

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



MARGO HITTLEMAN

Creating a Clear Vision for Our Liberation as We Eliminate Racism

This article is inspired by the People of the Global Majority Workshop 2014 led by the amazing Barbara Love, International Liberation Reference Person for People of African Heritage in RC.

Whenever I go to a workshop led by Barbara Love, I find myself wishing that all my friends and fellow RCers could be there with me. I often get inspired to take next steps in my RC leadership. At the recent People of the Global Majority Workshop mentioned above, Barbara encouraged each of us to create a clear vision for our liberation, and the liberation of our people. As I move forward to do just that, I want to share with you some of my thoughts.

I am born of mixed-heritage parents, each of African and Native American heritages. One of my grandfathers is of European and Native American heritage. Despite this biological diversity, many in my family have historically identified as Black and consequently so have I. This is because, in the mainstream of U.S. race culture, a person with a parent or even a grandparent of African heritage is often regarded as Black—that is, if not racially ambiguous. Any additional heritage is often rendered invisible, unacknowledged, or a part of a diaspora of “Blackness.”

The idea of separate races among humans is not supported by modern science, but it has resulted in the racism we all deeply want to eliminate. As a social construction, it saturates our lives and our world, including our languages. Though it can often appear to have been around¹ since the beginning of time, it was actually created quite recently in the context of recorded human history. It is the consequence of a mistaken but historic ideology of European supremacy.

What many of us have understood to be the “White race” was actually constructed by a group of European aristocrats and scientists in order to make it easier for them to dominate other humans. They constructed a “Negro (Black) race” to make it easier for them to subordinate and ultimately enslave Africans. Overall, the construction of these races was intended to uphold the socio-economic class system these

“I THINK IT WILL BE IMPORTANT FOR EACH OF US (PEOPLE OF THE GLOBAL MAJORITY AND ALLIES ALIKE) TO GET AS CLEAR A PICTURE AS WE CAN OF OUR PEOPLE, EXTENDING BACK BEFORE THE RATHER RECENTLY FORMED RACE CULTURES IN WHICH MANY OF US CURRENTLY LIVE.”

Europeans were accustomed to and to “justify” the enslavement, colonization, and genocide of others from whom they desperately sought to obtain land and other resources. After some time, this same socio-economic system would grow to hold in place an ideology of U.S. supremacy.

It’s certainly no surprise that the oppressions of racism have become both widespread and deep. As I process the how and the why of it and try to figure out forward movement toward my liberation and the liberation of others, here are a couple of questions I have been grappling with: (1) If the very ideas of “Black” and “White” are the result of white racism and based on the mistaken ideology of European supremacy, is it truly re-emergent for us to identify with them? (2) Despite

our best intentions, are we in many ways reinforcing racism by continuing to identify racially, often confusing race with ethnicity? For example, “Black” and “White” are colors often used to indicate biologically based racial classifications, which are not supported by modern science. “Latin” and “Asian” make references to geographic locations and diverse sets of ethnic and cultural experiences. Still we often refer to them as racial classifications.

Many people of African heritage around the world currently identify as Black, and many do not. Some seem to use Black more as a descriptive classification, even though it was historically intended to assign value. When Jesse Jackson ran for U.S. president in the 1980s, he started calling those of us in the United States “African Americans.” He stated that we were not one particular color. This caught on,² and for some time it was more politically correct to say “African American.” Interestingly, today many African-heritage young adults, as well as other USers of African heritage, are identifying as Black again. Could this, at least in part, be because our current U.S. president identifies that way, seeming to embrace it as a social construction? I wonder if he is politically and socially motivated to better align himself with “Black Americans.”

Through the years, we USers of African heritage have been creative and inventive in the most amazing ways. We’ve been so good at “making lemonade out of lemons,” both figuratively and literally. We’ve made delicious “soul food” out of our master’s scraps, and the list of course goes on to far greater things that have profoundly impacted the entire world. “Soul food” has served the wonderful function of

¹ “Around” means in existence.

² “Caught on” means became popular.

bringing people together, along with providing nourishment and energy for work to be done. It also has fed our souls by being so delicious. That being said, I think it is important for us to remember that it was still once the master's scraps. Eating that same way today, on a regular basis, will clog our arteries and contribute to diabetes and heart disease. It could literally kill us. In fact it has killed many of us. This is, at least in part, because the majority of us no longer work on plantations where our bodies could make better use of such a diet. Today, thanks to those who fought and died for the civil rights and liberation of our people, we now live under different conditions and have access to a broader and more global perspective on who we are.

We know that many of our African ancestors were taken from Africa to become enslaved Negroes and later Black Americans in the New World (the Americas). We also know that many Europeans left Europe to become White Americans in the New World. I recently saw a counseling session in which a native European counselor said to his client, "Good-bye, my sister. I will miss you!" The client got to imagine she was leaving Europe for the New World, perhaps never to return. She discharged what seemed like the deep pain of leaving her people behind and consequently leaving a big part of herself behind too.

I just wonder, as we dare to visualize a world without racism, what we Co-Counselors of African and European heritage would get to discharge if we claimed our African heritage more than our "Blackness" and our European heritage more than our "Whiteness." Would this deepened sense of connection to our European and African ancestors connect us more to ourselves and consequently more to each other? I imagine we would need to look at the European enslavement of Africans in a bigger way. I also think we would need to look closely at the events

that led up to the enslavement, as well as to genocide and colonization.

Here's a snapshot: Toward the end (the 1300s to 1400s) of Europe's Dark Ages, Europeans were continuously at war for a hundred years, fighting each other for dominance, land, and other resources. Just outside of every village was what was called a "hanging tree," where people were hanged to death for the smallest of crimes, like stealing a rabbit or a loaf of bread. Even after death, their bodies were left hanging on the tree to serve as an example and a reminder of the terror that could come to anyone at any time. At this point in the story that Barbara told at the workshop, I heard the sighs of other Co-Counselors and couldn't help being reminded of the historic regular lynchings of African-heritage people in the southeast United States. Barbara reminded us that in RC we have the

clear understanding that when we get hurt and don't have an opportunity to heal, we pass the hurt on.

Moving forward in loving connection with each other, I think it will be important for each of us (people of the global majority and allies alike) to get as clear a picture as we can of our people, extending back before the rather recently formed race cultures in which many of us currently live. Who were our people and what happened to them? We all need to heal from the effects of what got passed on to our people, so we don't continue to pass it on to others. With all of our diversity and all of our sameness, in the end it is, as Barbara has said, "about liberation. It's about having lives that support us to be fully and completely human."

Gregory Lipscomb
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA



BEAVERTAIL STATE PARK, RHODE ISLAND, USA • MARJORIE SMITH

Facing Sexual Objectification

I am a middle-class raised-Muslim African-born-in-England-in-1970 female. When I was growing up, it was easy to accidentally see images of sexually objectified females on the third page of a popular newspaper. These images held up teenage white females as highly desirable and at the same time totally disrespected them. As a black female, I felt excluded from being desirable while at the same time relieved not to be part of something so disrespectful to females.



ASTUVANSALMI ROCKS, RISTIINA, SOUTHERN SAVONIA, FINLAND • KAISLI SYRJÄNEN

In the 1980s a few working-class teenage females became celebrities as topless models. The message was that it was a way for young working-class females to succeed in a society in which male domination and classism limited their opportunities. It also communicated that whatever role women took in society, their attractiveness to men was highly important to their success.

As a female raised with middle-class privileges, I have not been forced into taking part* in the pornography industry. Also, society encourages me to act on my feelings of powerlessness and not stand up against the industry, to see myself as one of the “good ones” who has stayed out of it and is unaffected by it. I look forward to working on pornography in a middle-class women’s group and addressing passivity about changing society when we seem to benefit from it and feel comfortable.

Alima Adams

Cambridge, Cambridgeshire, England

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

* “Taking part” means participating.

“It Revealed Myself to Me”

In July 2014 there was a women’s workshop in India led by Diane Balsler¹ and organised by Niti Dandekar.² Along with Indian women, a few Iranian women and a woman from Sweden took part.³ Having people from different countries and working together on women’s issues strengthened our sisterhood. We shared how women are treated in our different cultures.

I was glad to meet Diane Balsler. She is a personification of women’s power and intelligence, and I felt fortunate to experience her leadership.

We met in topic groups on women and marriage, women and beautification, sexism and sex, and so on. We had a lot of fun. On the last night of the workshop, none of us was willing to go to sleep. Most of us stayed up and enjoyed singing and dancing.

There were demonstrations on physical appearance, sexism, rape and sexual abuse, hair dyeing, and more. A great demonstration started with my earliest memory of sexism and went on to various areas, including sexism in sitting, standing, and walking postures and even in sounds made while breathing and urinating.

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

² Niti Dandekar is the Regional Reference Person for India.

³ “Took part” means participated.



We discharged about disrespect for women's bodies, particularly breasts and genitals. Uttering the word *vagina* was a big challenge. There was shame and embarrassment connected to it. At that point we were getting numb and finding it challenging to pay attention. Diane gave us the direction "I am fully a female, and I have a vagina." It worked well. I shivered, laughed, and finally could say it. Diane commented that this is important work—one woman's re-emergence can bring about changes in many people's lives.

I am able to use the word *vagina* more casually these days. At the end of our sessions, one of my Co-Counselors and I ask each other, "How is your vagina now?" We give funny answers like "rainbow," "dry well," "ice cream," "biscuit," "blue sky," and so on. Playing in this way has brought about more closeness with my Co-Counselor.

The workshop was a great experience. It revealed myself to me. I am glad and proud that I was a part of it.

S.J. Shashikala (Shashi)
Bangalore, India



Staying Counselor

Someone asks Harvey¹ how to be a counselor to an oppressed person who is directing their restimulated feelings of anger at him. Harvey asks him to come up and play the role of the oppressed person while Harvey plays the oppressor role.

Oppressed: I don't want hypocrisy. Don't cry if you are going to oppress. Where do you stand?²

Oppressor: I'm shedding tears to get over being oppressive. I'm not there yet, and I don't expect you to be satisfied until I am.

Oppressed: Are you my enemy?

Oppressor: No, I'm not. But society is, and I'm a passive member of society giving it permission to oppress you, and as such I have responsibility, and I'll accept that. I'm not going to be an active oppressor, but that's not good enough. I have to actively intervene to end oppression, and I'm working to

get there, but I'm not there yet. I'm not your enemy; I'm on the way to being your ally.

Oppressed: Do you really feel for me?³

³ "Feel for me" means care about me.



LYNDALL KATZ

Oppressor: I'm trying to fight my way through fog that has been dumped on me and led me to feel and react as if you weren't quite a human being. That's very wrong. You're a human being at least as good as I am, and I'm on my way to realizing it, and acting on it, and being close to you and with you.

I'm going to be your ally, and if you need to complain because I'm not a good enough ally yet, or if you feel safer complaining at me than going out and complaining at those who are really grinding you down, then practice complaining at me, and get your weapons sharp, and we'll tackle your active oppressors together.

Harvey (to the group): There's no hoping to get across⁴ unless you can stand up to some abuse. This is a test. "Can you be a good enough ally to handle my distress?"

Harvey Jackins
At a workshop in 1973

⁴ "Get across" means be convincing.

¹ Harvey Jackins

² "Where do you stand" means what is your position.

Tackling Classism Together

Our RC Region¹ has tried a few things to challenge classism. One of our Areas in Chicago (Illinois, USA) has a support group for people raised working class. A support group of middle-class people from both Chicago Areas also meets. In my leaders' meetings, I've noticed that a lot of us feel like we don't have any more time or money for RC, regardless of how much time or money we actually have. So when I led our Regional workshop this fall, I was thinking about other things we could try to get more attention in this area.

It seems difficult for many of us—no matter what our class background is—to talk about our current situation. Telling someone how much money we earn, how much we have, and what we do with it (including how much we pay for RC workshops) seems difficult. It's hard for us to remember to discharge on it, or to ask each other about it. Our economic system keeps us extremely isolated around these issues. We feel bad if we can't "make it work," believing we are personally to blame for a big, oppressive system.

At our workshop, I asked people, "What is the group of people you could talk with about your financial and economic situation?" We took a lot of time proposing groups and helping people think about them. They included the following:

- Want to retire but scared to stop working
- Younger people trying to navigate capitalism
- Having more money than our parents
- Self-employed
- Raised poor or working class but working in middle-class jobs
- Raised middle class and working in middle-class jobs
- Owning class, trust funds, and unearned income

A lot of people said these groups were a highlight of the workshop. Below are some responses and some additional thoughts on our work on classism.

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

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

Our last several Regional workshops have spurred me into action² on classism. Last year I led a table at which I asked everyone to discharge about what to pay for workshops and to look at the connection between racism and wealth. Since then I have pushed way³ outside my comfort zone to lead a raised-working-class support group. I had noticed that many of our Region's working-class leaders spent a lot of time rehearsing complaints about middle- and owning-class patterns and I wanted to point us toward a more powerful response. The class system is complex, and we are often pulled to look at things from the targeted end. We need to discharge our oppressor material⁴ as well. It would also be great if we could gain better attention for our middle- and owning-class sisters and brothers. We might even choose to counsel them.

In the support group, we noticed that everyone there had a bachelor's degree or higher, including those of us who were raised poor, and that our Region has had difficulty attracting and retaining individuals who haven't had access to that kind of education. Since we are in the United States, that means we are missing out on sixty-eight percent of the adult population. We also noticed that there are few (if any) active Co-Counselors in our Community currently doing working-class jobs.

Many of us who make it to RC were labeled early on as "gifted" or "smart" and were tracked differently from our peers. We have had sessions about working-class people we loved in our childhood, ways we got separated, and what it would take to make friends with more working-class people in our current lives. We have looked at Harvey's⁵ idea of serving as "secret agents" of the working class and how we could make that a reality.

A raised-middle-class support group has also been meeting regularly, and at our last Regional workshop *everyone* worked on money. Things are starting to happen.

Jason Rasmussen
Chicago, Illinois, USA

² "Spurred me into action" means motivated me to take action.

³ "Way" means far.

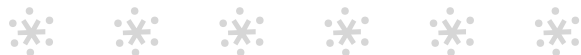
⁴ "Material" means distress.

⁵ Harvey Jackins'

My mom was a single parent who was over forty years of age when I was born. I had two brothers, both about twenty years older than I. One was challenged by alcoholism and the other by a mental condition. Mom graduated from a practical nursing school but couldn't get a job as a nurse. We lived in a second-floor rear apartment heated by a coal stove. There were two tiny bedrooms. During the great migration of African Americans from the Southern United States, seven relatives came to live with us in that two-bedroom apartment. I suppose this is why I feel penniless and on the brink of starvation. I always carry food in my purse, and plastic bags in which to take home food from any reception I attend.

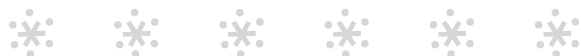
The workshop helped me realize my present reality. I now live in one of Chicago's nicest neighborhoods, one of my offspring is a city planner for a major city, and another is the manager of a post office in a major city. I have travelled to India, Israel, Brazil, Korea, and many countries in Africa and have cruised the islands of Hawaii. I have spoken to many audiences in cities around the United States. Because I've had a small business for the past ten years, at the workshop I joined the group for people who were in business. The workshop helped me *begin* to work on the fact that I am not penniless and on the brink of starvation.

Anonymous



I have been discovering how closely self-worth is tied to "making money." I counseled about that and found fear at the bottom of it all. Not working (being retired) has me scared into feeling that I am worthless.

Madeline Talbott
Chicago, Illinois, USA



I was shocked when we were told to do sessions and have groups about money. Money has seemed like a taboo subject, even in RC. The people in my group all seemed "comfortable," bordering on rich. Lots of early feelings came up for me about not fitting in. I connected with one person and did my session with him on money. I made a commitment to follow-up with him and put the date in my phone calendar. While I never did check in with him, having it written down encouraged me to look at it, and several weeks after the date I took care of the money business hanging over me. I felt proud that I did it!

Joy Aaronson
Oak Park, Illinois, USA

Working on class and money in constituency groups was incredibly helpful for me as a young adult. I have worked on class and money with young adults before, but having Alysia's leadership and a room full of people all working on different pieces of related material created safety and a space to work. Just hearing people list the things they wanted to work on was helpful. It was reassuring to see that we (adults included) don't have it all figured out already and also that we are making progress.

As a young adult I am trying to navigate an unreasonable and oppressive system, but I am constantly given messages to the contrary. The message I've gotten as a middle-class U.S. woman is that I have a good life—and the tools to keep it that way and improve other people's lives as well—and that I'd better learn how to "do it right" or I'll be left behind or be humiliated. As a young person, there was a lot of pressure to go to the "right" schools and do the "right" things to eventually get the "right" job.

"It is not a rational system. There is no 'right way' in an oppressive system" was a powerful contradiction.⁶ There are no "winners" in capitalism, because we are all hurt by such an irrational system, so trying to be a "winner," or trying to win just a little—not too much, and in the "right" way—is not logical.

Discharging with the other young adults was a contradiction to the sudden isolation we face when we transition from being young people to being young adults. When we were young people (mostly in school), we got to spend a lot of time together and be close. That was a contradiction to competition patterns. As we became young adults and started entering the workforce, we were separated from each other by competition for work. That's why it was such a great experience to openly show our struggles around work and money. It is a myth that there are certain jobs that will allow us to escape capitalism entirely, but we get to look for a way to work without being overly hooked by or entangled in the oppressive society.

I loved seeing how my fellow young adults were working hard to live lives of integrity in an oppressive society. Working on it together reminded me that I'm not alone and that it isn't my job, by myself, to make sure that we all thrive. It is crucial that we do this work, and get supported by our Communities to do it, because then we will be able to think so much better about the future of RC and our society.

Madeline Cronin
Chicago, Illinois, USA

continued . . .

⁶ Contradiction to the distress

LIBERATION

... continued

I joined the group entitled “Owning Class, Trust Funds, and Unearned Income.” It was a first for me to be in a group like that. It was so nice to have a group to belong to. The safety was a contradiction and allowed me to discharge my confusions about money.

Cindy Dimmitt
Chicago, Illinois, USA

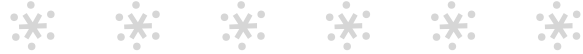


I found it interesting to watch our minds work as we proposed the groups we wanted to be in to discharge about money and class. People kept coming up with⁷ more and more specific categories (raised poor but now middle class, raised working class but now not sure, and so on). It demonstrated that one can have a mixed class background or move from one class to another. Seeing all the different

⁷ “Coming up with” means thinking of.

combinations made it safe to discharge about current income and debt and all the feelings attached.

Patrick Zylka
Chicago, Illinois, USA



For the first time since arriving in this country, I was able to talk about money without fear of offending someone. Since the distribution of wealth is so far from fair in this society, talking about how much one makes is a taboo. It was refreshing to be liberated from it during the three-way mini-session.

Katya Rehak
Oak Park, Illinois, USA
(originally from Russia)



BURMA • MAURA FALLON

A Great Web of Falsehood

This great web of falsehood, of unreality, has covered not only our heads but everything about us deeply. Underneath this thick layer of nonsense, of course, reality still persists. It is a good universe. It's full of marvelous things to enjoy and learn about. It is very eager to be taken care of and managed well by our intelligences.

These strange-looking creatures around us, wearing these patterned masks and behaving so badly and so unhappily, are really wonderful human beings in disguise. This society, which acts so powerful and threatens death to anyone who does not submit, is a ridiculous house of cards* that can be blown away with one strong breath (and even if we haven't blown strongly at it lately, is still collapsing under its own difficulties).

Harvey Jackins
From *A Better World*, page 10

* “House of cards” means unstable structure.

An Elders' Liberation Workshop

I led an Elders' Liberation Workshop in Virginia (USA). It was preceded by a gather-in on "health and well-being." I was pleased with what we accomplished.

The gather-in was open to both elders and allies (anyone under fifty). In one demonstration, someone who had dealt with chronic physical pain ended up discharging on early distresses. I talked about how the weakest parts of our bodies "soak up"¹ distresses and how discharge can relieve or get rid of pain. Because elders' oppression is often discouraging in many ways, I aimed for lightness, and lots of laughter resulted.

At the workshop, I said that the following were some key issues in elders' liberation:

- elders' oppression and internalized oppression
- health
- fear of dementia
- fear of death and dying
- developing younger allies

In the Saturday morning class we dealt with health issues the participants had brought to discharge on. We focused on building strong relationships (instead of being isolated with our hurts), fighting for ourselves with someone's attention, and knowing when to discharge and when to seek medical help (while continuing to discharge).

When in pain, many people seek pain pills, a temporary "solution" that only masks the pain. (People in the United States spend more on pain medications than on any other kind. Pain is also the second-most common reason for visiting a doctor.) Pain is mostly fear. When the fear is discharged, not only do our bodies feel better but we also reclaim better functioning. Consistent discharge can sometimes permanently change chronic conditions. (However, it's not our job as counselors to expect that someone can heal a disability.)

FEAR OF DYING

We accumulate feelings by not discharging thoroughly on deaths, starting from our childhood, and by watching others older than ourselves grieve only partially—never enough.

I asked the question, "If you could imagine for a few minutes that you would never die or have dementia, what goals would you set now?" This brought us to focus on living our lives in the present instead of giving in to the oppressive feeling

¹ "Soak up" means absorb.

that "we are getting old and closer to death." If we live as if we will live forever, not fear or plan for death, our lives will change. We can plan for and live the biggest possible lives in the present. This can include doing work to save and heal the planet. I've personally decided to live as full a life as I can every day and not focus (with distress) on the future, except to keep doing what I love. So far it is working well.

FUN

After creativity² we had a "sock hop"³ dance to the music of the 1950s and 1960s. That brought everyone's attention way out.⁴ Faces looked different for the rest of the weekend.

INTERRUPTING ELDERS' OPPRESSION

Every day we experience elders' oppression, which can leave us isolated and believing our distress. Nearly everyone has been conditioned by elders' oppression, so usually no one interrupts it. I talked about the importance of building relationships with younger allies. It's to their advantage⁵ to understand and discharge on elders' oppression, as they are future elders. And it is definitely to our benefit⁶ to have relationships with people younger than ourselves.

continued . . .

² During creativity, participants share their music, art, writing, and other creative expressions with the workshop.

³ "Sock hop": in the 1960s in the United States, teens would get together and dance to popular music in their socks.

⁴ "Way out" means far away from distress.

⁵ "To their advantage" means advantageous to them.

⁶ "To our benefit" means beneficial to us.



ISTANBUL, TURKEY • LANCE CABLIK

LIBERATION

... continued

We spent some time figuring out ways to interrupt elders' oppression. I presented some samples of what people in the wide world utter without thought, and answers that might jiggle⁷ people's distresses and hopefully make them think a bit differently. We worked on these in groups of four, and I was pleased when I heard laughter throughout the building. Here are a few examples:

Comment: "You're seventy (or whatever age)? You don't look seventy."

Replies (said in a light and upbeat tone):

"Yes, I'm in the prime of my life!"

"Yes, I'm seventy, going on to a healthy and productive hundred and twenty."

"Yes, and someday you will get to be seventy!"

"Seventy is a fabulous age."

"I wouldn't trade my age for anything!"

"... and I have more confidence, knowledge, compassion, (and so on), than ever."

⁷ "jiggle" means interrupt and contradict.



"Here Come the Elders!"

Who wants to be an elder? Who understands that our bodies are forever vibrant and precious and have amazing capacities to heal? Who knows the importance of working, working, working, on the early memories that collect in our minds and "play" with our bodies? Who wants to have fun?

WE DO!

In November 2014 Pam Geyer¹ led a truly amazing Elders' Liberation Workshop for the Maryland, District of Columbia, and Virginia (USA)

¹ Pam Geyer is the International Liberation Reference Person for Elders.

Regions.² An outstanding group of shining elders came close together to tackle and understand the struggles surrounding health and healing that threaten to take over our lives as we age. Pam was as gentle as she was firm as she encouraged us to work, over and over, on the connections between our minds and our bodies and not settle for the stereotypes that threaten our well-being. We bonded well as we began to step out of elders' oppression to embrace the joys of elders' liberation.

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

Comment: "I'm getting old."

Replies:

"I live as if I will never die."

"My life improves every day as I use all my accumulated knowledge."

"These are the best days of my life."

"I expect to have a life that continues to move forward in health and productivity."

Comment: "Here you are, (sweetie, honey, young lady)."

Replies (said lightly and with a smile):

"Do you address men by those same names?"

"Oh, I didn't know we were in that kind of relationship!"

And we tried taking this direction: *I will disregard the negative images, beliefs, and impressions I have been given about ageing and will live my life the way I was intended to—happily, healthily, and productively, now and forever.*

Then we had mini-sessions in which we answered the question, "What is the biggest picture of yourself in your future, outside the distress?" and set goals.

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

Here, among many, are a few things that stood out for me:

- "It sometimes happens that a body heals" is a great contradiction to our assumptions that our health is static.

- "An injury will soak up emotions, and our bodies will soak up emotional distress."

- The best way to work on pain is to go back as early as possible and find what has been restimulated. With a fresh injury, we can work on the events leading up to it and on the actual injury, and then go back.

Chances are³ we will run smack into⁴ a chronic.⁵ “Chronic patterns love our pain.” We need to keep working early⁶ to see what is possible for the healing and longevity of our bodies.

- Death: What if we never thought of death? What would our life be like? What are our big goals, at the age we are now? It’s also important to work on the deaths of family members and others we have known.

- Handling elders’ oppression: (We need to call it “elders’ oppression,” not “ageism”—ageism affects us at every age.) We need to contradict it with light and playful tones. My personal example:

Person tells me, “Laurie, some of us are going into this gorge. It has eight

³ “Chances are” means it is likely.

⁴ “Smack into” means directly into.

⁵ Chronic pattern

⁶ “Working early” means discharging on early hurts.

hundred steps that we think will be difficult for you. So we suggest that you watch some of the movies in the Visitors’ Center while we do this climb.”

My response: “Thanks. I actually am joining a group that is taking a longer route, which means about a thousand steps. I don’t want to miss the challenge and beauty of this adventure, and the steps are actually easy ones. So I will meet you at the other end.”

I have cerebral palsy, which affects my speech and coordination. I also have some balance difficulties. I am sixty-seven, and I get these cautious, well-meaning statements all the time. In the past few months I have gone on some more-challenging-for-me-than-usual hikes, including the eight-hundred-steps gorge. The beauty of nature and the desire to see how far I can push myself physically

overcome much of my fear. I want to live life as well and as big as I can. I am also curious to see how much of my coordination and balance (and maybe even speech) may be affected by early distress. My disability will always be present, but some of its manifestations may be benign.

- “Attitude is everything. Everything is a choice.”

Pam is so perfect to be leading us in this work. She projects so much hope and love and certainty in her words and in the way she welcomes everybody. She is leading a revolution and is always on everybody’s side.

WATCH OUT,⁷ WORLD! HERE COME THE ELDERS!

Laurie Summers
Silver Spring, Maryland, USA

⁷ “Watch out” means get ready, pay attention, be alert.

My Goals for Elders

(in no particular order)

SHORT-TERM AND INTERMEDIATE GOALS

- Work with lots of people on closeness, connection, and trust.
- Set up ongoing support groups.
- Work on elders’ oppression and elders’ internalized oppression.
- Figure out and share effective ways of interrupting elders’ oppression and internalized oppression.
- Update the Elders’ Draft Liberation Policy Statement.
- Build friendships and alliances with people under fifty.
- Work on feelings about death and dying.
- Be at the center of the RC Community.
- Plan an elders’ conference.
- Because personal health issues distract us, discharge on our health to help us reach other goals.

LONGER-RANGE GOALS

- Begin healthy aging early in life.
- Live a long, healthy, productive life (everyone).
- End elders’ oppression.

FOR ALL TIME

- End all oppression.
- Stop climate change and bring about* the flourishing of all of life.

What are your goals for elders’ liberation (no matter what your age)?



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

* “Bring about” means make happen.

A Wonderful Young Jews Workshop

I recently attended a wonderful Young Jews Workshop led by Emily Bloch and Cherie Brown.¹ I was *so* excited for it because I wanted to work on Jewish terror with other young adults. (My terror is often most accessible around other Jews, and I'm most relaxed and myself around young adults.) The combination of Cherie's class on being "totally and completely kind, tender, and generous with ourselves and others where we or they have distress" and Emily's class on terror, choices, rigid integrity, and young people and young adults was powerful for me! It gave me perspective on where I struggle *and* how I can be completely compassionate with myself and others. Emily and Cherie modeled complete tenderness in their explanations and counseling.

I took away a deeper understanding of anti-Jewish oppression and how to contradict it. Anti-Jewish oppression sets up² Jews to have distress and then targets us for showing it. For example, in the past Jews were not allowed access to most types of work; they could only lend money (other religions outlawed lending money with interest). Then they were blamed for being "greedy." Another way of putting it is that Jews get oppressed, we internalize it, and then everything goes badly. For example, a lot of people have tried to kill us, we've internalized that hurt and developed distress recordings that say that everyone is out to get³ us, and then some of us overreact to anything that (understandably) restimulates that recording.



WARSAW, POLAND • TIM JACKINS

We also turn on each other the internalized message that Jews should be separated or kicked out. We abandon other Jews when they hurt others or go against our own ethics due to their distress. Cherie and Emily invited us to contradict that by getting close to the most "unappealing" Jew and deciding that we would have other Jews' backs⁴ when they take a stand, even if they don't get it right all the time. This doesn't mean endorsing oppressive behavior, but it does mean continuing to see and love them and hold up their core goodness.

Upper- and middle-class Jews sometimes think that they've found a life of integrity in LGBTQ⁵ liberation or Palestinian solidarity. My choosing to take on⁶ in my early twenties a person-of-color identity (I'm a mixed-race Jew of the global majority) was about trying to find a way to have integrity and not feel so bad about myself. In one of my support-group sessions, I worked on reclaiming the person-of-color identity not as a way out of despair or self-hatred but as a personal choice for me, regardless of what anyone thinks.

I wanted to get some perspective on Israel-Palestine struggles, to not feel like I was going to die every time I was on social media, or like my activist friends would kick me out and attack me if I spoke up. My survival strategy had been numbness and avoidance—for example, not reading anything too deeply. Cherie explained that most of the wide world has a variation on one of two views when it comes to Israel-Palestine: (a) Jews and Israelis have no distress and are always totally justified, everything is fine, and saying anything against the Israeli government's behavior is anti-Jewish, or (b) Israel (and all Jews by association) is totally messed up, deeply oppressive for absolutely no reason, and so Israel (and Jews) should be eliminated.

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

² "Sets up" means creates the conditions for.

³ "Get" means hurt.

⁴ "Have other Jews' backs" means protect and support other Jews.

⁵ Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer

⁶ "Take on" means adopt, assume.

Obviously both views have significant distresses attached to them. As RCers we know that we can be for both peoples and for unity and peace, but internalized anti-Jewish oppression can make it incredibly hard to take a stand for a different way of thinking. At a table for people active or thinking about becoming active in the Israel-Palestine struggle, Cherie had each of us share what we were doing or thinking about doing and where we could use some extra support.

AFTER THE WORKSHOP

In the two days after the workshop I had conversations about Israel-Palestine with more than five people. On the plane ride home I had a three-hour conversation with a raised-Catholic white woman in her sixties who was married to a Jewish man. Talk about⁷ post-workshop attention! The moment she sat down, she said to me, "You just seem so open and friendly." Early in the conversation we spoke about things we had *really* different viewpoints on, like Israel-Palestine, yet we were both able to tell⁸ how much we liked each other and stay connected. (Before the workshop, there was no way I could have stayed so connected with someone who was telling me she didn't have any sympathy for Palestinians.) We talked (not argued) for another two and a half hours. It was pretty cool⁹ to talk about our visions for the world and our dreams and goals for ourselves.

It was also *awesome* to have post-workshop attention for my parents. Besides Jewish liberation, I moved on some owning-class, Asian-heritage, and "mental health" liberation issues with them. It was challenging, exhilarating, illuminating, and ultimately connecting.

This past weekend I went to the North American Asian Liberation Workshop where I attended a topic table *and* a topic group on Muslim liberation (for Muslims and allies). My highlight was hearing about a long history of connection between Muslims and Jews (especially pre-World War I) and taking the direction that "I'm not inventing connection; I'm recovering it!"

"Bobby Tamara"

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

⁷ "Talk about" means I certainly had.

⁸ "Tell" means notice.

⁹ "Pretty cool" means quite wonderful.

A New Poster

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

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

Thank you,
Tim Jackins

* A goal adopted by the 2013 World Conference of the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities. (See the cover of this *Present Time* for larger, more readable text.)



Young Jews Challenging Internalized Oppression

This past July I attended the Young Jews Workshop led by Emily Bloch and Cherie Brown.¹ Fifty-one people participated, most of them between the ages of sixteen and thirty-two.

Emily started the workshop by challenging us to have an accurate picture of our significance as young and young adult Jews at the center of both Jewish liberation and the RC Community. Cherie said that if we could really tell² that we were at the center of this project, Jewish liberation would fly.³

On Saturday afternoon, the white Jews and Jews of the global majority met separately. Cherie asked the white Jews to look at where our internalized Jewish oppression gets acted out as racism. We grew up with the picture that being Jewish is being a white Jew. Emily talked about how bad we feel about ourselves as Jews and how this connects to racism. And we often let the oppressor role we play as white Jews be a justification for feeling bad about ourselves—for example, “I run⁴ racism or have racist thoughts, so I should feel bad about myself.”

Emily led us on thinking about our lives as young adult Jews. She asked us to raise our hands if in the past year we had done any of the following: moved to a new location, gotten a new job, started or ended a relationship, or graduated from school. A third to a half of the workshop raised their hands for each question. Ten people had done all of those things in the past year. Almost the entire workshop had done at least one of them. It was a huge relief to see such a visible representation of what so many young adults’ lives are like. In the past



DEBORAH BELL

year I have moved, started two new jobs, and ended a relationship. One thing that is precious to me about us is that because our lives are often changing, we are always trying to think flexibly about them.

Internalized anti-Jewish oppression and young adult oppression play into⁵ our life decisions. We are encouraged both by society and by RC to try for “big lives.” However, we are trying for them on top of years of young people’s oppression during which we had no control over our lives. By the time we are young adults, we carry big hurts about wanting things and have a limited picture of what we can want. Although we finally have enough

freedom and power to do something, we often carry enough hopelessness that we find it hard to do much of anything.

Many of us panic about every life decision, big or small, with a particular intensity around figuring out the “right life.” Many of us got a narrow picture of what our lives could be like, from families whose decisions were shaped by fear for their own survival. Our search for a life with integrity can be almost an obsession. We are trying to reconnect with the human part of wanting things that we gave up on.

Cherie reminded us that what is good for us is not in contradiction to what is good for everyone else. Fighting for ourselves is not in contradiction to saving the world. She said that people generally join movements because of human connections, not ideas, and that it’s hard to save the world if we don’t have any friends.

Alana Eichner
Washington, D.C., USA
Reprinted from the RC e-mail
discussion list for leaders of Jews

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

² “Tell” means notice.

³ “Fly” means make great progress.

⁴ “Run” means act out.

⁵ “Play into” means have an effect on.

Women and “the Middle East”

I had the great fortune of attending a recent Contemporary Women's Issues Workshop in Los Angeles, California, USA. Our bold leader, Diane Balser,¹ led a class on women and “the Middle East.” She asked me to speak briefly on the topic, and this is what I said:

The Arab League has twenty-two nations in it, many of which are in North Africa. “The Middle East” is a colonial term that comes from England. If you think about a map, many Arab countries are to the east of England, and in the “middle” relative to countries farther east. We still use the term because it is commonly understood in the United States and other countries in the West.

We South, Central, and West Asian-heritage people have an International Liberation Reference Person now! Azi Khalili. She's not a Reference Person for people of *the Middle East* but for people of *South, Central, and West Asia*, which is the language that we're using more and more in RC and that is often used in the wide world. It still doesn't acknowledge North Africa, but we have to start somewhere. Azi is an Iranian woman who immigrated as a young adult to New York (USA). She has been building Co-Counseling there for decades. She's also been leading South, Central, and West Asian liberation for years. Giving her a title is important in terms of the visibility of her leadership as well as the visibility of our communities within Co-Counseling.

When we talk about South, Central, and West Asia, we're talking about many countries, from India and Pakistan up through Turkey and Iran and over to the Arab countries of Lebanon, Syria, and Egypt, for example. It makes sense for the countries of this region

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

to be grouped together. Our people are targeted in similar ways: our men are perceived as terrorists and as more sexist than other men, and our women are thought of as silent and oppressed or exotic and belly dancing. At the same time, we have musical instruments, languages, histories, food, and traditions in common. It's not just the oppression that ties us together but our cultures as well.

The first wave of Arab immigrants to the United States came in the early 1900s. Most were Christian and fleeing the Ottoman Empire, which was massacring Christians at that time. There was a huge fight in the U.S. court system, led by the Syrians, who argued that because they came from Christ's homeland, they should be considered white. They wanted to distance themselves from blackness so as to avoid being targeted by racism. They ended up being recognized as white and fought hard to blend in and assimilate into U.S. society.

Up until now, most of us U.S. Arabs in Co-Counseling have been the descendants of that first wave of immigrants. The majority of us are mixed heritage, with Arab fathers and white mothers. We have spent the last ten years facing what our ancestors wouldn't: genocide recordings² and the terror of identifying as Arab.

² Distress recordings

Since the 1960s there have been more waves of Arab immigrants, and more of them have been dark skinned and Muslim. I think we Arab RCers have faced our internalized oppression enough that we will begin to build, or continue to build, relationships with people of these waves, and our Co-Counseling Communities will start to become home to them. We'd like everybody to get prepared for that.

Azi leads a monthly conference call with about a dozen Arab RC leaders, the majority of whom are women. She chooses a different topic every month, for example, the Arabic language. Recently she had us look at being mixed heritage. The work we're doing in these calls is trickling over into the wide world. For example, next month I'm presenting at an Arab writers' conference a study I did of Arab American women writers who are mixed heritage with one European parent and one Arab parent. (Many of the big names in the Arab American writing community are mixed heritage.) I asked them why, if they could pass as white, they chose instead to “flame” as Arab. (“Flame” means show something that is otherwise hidden and not well accepted by the dominant society.) Most said that although it was a choice to assert their Arab identity, it also wasn't, because it was so much of who they were.

Stephanie Abraham
Los Angeles, California, USA
Reprinted from the RC e-mail
discussion list for leaders of women

Creativity

Not the making of messes, however new and strange; not the abandonment of responsibility simply because responsibility has become rigid in our society; not settling for mere novelty; none of these fulfill the requirements of creativity. Creativity involves something new and something significant, something positive, something in an integrated direction.

Harvey Jackins
From *The Human Situation*, page 199

Making RC Accessible to Young People

This is the third of three articles about moving Goal 2¹ forward in Re-evaluation Counseling. Goal 2 is *“that the Re-evaluation Counseling Community put new and increased efforts into making Re-evaluation Counseling and the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities accessible to young people.”*

In the first article, I focused on the basics of young people’s oppression and some first steps for allies.² In the second, I focused on what is currently going on³ in young people’s work in RC and what has worked well.⁴ In this article I will focus on where I want us to move to make RC more accessible to young people.

Many people are discharging about and acting against young people’s oppression and making RC accessible to the young people with whom they have relationships. Goal 2 has helped move this forward. However, most RC Communities have not yet fully taken on⁵ young people’s work. There is more to do to make our Communities places that are good for young people, and everyone.

TRANSITIONING FROM FAMILY WORK TO TWO-WAY COUNSELLING

Many Communities that have strong family work⁶ struggle when the young people are ready to learn two-way counselling. Allies get restimulated about their own preteen and teen years and struggle to think about these young people in a different way than they have thought about younger young people. This has to do with⁷ the severe isolation many people experienced in their teen years because of how young people’s

oppression targets teenagers. It’s important that adults discharge on their teen years so that they can have good, relaxed attention for young people making the transition to two-way counselling.



STAN EICHNER

Something I’ve seen work well is to expose young people just a bit to two-way counselling—for example, in an optional class at a family workshop, or at a playday,⁸ or in a weekly or monthly class for young people who are making the transition. The goal is for the young people to try out⁹ two-way counselling and connect with each other. At the beginning this is often more about fun and connection than heavy discharge. It works best when the adults have discharged any urgency they feel about young people doing RC and can let them make the transition at their own

pace. It also works well for the young people to continue doing elements of family work, such as playing and special time.¹⁰

It is important for young people to have an ally (or a couple of them) during the transition to two-way counselling. A useful ally maintains contact with them, respects them, is interested in their thinking, hangs out¹¹ and plays with them, and isn’t urgent that they discharge or lead in RC. It also helps if a parent can hang in there with them¹² through the transition and do the things mentioned above. (The non-parent ally can help them get a picture of RC that is not through

¹ A goal adopted by the 2001 World Conference of the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities and reaffirmed by subsequent World Conferences

² See “Young People and RC,” on page 49 of the July 2014 *Present Time*.

³ “Going on” means happening.

⁴ See “Young People’s Work in RC,” on page 36 of the October 2014 *Present Time*.

⁵ “Taken on” means embraced and undertaken.

⁶ 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.

⁷ “Has to do with” means is related to.

⁸ A “playday” is a several-hour workshop that includes time for children to do whatever safe activities they want to do, with the encouragement and appreciation of the adults present, and to discharge if they wish. It also includes discharge time for the adults.

⁹ “Try out” means experiment with.

¹⁰ Special time is an activity, developed in RC family work, during which an adult puts a young person in full charge of their mutual relationship, as far as the young person can think. For a specific period of time, the adult lets the young person know that he or she is willing to do anything the young person wants to do. The adult focuses his or her entire attention on the young person and follows his or her lead, whether the young person tells, or simply shows, the adult what she or he wants to do.

¹¹ “Hangs out” means spends relaxed, unstructured time.

¹² “Hang in there with them” means stay in supportive contact with them.

the lens of their parent's distresses.) A project is starting that will pair up transitioning young people with allies. For more information, please contact Shelley Friedman at shelley.friedman@gmail.com.

YOUNG PEOPLE WHO DIDN'T GROW UP WITH RC

There are not enough raised-with-RC young people to build the big RC young people's liberation movement that we want. We need to reach out to young people, particularly teenagers, who didn't have RC at an early age. This can have its challenges. These young people may not have the full support of their parents (for paying for RC events, driving them places, giving them sessions when things get hard, and so on). We need to think of creative ways to tackle the challenges and do everything we can to make RC accessible to these young people. (If you need help in the form of Outreach funds for a project with young people, please talk to your Reference Person or contact me.) Because these young people often don't have a parent who is supporting them in their RC endeavours, it is extra important that they have a committed ally who will counsel them, help them figure out logistical challenges, and show them respect and love no matter what.

If you are an adult, teaching young people RC can be wonderful for you. Young people can be some of your best counsellors. You will need to think of it as a long-term project for your own re-emergence (not view it in a patterned saving-young-people kind of way).

YOUNG PEOPLE TARGETED BY RACISM, GENOCIDE, AND CLASSISM

We need to be thoughtful about how racism, genocide, and classism have affected young people. To have a strong young people's liberation movement and strong RC Communities, we need to find more ways to build relationships with young people who have been targeted by these oppressions and make our local Communities and young people's work go well for them. We need to put extra resource into thinking about them and developing them as leaders. We need to talk openly about these oppressions and whenever possible get the thinking and leadership of the young people who have been targeted by them. Those of us not in these oppressed groups need to discharge on racism, genocide, and classism and particularly on the way they combine with young people's oppression. Getting to discharge on these oppressions and having these young people in our lives and our

RC Communities will be very good for all of our lives and re-emergence.

YOUNG PEOPLE MAKING LIFE TRANSITIONS

Young people in RC need people keeping track of them and thinking about them when they make transitions, such as moving away from home or changing RC Communities. Several years ago Tim Jackins noticed that when young people would move away from home (often to go to college) and try to navigate a new RC Community and many other new things, they would often become disconnected from RC. He created the "Transition Project" to help with this problem. Young people going through a transition are assigned an ally who commits to being in contact with them at least once a month. The ally can Co-Counsel with them and help them figure out how to get connected to their new RC Community (if there is one). Sometimes the young people pick someone from their home Community, or new Community, and then the person is asked if he or she wants to play this ally role. Alternatively, an ally (from a list of allies who have volunteered) and a young person get matched up, sometimes without knowing each other beforehand. Allies can participate in a conference call led by Jenny Sazama, the International Liberation Reference Person for Allies to Young People, and be in contact with her if they need help figuring something out. There have been many successes with this project. At the same time, many young people and allies still don't know about it, so please spread the word!¹³ If you would like to participate, know someone who would, or know a young person in RC who is going through a transition, please contact Megan Lynes at meganlynes@gmail.com. (For more details about the project, see page 22 of this *Present Time*.)

COMMITTED ALLIES

Whenever young people are struggling to be in RC, it makes a big difference to have an ally (or several) who is in regular contact with and committed to them. The ally can be their parent or not. He or she needs to respect their mind and follow their thinking, be persistent in their direction,¹⁴ and above all show that he or she cares about them. Allies don't have to be perfect. They just need to care about young people, keep having sessions about what gets in their way of being an effective ally, and care about eliminating young people's oppression.

continued ...

¹³ "Spread the word" means tell people about it.

¹⁴ "Persistent in their direction" means persistent in reaching for them.

LIBERATION

... continued

GOAL 2 AS A COMMUNITY PROJECT

In addition to all the above, it's important that the RC Community as a whole continue making RC accessible to young people. This means actively challenging young people's oppression and its effect on our Communities. Local Community events (classes, workshops, support groups, and so on) need to become more accessible to young people, and young people's work needs to be made a central project. All adults need to be discharging about their years as a young person, and at least a few adults in each Community need to take on making their Community accessible to young people. A start is to have a small group of committed allies who can hang out with young people at RC events, counsel them when things get hard, and ward off any weird oppressor material¹⁵ coming at them from adults. Events might need to be set up differently—for example, with more play, more hanging-out time, and young people suggesting topic groups and picking first when people choose Co-Counsellors. At first adults may feel awkward or have difficulty with this, but it will be great for them to discharge these feelings, from when they were young, and move toward being more fully alive.

I would like someone to take the lead at every workshop in creating a group for discharging about young people's oppression. I'd like every RC teacher to talk about young people's oppression in his or her fundamentals or ongoing class. Because our most chronic patterns, including those from oppression, were first put on us as young people, working on young people's oppression is a fast track to every

¹⁵ "Material" means distress patterns.

individual's and every group's liberation. Here are some possible questions to start this work:

- What was your life like as a baby, child, and teenager?
- What was good about being a young person, and what was hard?
- What were your relationships like with adults? What were your relationships like with other young people?
- What feelings of discouragement, isolation, powerlessness, or being stupid are leftover for you from young people's oppression?
- What would you have to discharge to live a big, fun, powerful, connected life?
- What oppressor feelings do you have toward young people (wanting them to be quiet and well behaved, thinking you know better, and so on)?
- Where does it get restimulating to give young people the attention and respect you didn't get as a young person?
- In what ways do you want young people to like you, be hopeful for you, and so on?

It can be hard to know where members of my constituency are. I'd like to hear about any young people you know—both individuals and groups—who are currently, or want to be, doing two-way counselling. Please send me an e-mail. My contact information can be found on page 116 of this *Present Time*.

Mari Piggott
International Liberation Reference
Person for Young People
Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada



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Realizing the Effects of the Camps

Before last year's Tule Lake Pilgrimage,¹ Mike Ishii² recommended some books for me to read, including *And Justice for All*, which consists of oral histories of former incarcerated. A few days before the trip, I was stopped at

a stoplight. A Japanese-heritage couple who looked near to my age (I'm sixty-five) crossed in front of me, and for the first time I had the thought that their parents had probably been in the camps and that it had to have had an effect on them. I also realized that probably most of the Japanese Americans I meet here on the West Coast (of the United States) have parents or grandparents who were in the camps. I started thinking about the effects of the camps on the following generations and realized that I had never asked my Co-Counselors about the effects on their families.

Mary Ruth Gross
Richmond, California, USA

¹ The Tule Lake Pilgrimage is a biannual pilgrimage to the site of the Tule Lake Camp, one of the ten concentration camps in which the U.S. government interned Japanese Americans during World War II. United to End Racism (a project of the RC Communities) has sent a team of Co-Counselors to the last four pilgrimages. The author was a member of last year's team.

² Mike Ishii is the Area Reference Person for the Triboro, New York City, New York, USA, Area and was another member of last year's United to End Racism team at Tule Lake.



MARIAN FREDAL

Working on Oppressor Material

At an Allies to Lesbians, Gay Men, and Bisexuals Workshop in April 2013, "Jeanne D'Arc" talked about oppressor material² and how to work on it. I used what she said to lead two different groups at that workshop and later a number of Community classes, topic groups, and workshops. The following is what I understood from her, and what I learnt from doing this work:

Because we live in oppressive societies, every one of us has been oppressed, at least as a child. Each time we were oppressed, it was

a hurt that left us with a distress recording—a literal recording of everything that happened at the time we were being hurt: our emotions, our sensations, our responses, and what other people around us were doing, including the person who was oppressing us.

If we witnessed someone else getting oppressed, then the distress recording was of our own feelings and actions (or inaction) as well as the actions of the "victim" and the person in the oppressor role.

If we didn't get to fully discharge the hurt, then we still carry the distress recording, which can be

restimulated. We are vulnerable to feeling any of the feelings and acting out any of the actions in the recording.

We can act out any of the victim behaviours or any of the oppressor behaviours, or none of them. We may feel our recorded feelings, or not. Our restimulated feelings don't necessarily match our restimulated actions since the only feelings in the recording are ours, whereas the recorded actions are both ours and others'.

We don't have to have any negative thoughts or feelings about someone in a target group to act out oppressor

continued ...

¹ "Jeanne D'Arc" is the International Liberation Reference Person for Lesbians and Gay Men.

² "Material" means distress.

LIBERATION

... continued

material at them. In fact, we can be feeling positive about them while acting it out.

We also don't have to be in an oppressor role to act out oppressor material. For example, if someone in a victim role lashes out in anger³ at someone in an oppressor role, the anger can be "oppressor material." (I've put "oppressor material" in quotes here because it is being acted out by someone in an oppressed role at someone who is in the role of their oppressor. Thus it is not oppression.⁴ Still I think it is useful to call it "oppressor material," because it is a recording of what an oppressor did.)

I've noticed that "oppressor material" often comes out when we feel like we need to defend ourselves. Perhaps it feels like a way to be "powerful." (It certainly once overpowered us!) It may feel like "it's better than settling for being oppressed."

Also, as we begin to move out of oppressed behaviours, we can move into positions in which there is more "opportunity" or "permission" to act out oppressor material. (As I move out of victim behaviours that are part of internalised racism and classism, I find myself mistreating people in ways I've not done before.)

In the wider society, some oppressor behaviour is seen as "bad." (In RC we say that everyone is good—though we are not yet consistent in remembering or acting on this bit of our theory.) Some people are harshly and visibly targeted for acting out their oppressor material—for example, white working-class people for acting out racism, or black men for acting out sexism. Others can get into the habit of looking out

for who the "bad" people are and making sure they are not mistaken for one of them. Because of all this, no one finds it easy to talk about or work on oppressor material.

Also, when a child acts out oppressor material at another child, the child who is acting it out usually gets punished harshly. Because we all witnessed or experienced this many times, we can feel like there is little safety to be open about and discharge on how we have acted out oppressor material. This may be a fundamental part of keeping the whole world tied into an oppressive system.

A lot of our distress recordings include oppressor material, but for the most part we've focused on where we are being hurt rather than on where we may be hurting someone else. If we think of all of our recordings as a heap of dirt, we've taken big shovelfuls out of the "victim" side of the pile (and we carry on shoveling, even when we've reached the bottom) but the "oppressor" side has been left relatively untouched.

Anyone who has been oppressed has recordings of all that the oppressor group did to them and may potentially act that out at other people. I've been reviewing the ways in which I've been hurt to see if I might have been acting out those hurts unawarely.

A TWO-STEP PROCEDURE

"Jeanne D'Arc" suggested that one way to discharge on this stuff is to adopt a two-step procedure:

1. Recall where you can notice oppressor distresses in your own behaviour, such as

- getting irritated with someone
- adopting a strange tone of voice
- being distant or aloof

- feeling more important than or superior to someone
- wanting to have the last word
- lashing out with anger

As much as you can, talk through in detail the behaviours you notice. (You may not be aware of them at first. If you don't know what your oppressor material looks like, then ask the people closest to you. They will probably have seen it—and told you about it several times already.)

2. Ask yourself where this behaviour might have come from in your early life.

I can think of two reasons why this approach seems to work well:

Firstly, it doesn't identify one group of people as "the oppressors" and another group as "the victims," with the conscious or unconscious associations of "the bad ones" and "the good ones." This means that it is relatively easy to use in a group of people of mixed identities. (I think it works better in a group than in a session, because everyone gets to see everyone else working on oppressor material. However, the turns have to be long enough to do the two steps effectively.)

Secondly, the material we work on is mostly self-identified. We work on it because we've noticed something about ourselves that we're curious about and want to change. This is very different from having someone tell us that we've done something wrong and that we should "go away and work on it."

Almost everyone who has done even a bit of this work has reported that his or her life and relationships felt different in the following week.

From the point of view of this work, oppression itself may be seen as society's large-scale permission

³ The author doesn't mean anger *discharge* but the acting out of a distress recording.

⁴ In RC we define oppression as the one-way mistreatment of a group of people, reinforced by society.

and encouragement to act out a type of distress recording that we all carry, at the people society has put into positions weaker than ours.

SEVERAL RELATIONSHIPS TO OPPRESSION

I think we each have at least three separate relationships with oppression: our roles, our identities, and our distress recordings.

- Our roles are assigned to us by the oppressive society. Each of us has been forced into both oppressor and oppressed roles.
- Our identities are how we've chosen (often unconsciously)

to think of ourselves in relation to our roles.

- Our distress recordings depend on the unique ways that each of us has been hurt by oppression.

Our distress recordings and the resulting behaviours don't always correspond to a simple view of our roles or identities. For this reason, it's sometimes useful to work on the recordings without first finding a role or an identity to "explain" them or to justify working on them. This has been useful for many of us who have previously seen ourselves mainly as "oppressed."

I think there is also a fourth relationship with oppression that we can each build: understanding it. We can come to *understand* each of our own oppressions and each of our own oppressor positions (rather than just having feelings about them). Most importantly, we can come to understand the whole oppressive system—how each oppression, including the ones we have roles within, fits into the overall system and how the overall system works to impede human liberation, which is our goal.

Karl Lam
Cambridge, England



Wisdom from a Raised-Poor and Working-Class Workshop



The following are some things I learned at the recent Raised-Poor and Working-Class Workshop led by Dan Nickerson¹ in Melbourne, Victoria, Australia:

- Talent has been described as the relative lack of discouragement.
- RC is a working-class movement for working-class people.
- As to the language we use about who is "in" RC and who "isn't," Dan takes the viewpoint that everyone who knows him is in some way "in" RC.
- A session is paying attention to someone in a way that helps that person's survival.
- We can pledge to be preoccupied with giving the good session rather than having the good session.
- Working-class people are natural leaders because in their lives and work they are in the habit of making things go well.
- Strategic anger can be useful.
- It's okay to be furious.
- Shitty² things happen.
- Some questions are yet to be answered.

- It is always good to work early on chronic material.³ We also need to have sessions on what is currently going on⁴ in our lives. And we should expect to get good attention from the counsellor for the current difficulties.
- A good thing about a working-class workshop is that the people there are less likely to be freaked out⁵ by the hurtful incidents in our life and are therefore better listeners.
- We make the role of counsellor much more complicated than it really is. It is basically caring about the person and listening with good attention.
- RC in Spanish is *co-escucha*, which means co-listening.
- RC is about what's right with you, not what's wrong with you.
- One's class background is in no way a limit to the role one can play in the transformation of society.

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

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

² "Shitty" means bad.

³ "Work early on chronic material" means discharge on the early hurts that led to chronic distress patterns.

⁴ "Going on" means happening.

⁵ "Freaked out" means really upset.

Facing and Discharging on Sexism

I am a raised-working-class woman. The biggest battle for me as I lead is to reach my mind and fight the messages in my head that tell me that I'm doing it wrong, that what I said or did was stupid, and that I don't know what I'm doing. Sexism, male domination, and class oppression smashed me, particularly as a teenage girl. If I don't fight for my mind and to show myself, then I stay defeated and accept less than everything.

I recently led a Regional¹ Women's Liberation Day. I started the day by showing the fight I have against internalised oppression. Then I talked about how as females our existence is denied. The world is largely shown to us as belonging to and being for men. I asked the twenty-five women in the room how many had ever been called a "tomboy," and at least half raised their hands. I think this shows the sexism that runs² when we use our bodies and expect to do the same as boys.

We looked at ways we are divided as women, in particular by racism. The women of the global majority took time³ on anything that might get in their way of being united with the white women and anything they wanted to share or show. I wanted us to be united as women without pretending we are not set up⁴ to act

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

² "Runs" means is acted out.

³ "Took time" means each had a turn in the group.

⁴ "Set up" means put in a position.

out oppression at each other. When I feel inferior in my middle-class job, I'm more likely to try and look pretty. This is looking for crumbs within the power structure of male domination and ends up being racism. I talked about how racism has and does derail women's movements.

I talked about how Gay oppression separates women and reinforces male domination. Lesbian and Bisexual women get marginalised, attacked, and undermined as females for rejecting a heterosexual female identity. Heterosexual women are made scared of what will happen if they don't adhere to the oppressive society's definition of "female."

I wanted us to notice that we're female and look head on⁵ at the oppression and "lose it" (discharge without constraint). I read out loud some statistics about women in the United Kingdom—for example, two women a week are killed by current or former male partners, only twenty-two percent of our members of Parliament are women, and the cost of childcare here is among the highest in the world. I told them how much money is made globally by the beautification, cosmetic surgery, and pornography industries. I asked who in the room had experienced being "talked over" by a man,⁶ being touched by a man uninvited, having sex with a man when they didn't

⁵ "Look head on" means look directly.

⁶ "Being 'talked over' by a man" means a man interrupting them and talking while they're still trying to talk.

want to, having a male head teacher at school, having a male boss, doing more housework than male members of their household. Nearly every woman raised her hand for nearly every question. We then went into support groups and had a good chunk of discharge time. The room had gone pretty⁷ quiet when I was reading the statistics, so some of the support group leaders made noise and got the women shaking and shrieking. I spent my discharge time feeling bad about what I'd done or not done. It was exhausting fighting those recordings⁸ all through to the end of the day. However, I think the day was actually fine.

I want us women in the Region to be working consistently on sexism, male domination, and pornography. We need to be able to think about pornography, listen to women and men about it, and articulate our thoughts. We have good perspectives on sex, men's oppression, capitalism, distresses, and discharge and have much to offer in the debates that are happening now. But we need to be able to discharge to the rafters and fill the room with noise about the degradation of and violence against women that is acted out in and perpetuated by pornography.

Erin Mansell

London, England

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

⁷ "Pretty" means quite.

⁸ Distress recordings



KK

Calling on All Catholic Women of the Global Majority!

Dear Catholic women of the global majority,

The women at the recent Catholic women's workshop led by Joanne Bray¹ were of different class backgrounds, ages, sexual identities, races, and ethnicities. Some of us were mothers and grandmothers. Some of us were single, some married, some "living in sin."² We had also had diverse experiences of being Catholic females. Some of us had attended mass every week for many years, and some of us had never set foot in a church. Some of us had gone to Catholic school, and some of us hadn't. Some of us had been baptized, and some of us hadn't. Some of us had a family member who'd been abused by clergy. Some of us were from generations of practicing Catholics. A Catholic family member who had lovingly cared for us was for some of us our only link to Catholicism. Some of us were currently involved with the Church, and some of us weren't. Some of us proudly identified as Catholics, some of us vehemently resisted and denied the identity, and some of us were indifferent or ambivalent. And yet we were all there together as Catholic women.

WEAVING A SISTERHOOD

I wondered how unity could possibly be achieved with such a scattered group. What common threads existed to weave a viable sisterhood? It was like holding a fistful of sand with nothing to keep it all together—or so I thought.

The first evening of the workshop, I looked around and all I could see was a sea of white faces. I couldn't see women. I couldn't see Catholics. My first thought was, "What am I doing here? I want to go home!" My fear was that these white women would not understand me. "What could we possibly have in common? I'm on my own,³ again." But as we know in Co-Counseling, feelings are meant to be felt, not acted upon.

After talking about creating a sisterhood, Joanne did some demonstrations that left me speechless. As I listened to each



BRIAN LAVENDEL

woman, my heart started racing. "Hey! That's *my* experience too!" I'm not talking about a few similarities or a bit of overlap. *This white woman was having my session!* How did she get into my head to know all my secrets!? One woman discharged about being labeled "selfish" if she thought about herself at all. Another woman worked on how "arrogant" she felt putting her thinking out. And a third woman discharged about stifling church practices that left no room to ask her own questions. They shared their pain, their confusion, and their outrage.

I noticed how close their experiences were to mine. And then the light bulb moment⁴: "Ah, it's the oppression! As women and as Catholics, we all got hit with the same stuff." It was clear that these (white) Catholic women understood me and I understood them more than I realized. We carried the same cross.⁵ We'd had such a shared experience under the sexism and male domination within the conditioning of the Catholic institution that we didn't have to explain much to each other.

During Saturday morning's class, Joanne counseled people from the "pulpit" up front and repeatedly pointed out how others shared our individual experiences. The women's stories were powerful, and the directions Joanne gave were liberating and life giving. She was counseling the whole group through each female. With her help we discovered our sisterhood.

"AS A CATHOLIC WOMAN"

For years after I left the Church (in my early twenties), I thought that I could be free of the institution's influence and oppressiveness. But I couldn't. Avoiding an identity is not the same as being liberated from it. The scars (and the gifts) of being Catholic were still there. Throughout the weekend, Joanne coached us to add the phrase "*as a Catholic woman*" to whatever we were working on. Looking at invisibility, *as a Catholic woman*. Looking at feeling insignificant, *as a Catholic woman*. Looking at isolation, *as a Catholic woman*. Looking at sexism and male domination, *as a Catholic woman*. Adding that phrase opened up a portal to another whole set of experiences that I hadn't really considered in my sessions

continued . . .

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

² "Living in sin" means living with a sexual partner without being married.

³ "On my own" means completely alone.

⁴ "The light bulb moment" means the moment when I understood something.

⁵ "Carried the same cross" means carried the same burden.

LIBERATION

... continued

before. It gave me access to another part of myself. Consider sessions on the following:

- One's significance and sense of worth as a *Catholic woman*
- Leadership as a *Catholic woman*
- Reclaiming one's voice as a *Catholic woman*
- Motherhood as a *Catholic woman*
- Looking at one's body as a *Catholic woman*
- Looking at sex as a *Catholic woman*
- Being African heritage (or of another racial group) as a *Catholic woman*
- Being Native or Indigenous as a *Catholic woman*
- Being working class (or another class) as a *Catholic woman*
- Being Irish heritage (or of another ethnic group) as a *Catholic woman*
- Being LGBTQF⁶ as a *Catholic woman*
- Being allies to any of the above groups as a *Catholic woman*

Just add "as a *Catholic woman*," and see where it takes you.

POWERFUL CATHOLIC WOMEN ROLE MODELS

What does it mean to be a *Catholic woman*? I'd always imagined a somber-looking woman, silent and humble, with her head bowed, tirelessly working behind the scenes. Early on we were taught that good Catholic girls were selfless—meaning without self. Powerful Catholic women role models? My mind was blank. Maybe Mother Teresa,⁷ but she was stereotyped as another sacrificing, suffering, silent servant.

Joanne contradicted the invisibility of strong Catholic women warriors in a letter to the workshop participants prior to the workshop. She wrote, "The power, intelligence, and creativity of Catholic women have been deliberately made invisible—invisible to us, and to our allies. Because of external and internalized oppression installed by sexism and male domination, we and our allies do not know the brilliance of who we are. This is the reason I want you to go searching for pictures of the Catholic females in your lives whom you have cherished and been inspired by: grandmothers, mothers,

sisters; educators and leaders who are national, international; your neighbor who has organized the neighborhood around caring. I would like everyone to come with a picture, to create a *visible* contradiction."

We had a space dedicated to the pictures we had brought. The front wall was plastered with numerous blown-up photos of proud, powerful Catholic women activists and warriors, along with a small blurb explaining who they were. They were some of the most brilliant minds on the planet. They were females I hadn't heard of, and knowing they existed gave me strength and hope.

We watched a video of three Catholic women of enormous courage, integrity, and brilliance. They were proud to be Catholic and risked everything as they demanded radical equality for women in the Church, insisted that women be given prominent leadership roles, and argued that we cannot put limits on God or barriers between God and Her people. They were critical of the policies of Popes (John Paul and Francis) and demanded that women be allowed to serve in the ministry. They were confident, proud, without apology, and brilliant.

We saw them and thought, "Hey, I can do that!" or "I want to be like that!" Joanne reminded us that they had gotten hit with the same oppression and been as scared and insecure about their thinking as we were. That made their accomplishments seem all the more awesome. The message was, "If they can, why can't I? So you feel small and stupid, so what? Go ahead and persist anyway. Just start by opening your mouth and saying one sentence." There's an Italian saying, "Go slow, and be whole, and go far."

AN OPEN DOOR

I encourage all Catholic women of the global majority to join us. The door is open, and there's a place here for you. If you have any connection at all to the Catholic Church, if you or your family or your nation has been affected by it somehow, this is a place to call home and find others who truly understand. Sure, there'll be some variations of experience based on class, race, ethnicity, sexual identity, and so on, but there's a common oppression (sexism and male domination), along with anti-Catholic oppression, that we *all* got hit with. Claim Catholic women as your sisters, because they get⁸ it! Not much explanation required. White Catholic women get it more than you realize.



Bo-Young Lim
Toronto, Ontario, Canada
Reprinted from the RC e-mail
discussion list for leaders of Catholics

⁶ Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, or formerly one of these

⁷ Mother Teresa (1910–1997) was a Roman Catholic Religious Sister from Albania who spent most of her life serving very poor people in India.

⁸ "Get" means understand.

Organizing Domestic Workers

Domestic workers are people who are employed (and sometimes live) in private homes and work primarily as cleaners, nannies, and eldercare workers. Dan Nickerson's proposed initiative for ending classism¹ has raised questions about people such as domestic workers who are not employed in large workplaces. People want to know how we fit into the image that he describes of the inherent power and connection of the working class.

Domestic workers are mostly women, many are of the global majority, and many in the United States are immigrants. The situation for women in the working class is often invisible. I hope my story can shed some light on this sector of the working class, give some information, and encourage allies.

I was born and raised in the United States. I am white (Romani-, Italian-, and Ashkenazi Jewish²-heritage) and female. I began my life as a domestic worker at nine years old, working in people's homes, cleaning and taking care of people younger than myself. Sometimes I worked for money, because my family was really poor. Other times I worked to earn a place to live. Because laws in the United States protect against child labor, the domestic sector was an obvious choice because it is extremely unregulated and the pay is usually "off the books" (paid in cash with no information reported to the government).

I have continued to work as a domestic worker throughout most of my life (I am thirty-six years old). For many years I felt extremely ashamed about it. Domestic labor—including the skill and detail it takes to perform the job well—is often not valued or recognized. I had internalized the message "If I were really smart, I would

I was finally able to distinguish between loving the work and hating the oppression. . . . I could then put my mind on how to maximize the conditions that made domestic work favorable as well as decide to take on the oppression aimed at me as a domestic worker and as a working-class female. Then the fun really began.

be doing something more significant with my life." Messages like that had come at me from all parts of my life, including in RC by well-meaning and (still) dear Co-Counselors of mine. We are all doing our best to think despite what we have been mistakenly taught. None of us are immune to class hurts.

Despite feeling bad about being a domestic worker, I could tell³ that I longed to feel something good about it. The first time I ever felt the power and connection of the working class was at an RC working-class workshop. It was hopeful. Growing up poor, with no connection to unions or the labor movement, I'd had no idea that people could take pride in working-class work. Dan⁴ was a huge inspiration to me regarding this. His leadership of the working class has changed the course of my life.

I honestly thought that working-class liberation in RC was going to be about

how to get a successful middle-class job. Being told that my paid work in the domestic sphere was good, necessary, valuable, and important for the functioning of humanity was life changing for me. But still I couldn't wrap my mind around how the contradiction⁵ of being valued for my contributions to society could translate to my personal life. Domestic work seemed to be the opposite of what wide world working-class liberation movements were about (my mind would instantly think of men and hammers or people in factories). I worked alone and was paid directly by my boss and so therefore could not collectively bargain.

I cooked, changed diapers, and played in the dirt. None of that felt significant enough to include in a movement or to build a movement around.

I began RC when I was sixteen. As a young person and a young adult, I often asked people in RC about what I "should" do for work. I was told, "Do what you love," which largely left me feeling very alone. The sentiment was right on,⁶ but I couldn't figure out how to use it as a client. When I thought about continuing to do domestic labor, I felt I had to agree to being treated badly—that mistreatment was inherent in the industry and I just had to accept that. I would have Co-Counseling sessions on considering staying in the working class, and my mind would be pulled to thinking about my life wasting away in some "dead-end" job (a job that supposedly had no significant impact

continued . . .

¹ See "A New Initiative on Ending Classism," by Dan Nickerson, the International Liberation Reference Person for Working-Class People, on page 8 of the July 2014 *Present Time*.

² Ashkenazi Jews are Jews of Central and Eastern European descent, who generally identify as white.

³ "Tell" means notice, see.

⁴ Dan Nickerson

⁵ Contradiction to distress

⁶ "Right on" means exactly correct.

WIDE WORLD CHANGING

... continued

on the world) and being completely unhappy and devoid of zest. I was clearly looking for a lifetime's worth of sessions about being targeted with classism as a female.

I decided to take the RC working-class commitment⁷ and see if that could shift things. I can't recommend this enough. For six months I took the commitment during four hour-long sessions a week. I discharged hard about how I felt like people (myself included) who were engaged in the direct production of goods and services were "losers" (were of no use to humanity). I cried and cried, raged, and cried some more. I also got to notice how much my heart sang when I claimed pride and strength in being in the working class, how I smiled when I thought of how much we've accomplished as working-class people all over the world.

I had many re-evaluations while taking this commitment. The most important one was that I was finally able to notice that I have always loved domestic labor. It's work that is essential to the functioning of society. I was finally able to distinguish

⁷ The RC working-class commitment: "I solemnly promise that, from this moment on, I will take pride in the intelligence, strength, endurance, and goodness of working-class people everywhere.

I will remember to be proud that we do the world's work, that we produce the world's wealth, that we belong to the only class with a future, that our class will end all oppression.

I will unite with all my fellow workers everywhere around the world to lead all people to a rational, peaceful society.

I am a worker, proud to be a worker, and the future is in my hands.

between loving the work and hating the oppression. That distinction was key. I could then put my mind on how to maximize the conditions that made domestic work favorable as well as decide to take on⁸ the oppression aimed at me as a domestic worker and as a working-class female. Then the fun really began.

STANDING UP FOR MYSELF

The hardest thing about my sector is the isolation. I had struggled for years with feeling like my industry couldn't be part of the big working-class liberation movements. Conversations about organizing seemed to always be about "real" working-class work—male-dominated labor, like carpentry and welding. I was in an "unskilled" profession full of women who supposedly couldn't get better jobs. And because of how we were paid individually by private employers, there was no direct road to collective bargaining and unionization. As a sector, we had been left alone and were invisible. In the United States, domestic workers, along with farm workers, are specifically excluded from federal labor laws and do not have access to many basic protections other workers enjoy. These federal exclusions were put in place by white owning-class men who did not want their homes and fields regulated.

I decided that I would not let the oppression squeeze me out of an industry that I loved. If I stayed, I had to fight for a bigger mind, to take up

⁸ "Take on" means confront and do something about.

more space as a domestic worker and a female, and to change the industry for the better.

My first step was to figure out how to stand up for myself at work and fight for a living wage. Thinking about that made me laugh out loud—a lot! Whenever I'd tried to negotiate in the past—well, there had been no negotiating in the past! I had lacked courage. I had felt too bad. My bosses, though good people, had had their own struggles and had wanted me to spend time with their children or clean their house simply out of love. This was based largely on their hurts from having been raised upper-middle or owning class, but it would confuse me every time it ran⁹ in my direction.

I wanted my employers to validate my worth and pay me a living wage without my having to fight for it. I had to give that up. I had to face that I was smarter than my employers about what my working conditions should be and what wage I should earn. I got to be angry in sessions, but outside of sessions I had to decide to be counselor. I had to commit to my mind at the risk of feeling uncomfortable. I had to commit to not backing down (giving up) even while being told things like, "If you really loved our children, you wouldn't ask for so much," and "You're part of the family; why do we have to write anything down?"

I am proud to say that after twenty years of domestic work, I finally negotiated a written contract. Thank you to myself, Dan, and RC! This was a huge deal, as many disputes and instances of mistreatment can be easily resolved or avoided with a simple one-page contract. My life has gotten remarkably better in the six years since then. I can hold my employers accountable for many "simple" workplace things, like when I'm going to be paid and at what hourly

⁹ "Ran" means was acted out.



RHODE ISLAND, USA • MARJORIE SMITH

rate, how much I'll be compensated if my boss is late, and so on. After a while I was able to negotiate for paid vacation and sick time as well as overtime pay and a contribution to my health insurance. I wanted to be an example to other domestic workers. I wanted to have faced and discharged on the places where we tend to go quiet so that I could offer some attention and resource. I wanted my mind back where I had agreed to be small.

BUILDING A TEAM OF COWORKERS

My next step was to build a team of coworkers—nanny friends! I had lots of sessions in which I discharged on early hopelessness via the working-class commitment. I was then able to think about finding and meeting other nannies (whom I had never really been able to see before). I made myself go out to libraries and parks where I introduced myself to other nannies. I got their phone numbers and set up times to get together along with our charges (the young people we worked with). Eventually, with lots of sweating and laughing, I organized a night out for nannies in which a few of us met after work and had dinner at an affordable restaurant. I ran the meal like a support group and made sure that everyone got a chance to speak, without being interrupted, about what was good and what was hard about being a nanny. People loved it and wanted more.

So for over three years I organized and led a weekly nanny dinner group. It became a regular place where nannies knew they could go and be heard about hard things at work (negotiating contracts and pay raises, standing up and advocating for themselves, standing up for the young people they worked with). By getting together regularly we were building a community, a base that cut through the isolation of our work. Women who had never figured out how to have coworkers were getting together regularly with other nannies.

The dinners did not always have the same people, but everyone was invited every week and the invite list kept getting bigger. For some women, it took over a year of receiving weekly invites before they got the courage they needed to seek us out.

Eventually I began to rotate organizing and leading the dinners between myself and women who were ready for the next stage in leadership. I had to give big sessions to most of the nanny dinner leaders about being visibly in charge. Most of us nannies and other female domestic workers have huge battles with feeling small. We are master multi-taskers, potty training while at the same time making dinner and folding the laundry, but we have huge confusions about our significance. Assuming a title, even a “small” one like Nanny Dinner Leader, brought up huge feelings for people. I gave the sessions, got people laughing and sweating, until they accepted the job and title.

After three years, I had built a solid base of about a hundred and fifty nannies in my city who knew one another and saw one another regularly. This community base was enough of a contradiction for me to start thinking about how to push myself and my industry toward more visibility and better overall working conditions.

NANNY-LED TRAININGS

Education and implementing labor protections were next on my list. In the United States, nanny trainings are rare and almost always led by non-domestic-worker white people. They are rarely about organizing across racial lines as workers and females and almost always about how to better please our employers. I built relationships with the necessary people, and the next time a nanny-training opportunity came, I advocated for myself and a racially diverse group of nannies to be the organizers and presenters. A nanny-led training was another step in pushing

forward my own re-emergence as well as my industry as a whole. Over a hundred nannies attended.

We have since organized and led trainings on many topics, with simultaneous translation into three languages. I recently led an introduction to RC at a training, and over fifty women attended. (So embarrassing to tell you all!)

STATEWIDE ORGANIZATION

Because nannies and other domestic workers are excluded from U.S. federal labor laws, it is up to each state¹⁰ to decide how to regulate us. The state I live in lacked some basic workplace protections for us, and I wanted to change that. It was a great challenge to my feelings of smallness and insignificance. I created a statewide organization for nannies so that we could actively organize for legislation. I would have never done this in such a visible way had it not been for a nanny friend of mine who was white and raised owning class and didn't struggle with taking up space. Her human and patterned confidence around titles and organizations was particularly helpful in contradicting my internalized working-class feelings of smallness.

I then helped create a statewide coalition of domestic workers that included my organization as well as other domestic-worker groups. We became members of a national domestic workers' alliance, which in turn is part of a network of international domestic workers' groups. Domestic workers are organizing globally, likely in your country. It's a really exciting time.

ACCOMPLISHMENT AND INVISIBILITY

Organizing within my sector has not been without major challenges. In the United States, it is largely a Gentile

continued . . .

¹⁰ “Up to each state” means each state's responsibility.

WIDE WORLD CHANGING

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industry and I am a Jew. Being up in front and organizing has gotten tricky at times, and I have been heavily attacked. With discharge and the tools of RC, I have been able to keep thinking and adapting, taking on¹¹ new roles that make better sense for my re-emergence and the re-emergence of my Gentile sisters. About a year and a half ago, I shifted into a much less visible role. I now spend my time supporting Gentile leaders to be front and center, though I still do lots of organizing in the background. I'm not sure if this is ultimately the best course of action, but it's the best I can figure out for now. I will continue to discharge about it.

Recently my state was the fourth state in the United States to pass a Domestic Workers' Bill of Rights! It is the most progressive one so far. It's a pretty¹² big accomplishment! It has protections such as maternity leave (unpaid but still a *huge* deal). I still can't get my

mind around the role I had in making it happen. I feel like I am "just a nanny." It's tricky to be a worker-organizer when the organizers who organize for paid work are the people who visibly get the credit when successes happen. I need to do more sessions to continue to notice my significance in the face of the constant messages of invisibility.

Overall, I am able to share more of my humanity with the planet because I have engaged in this struggle for liberation. It's been a great and exhilarating challenge to make my own decisions instead of leaving it up to the oppression¹³ to decide for me. It's been great to stand firm as a proud female and feminist and understand that there is no inherent contradiction between those things and fighting for my significance as a domestic worker. And it's been fabulous having lifelong relationships with young people whom I have helped to raise.

¹¹ "Taking on" means adopting.

¹² "Pretty" means quite.

¹³ "Leaving it up to the oppression" means allowing the oppression.

TAKING OUR RIGHTFUL ROLE

A few parting words: At best nannies and nanny/house cleaners are part of a parenting team and are like a third parent. This is the situation I have right now, after twenty years of discharge and over twenty-seven years of domestic work. But in the past I was more often the only person raising the young people I worked with, and this is the current situation for many of my domestic-worker sisters. We generally do all of the parenting and do it invisibly. This causes deep hurts to the middle- and owning-class young people we love and care for, as society does not recognize our real role in their lives. We are not simply workers for these young people. Many times we are the only reason they decide to stay alive. Fighting for ourselves as domestic workers and gaining allies help us take our rightful role in society as visible co-parents to these young people.

Jennileen Joseph

Boston, Massachusetts, USA

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

Keep Putting Out Good Policy

What a tremendously lucky chance we have to play the role of putting out correct policy for human beings. We need to keep putting good policy out no matter how many times it's rejected, because, of course, to have good policy rejected is only the beginning. To have people turn down a correct policy and adopt a wrong one should not discourage you a bit. Just be patient. The wrong one won't work, and then there will be bids for new policies, and if you put out a correct one again, again it will be rejected in favor of a wrong one, but your policy will become better known. Certain bits of it will be borrowed in an attempt to patch up the other wrong one. And the second wrong one won't work, in spite of the patch. Surprisingly soon, with the greatest reluctance on the part of the patterns leading the people, the people will turn to you and say, "All right, dammit,* let's try your policy."



JULIE FORGIONE

Harvey Jackins

From *A Better World*, page 80

* "Dammit" means damn it, which is an exclamation of displeasure.

The People's Climate March

I had received a couple of e-mails about the People's Climate March in New York (New York, USA) before I received the link to the movie *Disruption* from Diane.¹ In our town, a group of people were raising funds to send two tour buses of people to the event, but it wasn't clear to me what the big picture was until I watched the movie. Seeing it put everything into perspective, answered questions, and clarified things that had been vague for me. I was excited to share it with my ongoing RC class at our next meeting.

In preparation for the class, I reviewed some of the articles in the journal *Sustaining All Life*.² After "news and goods," a mini-session, and a bit of RC theory, we launched right into the film. We stopped whenever anyone was having feelings and did three rounds of my counseling each class member. We were not able to view the whole movie in one class meeting, so I e-mailed the link to everyone, suggesting that they watch the remainder of it in their Co-Counseling session that week. And I had all of my own sessions that week on the film—mostly on feelings of hopelessness and despair.

Once I had the bigger picture, I began thinking about those e-mails I had received about the buses to New York. I thought about all the marches on Washington³ that had happened in my lifetime and my lack of involvement in them. In every case, I'd had an opportunity to participate but hadn't and I now regretted it. I called the local organizer to see if the buses were full. Unfortunately they were, but he put me on a waiting list in case someone cancelled.

I was excited about the possibility of going but had lots of fears too. I had never been to New York except to RC workshops, which meant just seeing the airport and the workshop site. I had never been in the city. The town I live in is pretty⁴ small, and the idea of New York was intimidating to me. Also, I knew that such a large crowd would restimulate some claustrophobia. I had sessions on that but found myself relieved when I got an e-mail on Thursday morning saying that it wasn't going to be possible for me to go. Now I wouldn't

have to face the fears and inconvenience of a four-day bus trip.

But at 1:30 p.m. on Thursday, I got a call. Someone had to cancel, and if I could get to the meeting place by 4:30 p.m., I could go. It was an all-expense-paid trip; my only cost would be my meals. And all I had to do was arrange for a dog sitter,⁵ cancel a few appointments, do some laundry, and pack. At 4:30, I was there. I was not willing to regret another missed opportunity to make a difference.

I carpooled to Little Rock (Arkansas, USA) with three men I didn't know. We spent the night in the home of more people I didn't know. At 5:00 a.m. on Friday we boarded buses for New York. I knew only one other person on the bus, but by the time we got to New Jersey, where we spent our second night, I felt like I was among old friends.

On the bus we watched the film *Disruption*, as well as *Do the Math* and one called *Cowspiracy*. Someone had brought a guitar, and another guy had a harmonica. I led folks in a sing-along. There were motivational talks as well, and by Sunday morning I was excited about getting to play a part in this historic event.

We arrived at the site of the march at 9:30 a.m. and began making signs and posters, helping others who were making them, blowing up balloons, and so on. By 10:30 a rally had begun. At many points I wished for a Co-Counselor; I could have discharged hard about climate change. What I did instead was try to listen to others as much as I could.

The thing I noticed about the rally was that everyone who spoke was "preaching to the choir." They were saying things we already knew about why we were there. (It was an attempt at a "pep rally,"⁶ I think.) I kept thinking I had a piece of information about the care of the environment that this group didn't have. I needed to speak to the crowd. I was very scared to do it, but I thought about Tim and Diane⁷ and all the Co-Counselors around the world who would want me to speak and for whom I would be speaking.

I worked my way through the crowd up to the front where people were standing on the back of a truck

continued . . .

¹ Diane Shisk, the Alternate International Reference Person for the RC Communities, had sent to the RC teachers' e-mail discussion list a link to where people could watch the movie *Disruption* on the Internet. *Disruption* is a movie about climate change, made in part to help mobilize people for the September 21 New York People's Climate March.

² The RC journal for people interested in care of the environment

³ Marches at the capitol of the United States, in Washington, D.C.

⁴ "Pretty" means quite.

⁵ "Dog sitter" means someone to take care of my dog.

⁶ A "pep rally" is a gathering aimed at inspiring enthusiasm.

⁷ Tim Jackins and Diane Shisk

WIDE WORLD CHANGING

... continued

with a microphone and a megaphone. I found the man who seemed to be the MC⁸ and spoke to him about getting on the agenda. I told him that I needed to give a perspective from an elder African-heritage Southern female. He agreed and said that he had not been acting in any official capacity but that if I would stay up front, and he could get the mike⁹ back in his hands, he would call me up to speak. I waited, trembling yet determined, but he did not manage to bring it off.¹⁰ I was both disappointed and relieved.

Rather than shouting angrily about the bad guys who were destroying the planet, I had wanted to talk about the importance of connection. I had wanted to mention the fears that capitalism installs on us that separate us from each other. I had wanted to talk about making sure that the voices of disenfranchised groups were represented in our environmental activism. I had also wanted to say something about the importance of moving closer to those different from ourselves and facing our fears of each other, and about how our love for each other was a powerful force in our love and care for our mother Earth.

I noticed that lots of people were totally surprised that Arkansas was represented at the march. I'm not sure why they were surprised, but I think it was because of a stereotype of Arkansas being a conservative, not-progressive state. Many people in the march and along the sidelines cheered when they saw our signs that said, "I'm marching for Arkansas."

By 7:30 on Sunday evening, we were back on our buses and beginning a twenty-hour trip back to

⁸ "MC" means master of ceremonies, which means person who was acting as the host of the event.

⁹ Microphone

¹⁰ "Bring it off" means make it happen.

Your heart and my heart
Are very, very old
Friends.

Hafiz
A fourteenth-
century Persian poet

Arkansas. On Monday afternoon, I decided to do a small class on the bus. I stood at the front with a microphone and talked about the things I had wanted to say earlier. I no longer felt like I was among strangers, and that made it easier, but I was still nervous about it. I invited people to take a three-minute-each-way mini-session with their seat-mate and talk about what had connected them to nature as a child. I ended with a little talk about how we are as new humans and how much we naturally want each other. I emphasized that our love for the planet is deeply connected to our love for all other human beings. I got cheers after the presentation, and several people hugged me and said that it had completely changed the tone of the trip. They spoke about feeling happier, lighter, and more connected.

On the car trip back to Fayetteville from Little Rock, my traveling partners—three white middle-class men—asked me to talk more about capitalism and how it separates us from each other. I did, and we had a long discussion about capitalism, sexism, and other oppressions. It was hard for me to hold my own¹¹ with these men, as their points of view¹² were restimulating. I had to remind myself to listen respectfully to them. But by the time I returned to my own car, I felt satisfied that I had indeed made a difference in the world, on both a large and a small scale.

Thanks again, Diane, for sending us the link to the movie and for thinking so well about our mother Earth.

Dorothy Marcy
Fayetteville, Arkansas, USA
Reprinted from the e-mail
discussion list for RC teachers

¹¹ "Hold my own" means maintain my position.

¹² "Points of view" means opinions.



DIANE SHISK

Following the Leadership of Native Peoples

As soon as I heard about the People's Climate March in New York City (New York, USA),¹ I knew I wanted to be there. For many years I've been learning about, writing about, mourning and raging about, and taking leadership on what is happening to the life support systems of our home, this earth—with its brilliant people struggling to feed and care for their families and communities under increasingly difficult and unpredictable conditions, and the many amazing plant and animal beings threatened by rapidly changing air, soil, and waters.

What is needed now is a multitude of good minds coming together in resilience, resistance, courage, innovation, re-evaluation, and brilliance. And there we were, about four hundred thousand of us, including many RCers. The organizers of the march were smart. Leading the way were people of the global majority, especially Indigenous people and those most threatened by the changing climate; young people; and people living in low-lying areas vulnerable to flooding. They were up front and visible.

Because I had worked for many years as an ally to the Native community near where I live, I was invited to travel overnight to New York with them. The tiny sovereign Onondaga Nation filled two buses with elders, young people, families, and friends who traveled through the night to get to the front of the march. And they were proud, dressed in full regalia. They seemed so pleased that the organizers were recognizing and honoring people who had been warning others of us about our destructive patterns for over four hundred years. Facing attempted genocide, theft of their land, destruction of their crops and forests, their children being stolen and taken to boarding schools, they had been

resisting colonialism and capitalism, generation after generation, always warning us about what was being lost because of our inability to listen to, learn from, and respect the earth.

At the march were Indigenous people from many parts of the world. One was a Co-Counseling leader of Mohawk heritage, Alison Ehara-Brown, who had traveled on the People's Climate Train for over three thousand miles to get to New York. I was so happy to see her. Her face beamed with determination, enthusiasm, and joy in being part of Native resurgence. I loved marching with her and others under the Bay Area (California, USA) Idle No More² banner. She and I couldn't find space in the surging crowd for a real Co-Counseling session, but we communicated with each other with smiles, tears, laughter, and shouts of joy. She kept a persistent beat with her traditional Haudenosaunee³ rattle, and drums played by neighbors in the Indigenous contingent kept the beat with her.

It has been a dream of mine that throngs of people would someday listen to what Native peoples have to say and remember their own Indigenous ancestors of the distant past, who lived respectfully, in reciprocity, with the gifts of the earth (or they would never have had living descendants). It's the right and necessary thing for all of us to walk together, following the leadership of Native peoples, to free the earth from the patterns of capitalism, greed, racism, and entitlement that have so long confused and damaged us.

² Idle No More is an ongoing protest movement that started among the Indigenous peoples in Canada and their non-Indigenous supporters and has spread internationally. It calls on all people to join in a peaceful revolution to honor Indigenous sovereignty and protect the land and water.

³ Haudenosaunee means "People of the Long House" and is what the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca, and Tuscarora call themselves. The confederacy was named the "Iroquois" by the French and the "Six Nations" by the British.



We RCers can make a profound difference as we support this rapidly growing movement for environmental and economic justice. Our new goal for care of the environment⁴ has clarified our task and coaxed us to be bold. Thanks to Wytke Wisser, Barbara Love, Diane Shisk, Beth Cruise,⁵ and the many others at the Care of the Environment Conference last year in Vancouver (British Columbia, Canada) for leading the way forward. We are on our way.

Jack Manno

Syracuse, New York, USA

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

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 Wytke Wisser is the International Commonality Reference Person for Care of the Environment, Barbara Love is the International Liberation Reference Person for African-Heritage People, Diane Shisk is the Alternate International Reference Person, and Beth Cruise is the editor of *Sustaining All Life*, the RC journal for people interested in care of the environment.

¹ The march took place on September 21, 2014.



POINT DEFIANCE ZOO, TACOMA,
WASHINGTON, USA • TIM JACKINS

Things Are Changing

I attended the People's Climate March on September 21 in New York City (USA) and helped to bring seven busloads of young people of the global majority, and their allies, there. I could not walk a block without seeing another Co-Counselor!

There were also twenty-six hundred other marches and actions that weekend in 162 countries all over the world. Things are changing. More and more, every day, people are joining the concerned, and acting.

From what I know, many U.S. local papers did an amazing job of covering the events. It was certainly true in Boston (Massachusetts, USA). Some people talked about how the television stations did not cover

them. But I don't think that they ever cover activism.

I realized in a Co-Counseling session that every single person who was at any of the marches made some kind of uncomfortable effort to get out of his or her usual life and get to someplace where he or she could join other humans and care all together with them as a group. It was not an easy trip for my crew and me, but that was part of the beauty of it. I've been crying for the past bunch of days about what we did, and wanting to go back again and again. I would love to hear others' stories.

In unity,

Jenny Szama

Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts, USA
Reprinted from the e-mail discussion
list for RC Community members

A Favorable Situation

I think we would have to conclude, if we had access to complete information about the trends and developments in the world, that our present world population is in the most favorable circumstance that humanity has ever occupied. We have already solved or are in the process of solving an enormous number of problems that baffled our predecessors and forbears.

That we have created a few more problems in the process is not in itself tragic. It is just in the nature of any such development. As we tackle and solve the still unsolved problems of the past, as we correct the sloppy, careless treatment of our world that has taken place under the banner of "profit first and to hell with¹ the environment," we really just have one priority. That priority is to "clean up our act."² We must become responsible caretakers of this lovely planet that we have been fortunate enough to evolve upon. We must become true to our own natures, eliminate the residue of distress patterns that have become attached to us. We must learn to prevent the spread of patterns by the victim-becoming-perpetrator contagion. We must live sensibly.

Harvey Jackins

From *A Better World*, page 5

¹ "To hell with" means forget about, don't care about.

² "Clean up our act" means improve how we have been behaving.



A Listening Project at the Bristol Climate Change March



Six Bristol (England) Co-Counsellors did a listening project¹ at a climate change march in Bristol on Sunday, 21 September.

Beforehand we read with interest the “pack” for listening projects² and decided to make our own leaflet. It was based on the content of “Thinking Our Way Forward”³ but was shorter and more accessible. We thought that for this particular day we needed something short and punchy⁴ and something that felt local.

Three thousand people came on the march. (That is big for Bristol, a city of five hundred thousand.) It was, as usual, dominated by white middle-class people, but they were lovely and thoughtful. It also included quite a lot of young adults and a sprinkling of ethnic minorities. There was good music, good-tempered chanting, imaginative costumes. We went through the shopping centre, and, although it was Sunday, a lot of people saw us and must have thought about it.

Before and after the march we approached people in pairs, carrying our placards with the question “What do you think the government should do about climate change?” As is usual in listening projects, even here in England where most people don’t speak to strangers, it was easy to get people talking.

We learnt a lot from listening. One young adult said there should be an equal citizens’ income and that the resources released should be spent on conversion to green energy. Some people talked about past struggles to get rational policies through the United Kingdom Parliament and about the present campaign against TTIP.⁵ (TTIP could finally undermine the National Health Service and make the privatisation of it impossible to reverse. It would also make it far harder for nation states to regulate corporations that damage the environment.)

For me the really fun part was after the march. As people were assembling for the speeches, two of us went up to a group of about eight students who were sitting on the

grass. They were not part of the march. At first they said they knew nothing, but we waited a bit, and they turned out to know⁶ more than they realised. They all spoke. One referred to the unfairness of poor countries paying the price for rich countries’ development. Others talked about how confusing the media is. They loosened up quite a bit after I asked them if they found the situation scary.

Then we went up to the skateboarders who are always on the edge of the green, and one young black man spent quite a while talking to us about the difference between his parents’ generation and his own. He was so modest, intelligent, and thoughtful. I told him that obviously he could educate himself on climate change within a week if he chose to, and that I’d feel a lot safer if he was in charge rather than David Cameron (the prime minister). He liked that because he could see that I meant it.

Another skateboarder was Scottish and was devastated by the “no” vote in the referendum.⁷ He talked about that quite a bit and then moved on to climate change and the importance of getting people involved in politics.

Of the six of us who did the listening project, five were older white women and one was a young adult of Bangladeshi origin. The key to doing it well seemed to be our knowing that we were wanted, acting on that basis, and showing that we were pleased with the person talking. The young adult knew less about climate change than the rest of us, but she didn’t need to know more. She was herself—sympathetic, joyful, interested, open. People enjoyed talking to her, and they could see that she enjoyed listening. Showing ourselves in one way or another was what made the project work.

Caroline New
Bristol, England

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

¹ In an RC listening project, several Co-Counselors go to a public place and offer to listen to passersby about some important issue, such as racism or a current war. They may hold signs that invite people to share their thinking about that issue.

² A digital packet of resources for listening projects on the environment, available for free by e-mailing to <irc@rc.org>

³ An article by Tim Jackins, in the packet

⁴ “Punchy” means vibrant, forceful.

⁵ The U.S./European Union Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership

⁶ “They turned out to know” means as it happened they knew.

⁷ The referendum on Scottish independence held on September 18, 2014, in Scotland.



NANCY LEMON

This Is How a Movement Is Built!

After a viewing of the movie *Disruption*¹ that I hosted on September 7, I asked the group of twenty at the movie if they were interested in a local rally. One person said, “Yes!” with conviction, and that was enough backing² for me to take the lead and make it happen.

At first I felt like I didn’t have time to do more than send out a few e-mails to lists of potential people and show up with signs. But I quickly realized how the process of organizing this type of event is full of opportunity—to build connections, lead people, give information—and I ended up spending many hours over the next two weeks doing all of that and more.

I incorporated our local rally, and the larger marches in New York City (USA) and around the world, into many of my conversations. It was a great way to start or continue the conversation about climate change.

The person at the movie who had wanted the event to happen said, “I’ll do anything you want.” (One of the more significant things we’ve learned in RC is how to support leaders, including by helping them do the work. Let’s spread that idea far and wide.) I was able to check ideas with her, and that bit of contact kept me inspired to keep trying things. She offered to host a sign-making event, which ended up being just the two of us, together with my six-year-old and a young adult woman who was visiting us. We spend a lovely evening talking and making signs. I had met this woman six months earlier at my

climate change awareness booth,³ and she is currently running for the local City Council. I was delighted to have a chance to get to know her better.

I wrote e-mails and sent them to my family, personal friends, a list I had of local people interested in learning more about climate change that had grown to over a hundred, the local



KATIE KAUFFMAN

Grange,⁴ and the school district’s union of teachers (over a thousand people). I also posted the event on the 350.org⁵ website and encouraged people to post it on Facebook.

I put up a few posters around town and a number at my daughter’s school. The school librarian made a display using the posters and talked to the students about climate change as each class visited the library during the week prior to the rally. The principal authorized sending information about the rally to the teachers. The assistant superintendent allowed me to distribute the flier as well, so if I’d had more time, I could have sent it to all the schools in the district.

³ See the article “A Listening Project and a Four-Week Class on Climate Change” on page 80 of the July 2014 *Present Time*.

⁴ The Grange is a national association originally consisting of farmers.

⁵ 350.org is an organization that is working to build a global climate movement.

I saw that there are countless opportunities to organize and that each step can be about connecting and informing. I am shifting away from seeing the steps as “hard,” unpleasant tasks to seeing them as important chances to reach people.

My husband encouraged me to contact the press, and I was interviewed for two local newspapers that published strong pieces before the event, connecting the local rally with the larger events in New York and around the world. I was pleased that they printed some of my statements about the disproportionate impact of environmental damage and climate change on low-income communities and communities of color.

About fifty people attended our rally. They were toddlers to elders, twenty Latinos/as, thirty white people, a woman in a wheelchair, and a woman who arrived by bike. Everyone was enthusiastic and left asking, “What’s next?”

A television crew arrived to cover us on the news. Two Latinas, including the woman running for City Council, spoke to the reporter. The next day the Spanish television channel contacted us and asked for Spanish-speaking Latinos/as to interview. We provided it with four names of people we thought would be terrific spokespeople, and two were interviewed and appeared on the news. Even though it was a short clip, once again the process was so valuable: our friends got to speak to reporters, the message about climate change got into the mainstream news, and so on.

All of this was a great reminder that one person can have a big impact. Just my deciding to organize the rally led to thousands of people

¹ *Disruption* is a movie about climate change that was made in part to help mobilize people for the September 21, 2014, People’s Climate March in New York, New York, USA.

² “Backing” means support.

being informed in advance about the week of actions around the world and thousands more reading about our local event in the newspaper or watching it on television. The fifty people who attended the rally were inspired and made connections, left hopeful about possibilities, and talked to friends, colleagues, and neighbors about being there. *And*, thousands of people drove or walked by us. They read our signs, honked horns in support, and got a little more informed about climate change.

We hope to arrange a report-back at which we show the movie *Disruption* again and have local people who participated in people's climate marches in different places tell about their experiences. This is how a movement is built!

Postscript: The other day I met with the assistant superintendent of secondary education for our school district of about twenty thousand students. He is going to facilitate my contacting key teaching staff in the

district (such as high school science teachers) in order to collaborate with them on climate change education. He believes the movie *Disruption* would fit in with Common Core Standards and be appropriate to show to high school students at school!

Nancy Faulstich

Watsonville, California, USA

Reprinted from the e-mail discussion lists for RC Community members and for leaders in the care of the environment

Answering the Question "What Do You Do?"

Six years ago I went to a conference to promote a manuscript I had written about my work in the factory. It was a conference for university professors who were trying to get departments of "working-class studies" on university campuses.

I am often faced with the question "What do you do?" which in my culture is understood to mean "What do you do for work?" or, more accurately, "What is your profession?" I never know how to answer this. I went to work in the factory to organize workers, but I usually can't say that out loud, because I might lose my job if the wrong people knew it. So I tell a half truth: that I work in a factory. That often ends the discussion. People are not interested, or they just do not know how to talk to a factory worker. If I tell them where I work, they say, "What a nice company."



GRAND CANYON, ARIZONA, USA • JOSHUA FEYEN

I thought that in this group of leftists¹ it would be a little safer to talk about what I really do, which is organize. But I knew that if I said, "I organize workers," they would think, "He is a union organizer," and would ask what union, and I would say, "I don't have one." And then the conversation would stop because no one would know what that meant.

I had many Co-Counseling sessions about this. I wanted to describe what I did in a concise way and before people lost their attention. I was pleased with what I came up with.²

The first people I met at the conference were three advanced-level students doing research and writing. I asked them what they did, and they told me about their studies. Then they asked, "What do you do?" I said, "Well, I work in a factory making shoes, but what I really do is look for signs of intelligence and encourage them." They didn't know how to respond to that answer, but I was pleased with it. I wonder how many of us do this for our "work."

Dan Nickerson

International Liberation Reference

Person for Working-Class People

Freeport, Maine, USA

Reprinted from the RC e-mail discussion list for leaders of working-class people

¹ "Leftists" are politically progressive people.

² "Came up with" means figured out.

The Healing Power of Action

A group of young Jews in Boston (Massachusetts, USA) decided to stage a rally challenging the narrative about the war in Gaza that was being put out by the local mainstream Jewish organizations. Seventy-five young people sang and chanted in front of the offices of these organizations for *Tisha Be'Av*.¹ The two heads of the organizations agreed to meet in their offices with a bunch of young Jews. As a Jewish leader in the wide world and a young adult, I was contacted by the organizers and asked to come.

I had a lot of feelings about it. My first instinct was to “duck”² the invite and pretend that I didn’t have time to deal with it—just as I had ignored the rally the week before. Fortunately I had a session already scheduled with another Jew of color. I brought all my feelings into that session and for the first time linked together all the reasons why I felt discouraged, hopeless, and hurt about Israel/Palestine. The contradiction³ of being with another Jew of color, and of being able to get a session about these feelings at all, led to a breakthrough for me. I feel like I have a new handle on⁴ how to tackle this distress. I could feel everyone who has written to the list⁵ urging me to fully discharge my feelings instead of disengaging from the material⁶ (which is how I have coped with it for the past decade or so).

Going into the meeting I still had lots of feelings but knew that I had to act. As young adults we have a lot of power to change the narrative about Israel/Palestine that is coming out of the Jewish community in the United States. We told our stories and presented our requests to the organizations and had an interesting discussion. We will take the results of it back to other young Jews in Boston and figure out what to do next.

This experience was a reminder of the effectiveness of a good session and the healing power of action! I feel rejuvenated and hopeful again. What a victory! It was also a reminder of our power as young adults and how important it is for us to raise our voices and stand up for our thinking. We can lead the Jewish people back to their true selves.

Rosa Blumenfeld

Boston, Massachusetts, USA

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

¹ *Tisha Be'Av* is an annual fast day in Judaism that commemorates the destruction of the First and Second Temples in Jerusalem and the subsequent exile of the Jews from the Land of Israel. The day also commemorates other tragedies that occurred on the same day, including the Roman massacre of over 500,000 Jews at Betar in 135 CE. *Tisha Be'Av* is regarded as the saddest day in the Jewish calendar and a day destined for tragedy. It falls in July or August in the Western calendar.

² “Duck” means avoid, ignore.

³ Contradiction to distress

⁴ “A new handle on” means a new way to approach.

⁵ The RC e-mail discussion list for leaders of Jews

⁶ “Material” means distress.

If you move . . .

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

Thank you!

Rational Island Publishers



KK

Speaking Up

This is a story about speaking up.¹

I live in a large city in the United States. Recently we had an election for mayor, and a local working-class man was elected. He appointed a new police commissioner (the head of the police force in the city). The Commissioner is also a local working-class man, very “down to earth” (real, not pretentious). He spoke at our neighborhood meeting a few weeks ago, and I was pleased with his report. It showed his intelligence, compassion, and love of our city. However, he said several things that bothered me. He wondered why women victims of domestic violence stay with their abusers and why young women who are sexually assaulted go out drinking and go home with men they don’t know.

I called his office and asked for an appointment to talk to him. I was surprised that I got one the next week. Fortunately I had an RC workshop in between and got to discharge about my boldness and what I wanted to say. (As a raised-working-class Catholic woman, I have often thought about speaking up without actually doing it.)

I prepared a talk about “blaming the victim.” This term was coined in the 1970s by a sociologist named William Ryan. He wanted to refute the belief that it was their own fault when people targeted by racism in the United States were poor—a belief that justified racism and social injustice. Victims of crime, especially rape, were also being



ROB VENDERBOS

blamed. The idea was that women were responsible because of how they behaved—for example, how they dressed.

When I got to the Commissioner’s office, he was welcoming and wondered what I wanted to talk about. I told him I wanted to talk about two things. The first was that I thought he had “blamed the victim” in his talk. The second was that I thought he was a breath of fresh air in city government and I would hate to see him have to defend himself against a storm of media criticism. I told him that if he did not understand the concept of blaming the victim, sooner or later he would have to face criticism.

I described what I meant by the concept and suggested that the questions should be about the people who victimize, not about the victims. I said that instead

of asking why women do these things, he should be asking why men feel entitled to hit or rape women—that this was where he should be putting his attention as a police officer. And I asked what it was about our culture that made these crimes the most common in our city.

We had a good half-hour discussion. We were able to listen to each other. He described growing up with a “totally male mindset” and how hard it was sometimes to break out of it. He told me his wife was trying to educate him about women, and he appreciated my coming in to talk to him. I asked him if he would watch a talk by a man named Jackson Katz, one of the leading trainers on these issues, and gave him the link² to look it up.

It felt great to be an active bystander—to step out of my pattern of feeling small and speak up about something important.

“Lucy Lupo”
USA

² “Link” means site on the Internet.

¹ “Speaking up” means freely expressing an opinion.

Ready to Fight

If labor becomes organized and aware, it is able to require any action it wants, including the peaceful, gentle ending of this oppressive society. Given a sensible program and a little encouragement, it is ready to fight. The working class is there.

Harvey Jackins

Perhaps We Could Do Something Big

*Uniting the Labor Movement, the Peace Movement,
and the Climate Justice Movement*

For thirty-seven years I have been working in the U.S. labor movement, hoping to win it over to progressive, pro-human policies. In the past ten or so years, the labor movement has built significant ties with the U.S. peace movement. Now there are hopeful signs that the labor movement and the climate justice movement could forge an alliance.

I was raised middle class, and my family had no background in unions. When I decided to enter the labor movement, I was working on a graduate degree in ecology. I had been active against the Vietnam War for ten years and could see that the lack of union support was a major weakness in the peace movement. I was convinced that the labor movement needed to be won over to progressive, pro-human policies in order to implement a program of environmental sustainability, social justice, peace, and anti-imperialism.

For the next twenty-five years I worked to make the Teamsters Union and the American Federation of Teachers more democratic and responsive. But because I was also helping to raise two children, earning a living, and being an active participant in RC, I had little time to advance the peace and anti-imperialism agenda. Then in 2003, as the United States prepared to bomb and invade Iraq, unions all around the United States started passing resolutions opposing the war. Nothing on that scale had happened before in the history of U.S. unions. My own union of faculty and staff at my community college ended up voting to oppose the war. I was then instrumental in convincing the Philadelphia (Pennsylvania, USA) AFL-CIO¹ to pass a similar resolution. Efforts like these in unions all over the country led to the formation of U.S. Labor Against the War—the first-ever national organization of labor organizations opposed to a major U.S. foreign policy—in which I

¹ The American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations

have played a leadership role. Within a few years, this organization helped lead the national AFL-CIO to call for a reordering of national spending priorities—for cutting back on military spending and for using the money saved to support needed social services and civilian jobs. That was a major reversal of AFL-CIO policies.

I could not have stayed optimistic through all these struggles if I hadn't had the tools of RC and the support of many wonderful Co-Counselors.

In the past few years, as carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere have steadily increased and the climate has been disrupted more and more, I have been reading, thinking, discharging, and talking about how to change the U.S. policies that leave us so dependent on damaging fossil fuels. With the encouragement of Madeleine Para,² Kathy Miller,³ and other Co-Counselors, I have decided to act on the assumption that I can play a significant role in uniting the labor movement and the climate justice movement. I have had to struggle against feelings that I am too small and too old, that someone else could surely do it better, and so on, but in the last fifteen months I have taken a number of steps to implement my decision:

1) I asked a friend, who is also a fellow union activist and an RCer, to arrange a meeting with the president of one of the best national labor organizations working on climate change. My friend and I convinced him that our experience in U.S. Labor Against the War was a good model for organizing and changing policy within the labor movement.

2) I worked with two other friends, one of whom is an RCer, to plan a forum on labor and climate change. About twenty labor activists and close

² Madeleine Para is an RC leader and a climate-change activist in Madison, Wisconsin, USA.

³ Kathy Miller is a wide-world-change activist and the Regional Reference Person for Western West Virginia and parts of Pennsylvania, USA.



ARIZONA, USA • STEVE BANBURY

to a hundred environmentalists attended, and they left excited about the prospects for unity between labor and climate activists.

3) Working with the same friends, I invited fifteen labor activist leaders to a discussion on “Labor’s Response to Climate Change.” I presented four propositions and asked people to respond in a taking-turns format. The propositions were (a) that climate change presents a major threat to our economy as well as to our environment, (b) that labor needs to develop its own program and not just react against programs put forward by environmentalists, (c) that this program should include a carbon tax to make fossil fuels progressively more expensive and forms of alternative renewable energy more economically competitive, and (d) that we need an organization that can focus on a labor-environmental alliance. Again, people left energized and pleased to be discussing the topic. Two of the labor leaders—people who have very busy lives—asked when we were going to have the next meeting!

Here are some exciting developments in the larger world:

- Last September more than three hundred thousand people rallied in New York City (New York, USA) to tell the world’s leaders at the United Nations that they needed to implement policies to address climate injustice. Ten thousand union members from a hundred different unions were part of that march. One union leader was quoted in a union magazine as saying, “Capitalism cannot solve the climate-change problem

it has created.” I have never before seen that magazine mention problems with capitalism.

- U.S. Labor Against the War is making climate change one of its central issues with the slogans “No More Wars, No More Warming” and “The U.S. Military is the Biggest Polluter on the Planet.” There is interest in lobbying for a fund for job training and income support for workers who lose their fossil-fuel jobs.

- Naomi Klein has written the book *This Changes Everything* in which she states that the climate justice issue might be compelling enough to unite a variety of activist movements and build a society that, by putting people before profits, is not only better for the climate but also better for people.

When I entered the labor movement nearly thirty-seven years ago, I hoped to help build a movement that would unite labor, peace activists, and environmentalists. It looks like this may be starting to happen. I plan to keep using my experience in the labor movement to help build the climate justice movement. I wonder what would happen if every RCer used his or her own connections to help build a diverse, powerful, pro-human movement to stabilize the climate. Maybe, just maybe, this could be really big! As Harvey Jackins used to say, “Let’s pull up our socks and go!”

John Braxton
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA
Reprinted from the RC e-mail discussion
list for leaders of wide world change

Sustaining All Life, Ending Classism, Ending War

Thank you, John, for writing and for the work you are doing to change the world.¹ You are making a significant contribution to meeting what I see as the three most important challenges facing humanity:

- *Sustaining all life.* If we don’t meet this challenge (and the threat is a real one), all the other good work we do (liberation work, family work, improving our relationships, reclaiming our minds, and so on) will be meaningless.
- *Ending classism.* As long as there is a class society, humans’ fears for their survival will push them into exploiting the environment (and other people) in an effort to survive and, for many, to make a profit.
- *Ending war.* War destroys human lives and the environment and enables the owning class to make huge profits. War also hurts and confuses young people and installs distress recordings of discouragement.

continued . . .

¹ See previous article.

WIDE WORLD CHANGING

... continued

We can all contribute to meeting these challenges, in big ways and small. Here are some suggestions:

- We can discharge on discouragement.
- We can discharge on the RC commitment to reclaim power: “From now on I will see to it that everything I am in contact with works well, and I will not limit or pull back on my contacts. This will mean _____.”
- We can discharge on the RC commitment to unity of all human aspirations: “From now on I will inspire, lead, and organize all people to eliminate every form of humans harming humans. This will mean _____.”
- We can get involved in progressive movements (and there are many of them all over the world) that are working for policies and laws that are respectful of the environment.
- We can inform ourselves about and back² Dan Nickerson’s³ recent initiative on ending classism (see “A New Initiative on Ending Classism,” on page 8 of the July 2014 *Present Time*).
- We can discharge on how our families have been affected by the long history of war and get involved in progressive movements that are committed to ending war. As most of you know, I have been leading and discharging on healing from war for over a decade. I was led to do this after I took the job of International Commonality Reference Person for Wide World Change. When I held out my vision of a world in which resources were shared equally and preserved forever, people started discharging on war and political violence. I discovered that in most families there was silence about the history of war and little or no attention for young people’s feelings about it, and that its effect on people was profound.

Julian Weissglass
International Commonality Reference
Person for Wide World Change
Santa Barbara, California, USA
Reprinted from the RC e-mail discussion
list for leaders of wide world change

² “Back” means support.

³ Dan Nickerson is the International Liberation Reference Person for Working-Class People.



“We Can Do This!”



What if we RCers took responsibility for seeing to it¹ that everyone around us learned about the current reality of climate change and got fully informed about the potential risks? What if we held community forums at which we taught people tools for processing their reactions to the seriousness of the situation?

My city, Watsonville (California, USA), has about fifty-five thousand people. It’s in Santa Cruz County, which has perhaps two hundred thousand

¹ “Seeing to it” means making certain.

people. I am taking the direction of seeing to it that everyone in my city and county gets fully informed about climate change and am thinking about what steps to take to make that happen.

Will you join me in deciding that you will be the person to see to it that everyone around you gets informed? How many people could we reach in one year? Are you already doing this? Please let me know. Here’s what I have been doing so far:

I am cultivating relationships with people already working in local

environmental organizations. That includes the Monterey Bay Aquarium and the Watsonville Wetlands Watch.

I am using my connections in the local school district to see what I can do to reach middle and high school students. I am building relationships with science teachers, a science curriculum coach, and someone who runs an environmental program in the area high schools. I attended a school assembly with a program called ACE—Alliance for Climate Education—and connected with school staff, appreciated the presenter, and suggested incorporating listening time in pairs into the assembly.

I am building a coalition of people who want to take action—participate in rallies and marches, staff education tables at local festivals, and so on. The group includes students, teachers, retired teachers, people running for the local city council, and environmental activists. I'm aiming for good representation from the larger community.

I attended a local Peace and Unity March in memory of people who had died from violence in Watsonville and carried a sign linking climate change to stress and increased violence. That opened up many conversations—with police, a parole officer, leaders from churches, youth, and politicians.

Many people I talk to suggest another person or group for me to meet. Each conversation can be a little seed that sprouts and grows.

I am working with library staff to plan a program of events for next April

focused on climate change. I am developing relationships with reporters for local newspapers.

I now have about 130 people on an e-mail list to which I send periodic updates from the news about climate change so that they continue to get informed.

As I build relationships, I'm introducing ideas and structures from RC. As I think it makes sense, I will invite people to an RC class, teach them one-on-one,² or start a group for leaders who are taking on³ environmental issues.

We can do this! One by one, we can reach all the people of the world with the important information about climate change, listen to them respond,

² "One-on-one" means individually.

³ "Taking on" means doing something about.



NANCY FAULSTICH

and then encourage them to take action. For me it's heartwarming, leads to great personal connections, and is a way to reclaim power. It also gives me a vehicle for using my mind fully and loving people openly. Thanks to all of you for keeping me inspired and moving forward.

Nancy Faulstich

Watsonville, California, USA

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

The Origins of Oppression and the Discipline of Hope

Why is there oppression? Where does oppression—classism, racism, sexism, and so on—come from? Why do so many people use violence against one another? Why do we kill and get killed in war? Why do a small number of people control most of the resources?

Does oppression exist because someone felt fear, did not know how to deal with the feeling, and decided to find some oppressive way to deal with it? Did those experiencing fear decide that they had to fight to keep their position? Did this develop into the class system? Did this lead to organised fighting—to war? Did this lead to the creation of institutions based on fear?

These questions come from my struggle to understand my own situation, particularly early times of wondering what was happening in me, to me, and around me.

Brian Smeaton

Letterkenny, County Donegal, Ireland

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

Recent DNA evidence shows that at one point, the number of Homo sapiens decreased to only a few thousand people, whom we are all descended from.

When a population of large mammals falls to that small a number, the risk of their becoming extinct is quite large. It appears that as a species we barely survived. It's possible that patterns of terror related to survival were installed

continued . . .



BURMA • MAURA FALLON

... continued

at that time (as well as earlier). As complex societies developed (around ten thousand years ago), the fears of our ancestors were woven into the structure of society—and we have lived with the resulting oppression ever since.

I remember a quote from Harvey Jackins: “If only a calm voice could have stepped in at the point when the societies were developing and said, ‘The organization is good, but you don’t need the oppression.’”

I sometimes give a short talk called “Hope Is a Discipline.” I suggest that people remember three numbers: ten thousand, three hundred, and sixty. These numbers represent the following:

- Oppressive societies have existed for about ten thousand years.
- Only in the last three hundred years have there been organized, widespread liberation movements. (Nearly every oppressed group on the planet now has allies thinking about how to combat and end its oppression.)
- Only in the last sixty years has at least one group of people figured out how to eliminate oppressor patterns and restore humans’ inherently loving and cooperative nature.

Other hopeful facts:

- The U.S. Declaration of Independence (1776) declared, “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal” Even though it referred only to white men who owned property, it was a powerful concept. Every liberation movement since that time has been nurtured by the understanding that all humans are equal.
- As industrial society increased in complexity in the 1700s, workers had to learn how to use math and read. They began to read and understand the words of owning-class people. Capitalist society was spelling* its own doom! Education of the masses works against society’s oppressive nature.
- The Internet has made it possible to communicate to people anywhere in the world, and we humans have defied attempts to limit its spread. Enormous amounts of human creativity and hope have been released.

On a bad day in our oppressive society, it helps me to remember the above and to actively look for what is hopeful—from the past as well as in the present. This is why I say that hope is a discipline. If you want to build a case for hopelessness (which the dominant media often does), you can find lots of evidence. However, looking for evidence of hope is more useful. When I remember to look for it, I always find it. Sometimes it allows me to discharge.

Dan Nickerson

Freeport, Maine, USA

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

* In this context, “spelling” means doing what would lead to.

Listening, Learning, and Discharging

Where I live in the United States, there is misinformation and lack of information about West Asian countries and Muslim, Arab, and other West Asian peoples. People are vulnerable to being manipulated and confused by racism and anti-Jewish oppression.

Many of the difficulties and conflicts in West and South Asia and North Africa were started and have been maintained by the governments and corporations of the United States and Europe. A lot of people I know have difficulty paying attention to the details of these situations.

Paying attention to and discharging about what's happening in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Syria, Egypt, Iran, and other places in West and South Asia and North Africa has helped me sort through the misinformation coming from corporations and our government. I read newspaper accounts. I listen to interviews of people involved and work hard to understand what they think, feel, and are hoping for and why they are doing what they are doing.

I also ask Israeli, Jewish, West Asian, Arab, and Muslim people how the current situation has been for them. I communicate that I am sorry that people are being killed and hurt and say that I think the situation is resolvable in a way that will work well for everyone.

A number of years ago I was part of an RC project in which I called a Co-Counselor in Palestine once a week and listened one-way. I remember how much of a difference it made to that person and to me. Since then, whenever there's an increase in tension and violence in Israel and Palestine I ask people about it and listen a lot. I try to call all my friends and Co-Counselors. Some of my friends play significant roles in social movements working to create solutions. I listen to them think about how they can take care of themselves and to their stories of what the work has been like for them.

After I listen to people, I counsel on whatever feelings have come up for me. I am getting more able to listen to people's oppressor and victim material* in a relaxed and unworried way. I am also becoming more pleased about the challenge of discharging my own oppressor and victim material and less impatient with myself that I still carry it.

Here are some questions I am discharging and thinking about:

- What is the role of nationalism in liberation?
- Can we (if so, how can we) separate the creation of nation states from violence and capitalism or other exploitive systems?
- How do we create the conditions in which another world is possible—one where there is no exploitation or oppression of people, or destruction of the environment, and where there is support for continuous re-evaluation and revolution?

Christine Selig
San Francisco, California, USA

* "Material" means distress.



SWITZERLAND • HOLLY JORGENSEN

Cooperation More Effective

Human intelligence, when operating, always concludes that cooperation is more effective for survival than is competition.

Harvey Jackins
From *The Kind, Friendly Universe*, page 5

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Important RC Literature!

Part II, Fundamentals Teaching Guide—Liberation

The *Fundamentals Teaching Guide and Class Outline—Part 1* (published in 2007) is an outline of how an RC fundamentals class might be taught. It includes thoughts about organizing a class and doing an introductory talk about RC. There are also outlines for classes on twenty-seven topics (newly updated to include a class on care of the environment).

The *Fundamentals Teaching Guide and Class Outline (Liberation)—Part II* consists of outlines for teaching basic liberation theory. The outlines were written by our liberation leaders and will be excellent resources for teaching liberation theory to members of both oppressed and oppressor groups. Included in the *Liberation Guide* are the following chapters:

- Liberation Overview
- African-Heritage Liberation
- Artists' Liberation
- Catholic Liberation
- Chinese-Heritage Liberation
- Chicano/a Liberation
- College and University Faculty Liberation
- Liberation of People with Disabilities
- Educational Change
- Elders' Liberation
- Care of the Environment
- Family Work
- Frisian Liberation
- Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Queer, Transgender Liberation
- Japanese-Heritage Liberation
- Jewish Liberation
- Korean Liberation
- Language Liberation
- Lawyers' Liberation
- Men's Liberation
- "Mental Health" Liberation
- "Mental Health" Workers' Liberation
- Middle-Class Liberation
- Musicians' Liberation
- National and Regional Liberation
- Native/Indigenous Liberation
- Owning-Class Liberation
- Pacific Islander and Pilipino/a-Heritage Liberation
- Parents' Liberation
- Protestant Liberation
- Puerto Rican Liberation
- Raised-Poor Liberation
- Southern U.S. Liberation
- Trade Union Activists' Liberation
- Eliminating White Racism
- Wide World Change
- Women's Liberation
- Working-Class Liberation
- Young Adult Liberation
- Allies to Young People
- Young People's Liberation

Both publications are for RC teachers, and those preparing to teach, but are available to everyone.

Part I: \$25.00 (U.S.), plus postage and handling

Part II: \$15.00 (U.S.), plus postage and handling

(no quantity discount)

Working Together to End Racism

A pamphlet introducing RC from
the perspective of ending racism

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



KATIE KAUFFMAN

Ordering information on page 110

Important RC Resources!

Fundamentals Teaching Guide Updated, and Readings Now on Website!

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

- A new topic was added: “Discouragement and Fighting for Ourselves.” (In 2013, the original version was updated to include the new topic “Care of the Environment.”)
- Additions were made to Topic 6, “The Early Roots of Distress Recordings”; Topic 7, “Counseling Techniques”; and Topic 23, “The Re-evaluation Counseling Community.”
- Additional readings (articles by Tim Jackins) for both teachers and students were added to many of the other topics.

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

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

Readings referred to in the *Fundamentals Teaching Guide and Class Outline (Liberation)—Part II* are also now available on the website at <www.rc.org/publication/ftg2/readings/contents>.

Short Talks by Tim Jackins, on CD

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

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

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

The entire 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, and 2014 four-CD sets

are also available to anyone, for \$25 per set, while supplies last.

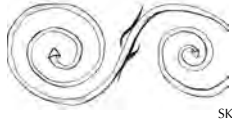
If you are a certified RC teacher, the upcoming four CDs per year are available on a subscription basis, and mailed out quarterly, for \$25 a year. If you are not a certified RC teacher, you can subscribe for \$35 a year. Anyone can order up to three years at a time.

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

For ordering information, see page 110.

Appreciating Present Time

Thank you for the wonderful gift of PRESENT TIME. I love it.



SK

Orna Shuman
Beit Shearim, Israel

I haven't even finished reading the July 2014 PRESENT TIME but am moved to express my appreciation to every parent who wrote in "Teens, Drugs, Oppression, and Setting Limits." And to Marya Axner (International Liberation Reference Person for Parents) for her piece entitled "We Can Figure This Out Together" that responds so supportively to all parents fighting to get close and stay close to their children. Thank you! And hooray for parents!



Brian Lavendel
Madison, Wisconsin, USA

PRESENT TIME is terrific as usual and is resting in the bathroom, as usual. So many valuable articles, so much valuable information. How I got so lucky to be introduced to RC in 1974 I don't know, but I ought to contact the person who told me about it.



CASSIOPEIA CONSTELLATION • AM

Pam Maccabee
Glastonbury, Connecticut, USA

Thanks for PRESENT TIME. It is a real treasure and a regular resource that is consistently useful for me.



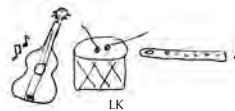
Lotahn Raz
Haifa, Israel

I love reading the continuing articles from people like Dan Nickerson and Xabi Odriozola, as well as from new folks.



Isabel Auerbach
Rohnert Park, California, USA

PRESENT TIME is excellent. The quality just gets better and better.



Diane Balser
Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts, USA

Thank you for one of humanity's most precious publications.



LIBRA CONSTELLATION • AM

Glenn Johnson
Greenfield, Massachusetts, USA



OVERLAND TRACK, TASMANIA • LYNDALL KATZ

What to Think About as We Set Up Our Lives

During open questions at the International Young People's Workshop in January 2014, I asked Tim¹ if he would share his thoughts about what makes sense for us to think about as we set up our lives, in general and in terms of our role in RC. I recorded what he said and summarized it below. Following that is some of my own thinking.

THE RC COMMUNITY

Re-evaluation Counseling is the only thing that lets us make our minds better in a particular way. Every Co-Counseling session makes us more effective and more efficient. Almost everything in our life goes faster and farther and more smoothly when we keep discharging.

When we've done a bunch of RC, we build up some slack so that we can coast for a while without sessions. Things seem to stay pretty² good. But enough distress gets restimulated all the time that things start to head downhill and get tighter and tighter. We need to discharge to keep moving forward.

Discharging by ourselves can work, but it doesn't sustain us long-term. We need the resource of an RC Community, which we can get by building RC relationships and being involved with the Community. Each of us gets to think about how much time and energy it makes sense for us to spend on this. However, we do need to do enough work that the Community builds steadily and is able to hold a clear perspective that contradicts our early defeats. Also, it can be confusing to come in and use the resource without being a part of building it.

When we think about how to spend our time, it's useful to remember that our sense of time is corrupted by capitalism. We're supposed to be busier and busier all the time. As beneficial as all the smart phones and other devices are, their real purpose is to make it possible for us to work anytime, anywhere, and be advertised to no matter where we are (making us consumers twenty-four hours a day). It's interesting to get away from all that and see how long it takes our mind to slow down and think about things from different angles.

¹ Tim Jackins, who was leading the workshop

² "Pretty" means quite.

As we build our lives we need to be involved in the RC Community, or capitalism can make us lose our perspective. We need that connection and to be working at building humanness, as we understand how to do that in RC, or it gets too confusing out there. Even though we may be doing good work in the wide world, we need a safe place to develop what we in RC know how to develop. That means being in a class, occasionally teaching a class, and in general taking initiative to make things happen. We don't have to do this continuously, but we can't step away for too long without getting confused and feeling separated. The nice thing about teaching RC is that we're taking initiative to make some relationships happen, which is where we are the weakest. It's useful to have RC leadership prompting us to take on³ relationship building.

CHOOSING A JOB

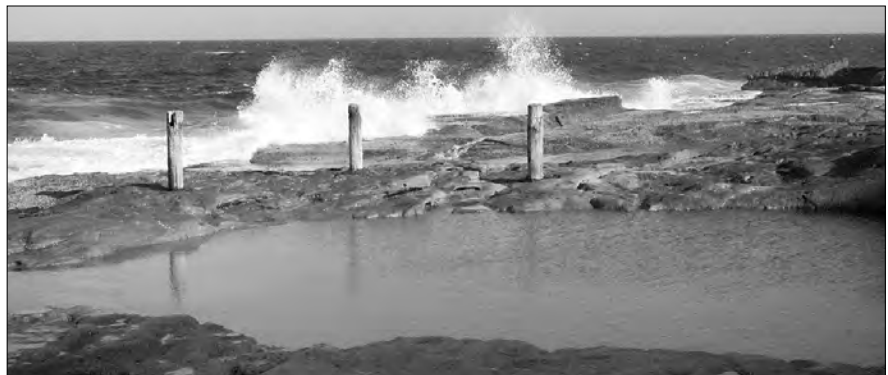
In looking for a job, we need to be hunting for good choices. But society doesn't offer good choices. It would be against the interests of an oppressive society to offer us good choices, because the society is built on the exploitation of people. A lot of people try working for nonprofit NGOs⁴ or other groups that do good things in the world. It's fine to do this, as long as we understand that it won't change the world in the big ways we want to see it change. These groups do good and important things to make life more tolerable and less oppressive. However, if that is all we do, it won't stop oppression, and we'll be left with the same basic difficulties.

Another way people try to find a good choice in the midst of societal oppression is to do nice little things away from everybody. It's a nice idea, but it doesn't go

continued . . .

³ "Take on" means undertake.

⁴ Non-governmental organizations



LYNDALL KATZ

TEACHING, LEADING, COMMUNITY BUILDING

... continued

anywhere, and eventually we've got to go somewhere. We can't keep stringing this society along⁵ forever. We have to face the fact that we're in the midst of an oppressive society and that there isn't a job that doesn't have oppression as part of it. Then we need to make the best choice we can—pick a job in which we don't play a directly oppressive role or don't do useless things. Ultimately we have to choose the best thing we can figure out without having it define us, our life, or our thoughts.

We have to think about things in a bigger context. The perspective is, "Yes, we are doing this—until the revolution." Until we can figure out a better solution, we do need something to do. We need to fill our time. We need something that gives us a basis for building broader and broader relationships. We need something that will support our life. Those are all legitimate things to look for as we look for a job and set up our life. We can do work that has good aspects while remembering that it is on the way to somewhere else. That's the important thing—that the solution is somewhere else and that we have to go there. Hopefully we can find a job that we enjoy, that gives enough stability that we aren't too worried and distracted about our security, and that puts us in contact with lots of people.

NOT LIMITED BY CLASS

Some of us will be working class, some middle class, and some owning class. It doesn't matter that much which class we are in. We do have to face the fact that we don't need an owning class. There was once a purpose to it—it let things progress—but we don't need to exploit people anymore. We also don't need a middle class anymore. Its job is to manage the oppression. We don't need that to happen. We still need people to produce things. We still need a working class. It's true that "the working class is the only class with a future."

We were born in these classes, and that's okay. We have certain distresses because of it, but it's really all right whatever class we are in. We just can't let our class define the way we think. We can't let class be a limitation.

Different positions give us different capabilities. That's okay. Being in any class is fine if we still have our own minds. For example, there are advantages to being owning class: a lot of money and a lot of power. Part of being owning class is that you're taught to use your money and power to perpetuate the system, but

⁵ "Stringing this society along" means prolonging our relationship with this society.

you don't have to do that. If you have a lot of stock in General Motors,⁶ you can use it to raise hell.⁷ You can use the position to do what we all want to do. It's all right to have a lot of power if you keep thinking about how you use it. You can do good things from that position. It would be wonderful if we had many, many owning-class allies. It wouldn't hurt us at all—if they could think. We need people everywhere in society who can think, who can play a role in changing things.

We don't have to feel bad about our class, and we don't have to be defined by it. Most of the successful revolutionaries of the past were individuals who overcame the conditioning of their class to identify with the working class and play a good role. We can discharge the distress patterns from the oppressions that hit us and play a good, important role—and we know how to do that; we can work in those directions.

MY THINKING

Here is some of my thinking based on what Tim talked about:

Leading in RC and building the RC Community will move us most effectively toward re-emergence. It will push us against the early discouragement that keeps us stuck. Choosing to be a part of building the Community is like saying, "I'm going to work to make things better for me and for everyone, in ways that feel impossible." Structuring our lives and goals around a decision so solidly in contradiction to early discouragement and hopelessness gives us a clear and powerful perspective. As we throw ourselves into a fight that challenges the conclusions of our early defeats, we will discharge the material⁸ that keeps us small and tight, material that we might not otherwise look at. Building the RC Community will make it impossible for us to use discharge only for the day-to-day feelings that come up.

It matters that we keep fighting for our minds to be more and more free of distress and for our lives to be as big as we want them to be. We know that's where we want to head, and now we get to decide to do it—against the messages of young people's oppression. We have the power to point our lives in that direction. Making the building of the RC Community fully our own project may be the best way to do it right now.

As I try to decide what kind of job I want, where I want to live, what I want my relationships to look like, one

⁶ A large multi-national corporation that produces automobiles and trucks

⁷ "Raise hell" means resist the power structure and change things.

⁸ "Material" means distress.

thing is clear to me: if I can stay connected to the people I'm close to in RC and keep discharging, my judgment will be clearer as I make these decisions.

When I contrast the people I know who don't ever get to discharge with the people who take RC and their own re-emergence seriously, it is clear that discharge makes people's lives much better. I can also tell⁹ that my own thinking is best after a lot of discharge. And in those moments, it is clear to me that having RC be a big part of my life is one of the biggest factors in my life going well.

I liked what Tim said about how staying connected to the RC Communities gives us connection and a chance to work on building humanness. The idea of building humanness sounds strange because it is so different from the way we usually talk in the wide world, but there's something about it that I like a lot; it feels like what I want my life to be about as much as possible.

I've decided that one of my priorities is to work hard to stay connected to my friends from high school and elementary school whom I still have contact with. I've also made it a goal to reach out to some old friends whom I haven't seen in a long time, no matter what they are able to do back in my direction. The messages I get from men's oppression, young people's oppression, and probably other oppressions are that my relationships with my old friends are unimportant, that I should be focused on setting up a new life. I'm so grateful that I've been able to hold on to my perspective in this spot. I don't think I'd be confident enough to see these relationships as one of the parts of my life that matters most if I wasn't part of building and valuing humanness in the way that we know how to do in RC.

The following are some of the things I'm hoping for as I think about what I want my life to look like:

I want to live as close as I can to my family, my RC Community, and my friends that I grew up with. I want to find a job that allows me to keep RC as a central part of my life. I'd like to be able to have a lot of sessions, enough that I can tell that I'm consistently moving forward in my re-emergence. I want to keep being a part of the RC groups I'm already involved with (my class, young people's groups, family-work groups). I want to have time in my life to take on building my local RC Community and see how much is possible with that. I hope to lead in RC and have opportunities to help people I care about move forward in big ways toward their re-emergence. When I've gotten chances to do that

in the past, it's been some of the most exhilarating work I've ever done.

In terms of finding an ideal job, I hope to find something close by that isn't doing something directly oppressive, that doesn't take too much of my time, and that pays enough that I'm not constantly distracted by worries about my security. I want it to let me be in contact with other people, so that I'm not isolated all day, and involve work that I can appreciate or get something out of. I'd like it to give me opportunities to recruit people to RC.

So far, I'm thinking that rather than choosing a paid job in which I can work to end oppression and fix problems in the world, it may make more sense for me to find a job that gives me time and space to throw myself into RC work or be involved with other organizations that are trying to end oppression.

If any of you want to share any thoughts about these ideas, or about how you're thinking about setting things up in your life, it would be great for all of us to hear them. I'm excited about thinking about these issues with all of you!

Jamie Irwin
Wilmington, Delaware, USA
Reprinted from the RC e-mail discussion
list for leaders of young people



Reaching People in Time

It is easy to demonstrate mathematically that individual chain communication, once in progress, will reach people "in time." If we start with one hundred communicators, and if each of these passes the idea on to two other people within a month, decisive sections of the population will be reached within a year, and a world transformation in thought will occur within two years.

Harvey Jackins
From *The Human Situation*, page 33

⁹ "Tell" means see, notice.



YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK, CALIFORNIA, USA • LANCE CABLK

"A Wonderful Weekend"

In August of 2014 I led a workshop in Kira Town, Kampala, Uganda. The purpose was to bring together RCers from several Communities (Nabbingo, Migyera, Mulago, Mpererwe, Gulu, Kampala) so that they could have Co-Counseling sessions with experienced RC teachers. We were twenty-eight people. Most participants had been in RC for about a year.

We began Friday evening with introductions. Then people paired up to discharge on their feelings about getting to Kampala (some had had to travel over three hundred kilometers).

On Saturday we had an early-morning support group for leaders in which we cleared our minds for the day. After breakfast the whole workshop reviewed RC theory and talked about confidentiality, attendance, the no-socializing policy, no mixing of theories, and avoiding addictive substances. The no-socializing policy was the most difficult to explain because it seemed contradictory to African culture. However, people understood it after they'd had a chance to discharge about it. Self-appreciation brought a lot of discharge on embarrassment. Many of us had been put down as we grew up and had lost belief in our capabilities. That's why it was important to do self-appreciation.

Following that we had support groups and then a play time. After dinner there was a panel discussion with presentations by both women and men. The topics were "What oppresses women/men?" and "Why are you proud to be a woman/man?" Before bed we enjoyed a cultural sharing, with dancing, singing, poems, and a sharing of cultural norms.

On Sunday morning people discharged about their workshop experience and then said farewells.

We had a wonderful weekend.

Apollo Ssemwogerere Vvubya
Area Reference Person
for Kampala, Uganda
Kampala, Uganda

Gratitude for RC

I am filled with immense gratitude for the resource that RC offers us at this time. We are reaping the benefit of decades of discharge and fresh thinking. We have built a safe container within which we can discharge and think. What a relief to be reminded of our principles and what's possible for humans in the face of a world so fractionated.

Joyce Herman
Penfield, New York, USA



A DAM ON THE UPPER SKAGIT GORGE, WASHINGTON, USA
• TIM JACKINS

Moving Forward by Discharging Old Disappointments and Defeats

The following are some reflections on a recent teachers' and leaders' workshop, led by Lousia Flander,¹ in Melbourne, Victoria, Australia.

I love the *Guidelines*! The *Guidelines for the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities* represent the best thinking of our International Community and are a wonderful resource for leading, organizing, thinking about money and addictions, and creating goals for the future. Like RC draft liberation policies, they are an amazing "work in progress" that gets reviewed and updated every four years. At our recent teachers' and leaders' workshop, we reviewed the recent additions to the *Guidelines*, discharged about the new goal for the environment, and appreciated the work that had gone into revising and updating the booklet. I feel re-energised and enthusiastic about how we are moving into the future together.

Bruce Clezy
Northcote, Victoria, Australia

Being led by responsible leaders and taking a lead ourselves will always bring up feelings—as we all carry hurts from when we were small and in the care of bigger people. The restimulated feelings may be negative or "positive." Negative feelings of discomfort or defiance can lead to uncooperativeness, confusions, or attacks. "Positive" feelings of security, awe, or relief can lead to "admiration," "gratitude," static incompetence, or taking leaders for granted. These are two sides of the same "I am small, you

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



DIANE SHISK

are big" recording.² When we run³ this recording, we collude with the oppression we experienced. We are all bigger than that now. We can now, in our own ways, lead.

Rowan White
North Fitzroy, Victoria, Australia

Over this last period our Community has been working consistently on two fronts. The first is dealing with old disappointments that have attached to RC leadership and other Co-Counsellors. The second is discharging old defeats and discouragements and counselling others effectively on theirs.

I understand intellectually that my feelings of disappointment, frustration, and upset do not have anything to do with⁴ the people in my current life. However, the habit of speaking about them (my feelings) as if they do feels impossible to resist at times. And working on the early hurts can feel unbearable and useless.

I noticed in a mini-session how strongly I wanted my feelings to be about a person in present time. Then it occurred to me that this was because the early upsets and disappointments had been impossible to resolve. I had lost those battles. So in the session I discharged on the early hurts and

² Distress recording

³ "Run" means act out.

⁴ "Do not have anything to do with" means are not at all related to.

tried to resolve them with the people of my early life. It was hopeful.

Tony Smith
Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

At our teachers' and leaders' workshop we were encouraged to work early⁵ in Co-Counselling sessions and stay in the present with each other the rest of the time.

Facing my early defeats as a woman is not an easy thing to do. My recording says that I can't face things, that the troubles will never end. Without everyone's love and clarity about feelings being old and over, I would not be having such big sessions.

My adept Co-Counsellors ask me to never turn my back on the little girl that I was, to prioritize this over any other current issue or person's feelings, and to be with her every minute. I left my little self behind. I had no choice but to accommodate to the situations I was in. But leaving her behind is a form of self-harm. And to believe that I am unimportant and deserve little, nurtures hopelessness and colludes with the oppressive society. I get to fight for her and me now, together with all of these smart and loving people. I can clearly separate the past from the present. I am much smarter than my feelings would suggest. I'm completely capable of sharing RC and leading.

continued . . .

⁵ "Work early" means work on early hurts.



HELEN PARKIN

... continued

When I separate the past from the present and fight for myself, I am a better counsellor for the leaders in my Community. Our Community is a treasured resource. If I don't take up⁶ my challenges and keep deciding to work toward my goals, I am squandering this great resource.

Cynthia Johnston
Frankston, Victoria, Australia



On the first evening of the workshop I was reminded that we are often pulled to avoid or be fascinated with certain people, because of who they remind us of. Unless I clean up these pulls, I can't be an effective counselor or effectively use my sessions for myself.

I understood anew that grievancing about people in the Community is colluding with the oppressive society,

⁶ "Take up" means start working on.

which says that people can't be close. Dramatising my early hurts in this way also confuses my counsellors (because they have their own hurts about people and relationships), and then it's harder for them to help me in my sessions. Given that I want (passionately) to be in the RC Community for a long time, and be part of bringing change to many people's minds, I will have to clean up this behavior.

When I forget that my counsellors are as treasured as my mother and father, I am agreeing with the oppressive society that relationships aren't important. Each time I put my attention in a session on anything but the early hurt, I waste a chance and the oppression wins. I also leave my little one⁷ alone, and she gets the message that once again she has to wait.

Remembering this requires a decision that my counsellor can't make for me.

⁷ "My little one" means my very young self.

My counsellor is there *to be with me*, not to think for me. I'm the only one who knows what really happened.

Every time I don't work early, my re-emergence is held back, which in turn holds my Community back. If I don't heal from a particular hurt, then I can't think in that area. Not being able to think in an area means that I can't be an effective counsellor in that area. This in turn stops the RC organization from moving forward. It was a revelation to understand that how I use my sessions is that significant.

Roslyn Cassidy
Johannesburg, South Africa



When I use my sessions to rehearse old hurts as if they're happening in the present, I am colluding with the oppressive society. When I blame my counselor, I am honouring an incorrect picture of the present, which is actually safe and benign.

This weekend I discharged on a pattern of self-criticism, which had been invisible to me. I need to notice it and see it for what it is: something from the past. It's a pattern that I developed to protect myself from early terror. I need to name it to stop it from running my life! The clarity and rigour we were offered this weekend made it possible for me to do that. Thank you.

Victoria Kemp
Thornbury, Victoria, Australia

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

Thinking About the Group as a Whole

If people are going to act as a group or as a community, at least one person has to think about the group or community as a whole rather than think of the activity only from the standpoint of a participant.

Harvey Jackins
From *The Human Situation*, page 172

A Workshop on Israel and Palestine

I led a short workshop in Vancouver (British Columbia, Canada) for people to discharge on Israel and Palestine. There were eleven of us—three of us Jewish and the rest Protestant and Catholic.

I had spoken the day before to the one Palestinian Co-Counselor and the one Israeli Co-Counselor in our Region,¹ both of whom were unable to attend the workshop. I had asked them if there was anything they'd like me to pass on for them, and then listened and taken notes.

I started the workshop by asking if anyone was a tiny bit scared or overwhelmed by what was happening in Israel and Palestine. There was wild laughter as hands shot into the air. I could see that just the act of bringing people together was a good idea.

I reviewed RC theory about human goodness and the value of human connection and held out many times that it was possible to be completely supportive of the Israelis and completely supportive of the Palestinians. We then did a round of sharing about Israeli and Palestinian individuals we knew and loved. That brought lots of tears.

I went through a number of ways that people could work on the topic, including working on discouragement;

early conflicts in the family; memories of war; hopeful actions in the present; racism; anti-Jewish and anti-Arab oppression; feelings of North American superiority; the colonization of North America, particularly Canada; and feelings about Native Land Claims, some of which are currently before the courts in Canada. I encouraged people to distinguish between what's useful to read and what isn't and talked about having sessions on facing the unfaceable. I said that the places where we can't bear to look in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are probably attached to something we haven't yet faced in ourselves.

Finally I talked about how useful it is to discharge enough to have attention for listening to non-RCers who have big feelings when we hold out a rational perspective about going for² a win-win solution.

All of this was, of course, interspersed with many mini-sessions and demonstrations, and we had a longer discharge time in the evening. One of my goals was to get people well connected with each other on the topic, and that seemed to go well.

Elizabeth Shefrin

Gabriola Island, British Columbia, Canada
Reprinted from the RC e-mail
discussion list for leaders of Jews

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

² "Going for" means pursuing.

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

New cover, updated contents, photos!

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

\$3.00 (U.S.)

plus postage and handling

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



"PANTHER POINT," OIL PAINTING • © SAMANTHA SANDERSON

Technological Devices at Workshops?

What do you think about participants' use of technology at workshops? I have noticed that the use of mobile phones, tablets, and laptops for calling, texting, Facebook, and so on, can interfere with developing and strengthening relationships between participants. It can also distract people from feeling uncomfortable about the issues we are confronting. It may contribute to class oppression, too. Some people do not have as much access to technology as others—especially, but not exclusively, at International workshops.

It may affect individual and group functioning as much as some substances we ban at workshops and some activities we discourage, like huddling with people we know or separating ourselves from the group (for example, going out to dinner with a group of close Co-Counselors). I have heard stories of people interrupting a Co-Counseling session to take calls and of texting or working on taxes during class. (I also know that people sometimes need to stay in touch with ill family members, check in on children, and so on.)

What has been your experience? What have you tried? Does the Community need some guidelines here? I have heard proposals that range from verbally trying to raise awareness to banning the use of technological devices at workshops.

Julian Weissglass
International Commonality Reference
Person for Wide World Change
Santa Barbara, California, USA

Thank you for starting a conversation about the use of technological devices at workshops. It is increasing because of capitalism and needs to be thought about.

There are several oppressions related to it. For example, particularly in Western countries, adults often criticize (oppress) young people by claiming that they are addicted to and spend too much time using technological devices (phones, tablets, laptops, television, and so on). These devices are marketed to young people early in their lives, and parents often use them to distract young people (particularly younger young people) when the parents lack attention and time for them or when the young people are having feelings. Then when the young people become older young people, adults (particularly older adults who don't use much technology) reprimand and criticize them for using the devices. Phones are confiscated at school, often in a disrespectful way; parents confiscate technological devices as punishment, and so on.

At the same time, young people are increasingly using these devices for school and sometimes feel the need to do homework at workshops. This is not always a rational need, and it's often useful to counsel the young people on it (especially if you already have a relationship with them and are clear that you trust their thinking). Sometimes they actually do need to do homework—for example, because of parental or teacher pressure, or personal goals that have particular requirements.

I agree that there are classist, isolating, and addictive patterns related to these devices. And although people of all ages are addicted to them, the

group most targeted for addiction is young people. Therefore, I think that a blanket policy would unnecessarily alienate young people.

I have noticed that many young people use technology at workshops when they are restimulated and feeling isolated. It has not worked well to come down heavy on them with criticism or a blanket rule or policy. (This is what young people experience all the time on a variety of issues.) What has worked has been to think flexibly about them and try to counsel them on their feelings of isolation. Some of us have tried being playful, getting physically close, asking questions about what they are doing and what is interesting or important about it, offering a mini-session, or pulling them into group activity. If I can connect with them and show that I respect them, they usually stop using technology in favor of human connection.

I have also found that technology can be useful in my Co-Counseling and other relationships. For instance, I've taken Tim's* suggestion to make small bits of contact with Co-Counselors—rather than big communications that require a response, I've sent texts, e-mails, private Facebook messages, and pictures of myself (with an application called Snapchat) whenever I think of someone I care about. Some people reply, and some don't. It's been sweet to have contact with people without having to have a mini-session, which usually isn't possible for me, given the numbers of young people I am referencing.

At workshops, a group of us will sometimes send pictures or text messages to Co-Counselors who aren't at the workshop, or Skype with them, and remind them that we are thinking

* Tim Jackins'

about them and love them. I've also seen technology be a way for people to share their interests and cultures by playing music, showing pictures, and so on. At a workshop I led recently, we had a big singing and dancing party for which a young working-class person of the global majority played songs on her phone.

It's true that not everyone has access to technological devices, so we who lead workshops need to think flexibly about each workshop and decide if we should talk about or have guidelines about them. We need to gauge which groups are using them and which aren't, and if they are being used in an addictive or overpowering way that is stopping people from connecting and discharging. If technology use seems like an important issue, I would suggest getting people to do a mini-session about it near the beginning of the workshop, as we often do with food or sleep.

I don't think addictions to technology are worse, more damaging, or more isolating than addictions to food, exercise, getting or not getting sleep, and so on, none of which we have RC policies about. There are some things that do not have any good uses and also cause major damage (like certain drugs) for which we do have policies, but I don't think technology use is on that level, at least at most workshops.

I would urge us all to keep in mind and discharge about young people's oppression, as well as classism and nationalism (and other oppressions), when making decisions about technology at our workshops.

Mari Piggott

International Liberation Reference

Person for Young People

Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

Reprinted from the RC e-mail discussion list for International Liberation and Commonality Reference Persons



MAURA FALLON

Whom Should We Invite?

Whom should we invite into the Co-Counseling Communities and classes? The sharpest people we know. The ones we would be delighted to have as Co-Counselors. The ones that will help us accumulate the collective resources and the organized structures to eventually meet the needs of deeply distressed people.

Harvey Jackins

From *The Human Situation*, page 208



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

You can order back issues as regular literature items (see pages 103 and 111).

“Let’s Do It”

At a men’s leaders’ workshop in California (USA) I called a topic group on climate change.

For years I’ve seen that care-of-the-environment topic groups at workshops have a hard time competing with groups on other topics. Many of the other topics are also hard to face (early sexual memories anyone?), but RCers have gotten used to taking them on.* Things must be shifting, because eleven guys showed up for my topic group on climate change. I think that having more than a few people provided a better contradiction to our fears about climate change and helped the group go well.

I started with everyone answering the question, “Why do you want to discharge about climate change?” This opened up the fears people had and also gave me a sense of what they knew.

Next I gave a short talk summarizing some information on climate change as a physical phenomenon. I shared in about five minutes facts that I thought portrayed the nature and seriousness of the situation and requested that no one add anything more. (People are often pulled to share their favorite terrifying fact, when what we mostly need to do is discharge.) After my talk people looked scared, and we had a lively mini-session.

I next said that technological changes would not be enough to solve the climate crisis and that what we needed was a transformation of our economic system and an end to the major oppressions. I pointed out that all of us in the room, by virtue of living in wealthy countries (the United States and Canada), were in an oppressor role in relation to those living in poorer countries. While we have created most of the problem, they have been hurt “first and worst.” Then we had another mini-session.

Last I talked about hope. I quoted Tim Jackins: “As long as we’re alive and thinking, there’s hope.” I mentioned some positive signs, like the climate marches being planned for the next day in New York City (USA) and many other cities

* “Taking them on” means engaging with them.



MARGO HITTLEMAN

around the world. I offered the direction “We will turn this around because” Then we had a final mini-session.

In the closing, several people remarked that good information presented with a light tone was helpful. That surprised me, because I didn’t know I had a good tone. My guess is that by discharging consistently on this (or any) issue over time, we accumulate attention that others can use, even though we still feel terrible feelings (as I do about climate change). Most people are still avoiding thinking about climate change. They are just waiting for someone with a little attention to say, “Let’s do it.”

Michael Levy

Santa Cruz, California, USA

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

Action Needed

No matter how brilliantly and accurately we think . . . , no matter how correctly and far-sightedly we plan, all will eventually be frustrated and wasted unless we *act*. Action requires *decision* by at least an individual. For action by more than a single individual, we need *organization*.

Harvey Jackins

From *The Kind, Friendly Universe*, page 171

New from Rational Island Publishers

Co-Counselling

The Theory and Practice of Re-evaluation Counselling

by Caroline New and Katie Kauffman

In 2004, RCers Caroline New (Bristol, England) and Katie Kauffman (Seattle, USA) together wrote *Co-Counselling—The Theory and Practice of Re-evaluation Counselling*, for Brunner-Routledge Publishers. It is part of a series of textbooks on “advancing theory in psychotherapy.”

In the preface, the series editor, Keith Tudor, wrote, “Co-Counselling publications have, to date, been largely written and read ‘in house’ and have not generally been available to a professional therapeutic audience. It is therefore particularly significant and gratifying that this book is appearing in this series, and I recommend it, especially to the sceptical reader.”

This text may be especially useful in presenting RC to your less adventurous friends.

The book is structured like a fundamentals class. The reader meets several Co-Counselors from different places and backgrounds as they learn the theory and practice of RC and share their actual experiences with it.

\$25.00 (U.S.), plus postage and handling



Une nouvelle édition de
***Un nouveau type de
communicateur***

en français

La cinquième édition de *Un nouveau type de communicateur* (un recueil d’articles-clé sur l’enseignement destiné aux formateurs et formatrices de Co-écoute) est parue il y a dix-huit ans. Depuis cette date, la Réévaluation par la Co-écoute n’a cessé de croître et de se développer. Les idées de la Co-écoute se sont répandues, et nous avons amélioré notre façon de les communiquer. Les Communautés de Co-écoute continuent de se multiplier et de se développer dans le monde entier.

La sixième édition de *A New Kind of Communicator* contient quatre des articles de Harvey Jackins contenus dans les précédentes éditions ainsi que quatorze nouveaux articles décrivant ce que nous avons appris depuis que ces premières éditions sont parues.

Je suis confiant que vous trouverez cette nouvelle édition à la fois agréable et utile.

Tim Jackins

\$5.00 (U.S.), plus frais de port



A new edition of
A New Kind of Communicator
in French

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

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

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

Tim Jackins

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

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

How to Contact Us Online

- The International RC Community: ircc@rc.org
- United to End Racism: uer@rc.org
- Rational Island Publishers (orders, and billing questions): litsales@rc.org (or order on our website at <www.rationalisland.com>)
- Re-evaluation Counseling Community Resources (Intensives and office matters only): rcoffice@rc.org
- Automatic response e-mail about RC: info@rc.org
- For sending photos: photos@rc.org

Online Fundamentals Class

An online fundamentals of Co-Counseling class is available for people who are interested in learning more about RC.

Active participation in the class is reserved for those who do not have fundamentals classes in their geographical region. Learning Re-evaluation Counseling via e-mail is much more difficult than learning it in a regular class and requires a higher level of commitment to the learning process and to regular Co-Counseling sessions.

Please see the RC website at <www.rc.org/page/onlineclass> for more information about how to sign up for membership in the online fundamentals class.

United to End Racism

United to End Racism (UER), an ongoing program of the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities, is on the web at <www.rc.org/publication/uer/contents>. The e-mail address for UER is <uer@rc.org>.

United to End Racism is working with other groups involved in eliminating racism, and sharing with them the theory and practice of Re-evaluation Counseling.

No Limits for Women

No Limits for Women, a project of the RC Communities, is sending a delegation to Beijing Plus Twenty, the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women NGO Forum, in New York City, USA, March 6 to 12, 2015. No Limits will present workshops, lead support groups, and hold listening projects as part of the work on ending sexism and male domination. For more information, see <www.rc.org/tile/nolimits>.