



**We know we need a large, diverse movement to make a big change.  
We know we need a lot of people with us—and we need people who are not yet with us.  
It's time to use all we know about reaching people.**

*Diane Shisk*

Co-Counselors continue to expand their use of RC theory and practice in the wide world—and are being encouraged to do so even more, given the climate crisis and COVID-19. We hear from parents in Nigeria, from a Native person raised Black, about the Francophone Africa Project, and much more. For the July *Present Time*, we need your articles and poems by May 18, and changes to the back-pages lists by May 26.

Lisa Kauffman and Katie Kauffman, editors  
719 2nd Avenue North, Seattle, Washington 98109, USA • publications@rc.org



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#### APPRECIATIONS

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Typesetting: Katie Kauffman, Valerie Jaworski

Editing: Lisa Kauffman, Katie Kauffman

Proofreading, shipping, and other help: María Magdalena Aranda  
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## Reaching Many People's Minds

Tim Jackins,\* at the Transforming Society Workshop  
in Warwick, New York, USA, January 2020

We are coming into a period with battles that none of us have seen before. I think it would be helpful for us to have a goal. An ultimate goal would be for a large number of people to get a picture of what being rational, being fully human looks like. This would mean using RC more fully, reaching out more widely, and helping every mind we are in contact with to get a glimpse—or more—of humanness.

We need to get many people to turn in the direction of rationality. We need to get them to turn away from isolation, away from thinking that everybody is against them, or that nobody notices them, or that their interests do not line up with other people's. We need to show that there is no conflict between us and them. That there is a place in their world where they can assume that their interests are aligned with somebody else's. And we can do this in small, hardly noticed, but always felt ways.

Even if one gains societal power, it doesn't work very well unless one has many, many other minds already coming with them. Maybe one makes some big step—still, what can happen next is limited if one is not in direct contact with enough people.

### USING RC MORE FULLY

We have RC. It's an incredibly powerful tool. We know how to use it in particular circumstances. I think we can use more of it, more often, more openly, and with more people. We do remember to use one piece of it fairly consistently: listening. We give other minds a chance to use this bit of the process. It has been useful to the functioning of various groups. That's good, but it's a small piece of what we can do.

I think it is possible to do something every day that will move another mind a little way out of distress and make it a little more likely that that mind can communicate with your mind. Every single day there are many things, small and large, that each of us can do to reach toward another mind. Doing this could build something significant.

It's going to take ten million small nudges to turn heads in a direction that lets them see reality more clearly. Ten million small touches, ten million small "good mornings" in a warm, welcoming voice to pop someone out of their preoccupation with their distresses.

We need to remember how trapped in early distresses we ourselves have been. We have gone on in spite of it. Around us are locked-up minds, longing for liberation, longing for any taste of life outside of their distresses. Every single person we run into [encounter] has had big early hurts happen to them. Every day they live back there where they got hurt. Why do they have trouble understanding (for example) a clear forward-moving policy? It doesn't get in. It doesn't get in to where they have been trapped and held by their distresses. What we say gets reinterpreted by their distress, all of the distress that they have never had a chance to fight their way out of. We have to keep that in mind.

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

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We do need boldly stated policies and strategies and more. But these need to get into individual minds, and they get into individual minds through other individual minds, minds that can think about them, for even a moment. That can create a possibility. We know how to do this—we just need more practice.

**“TEN THOUSAND LITTLE DIFFERENCES”**

We have to get other minds in contact with us before we have much chance of communicating anything useful. Unless we reach people’s minds, we are blindly throwing out good things and they bounce off.

I learned a tremendous amount teaching elementary school. I learned to walk past every single desk. Every single desk. These were second graders. Almost every little girl would grab my hand and every little boy would hit it. They would make this contact; then, when I was up front teaching, we would have a place to start that I could use to communicate. Most of us are not with second graders. They are much easier. Much easier.

I don’t think big rational changes can happen until ten thousand little human differences happen first. How many hundreds of people do we need to be in contact with to make the world a better place? How many of them don’t we even look at usually?

Maybe we can look at someone long enough to catch their eye and just raise the corner of our mouth a quarter of an inch. They would probably notice. They would notice any human thing coming in their direction. We could just put a hand on their shoulder. We could say one little oddly complimentary thing that they would have to notice and think about. We could ask them something. Maybe we say, “I’m struggling with this question—what would you do?” Maybe for a moment we lean against someone we know and ask them (for example), “I’ve always wondered, where were you born?” We can say to people who are distant and oppositional, “I want us to be allies.” We can state that because it is true. It is our long-term goal, our intention, whether we can make it happen right now or not.

Anything that shows we are interested in someone’s existence will cause them to turn a bit in our direction. And they might know a lot of things that would be useful to us.

Every day we can make contact. Every day we can begin to build a relationship with somebody. When we get up feeling lost, we can say to ourselves, “How do I turn someone two degrees today? How do I do that? Who will it be?” That’s always within our reach.



KATIE KAUFFMAN

## Discharging “Unbearable” Distress

When I was eighteen, I had my first “panic attack.” When I was twenty-two, I started having debilitating panic attacks on a regular basis. The content was always that I was going to die or go “crazy” or both and that I had to get out of wherever I was immediately.

My parents sent me to a psychiatrist and a psychotherapist. The psychiatrist prescribed a psychiatric drug and the psychologist taught me relaxation techniques. Somehow, I knew that I didn’t want to be on the psychiatric drug (an anti-depressant) and got off within a month. I did, however, continue to self-medicate with alcohol and occasional Valium supplied by my father. Eventually the panic attacks went underground for a few years.

At twenty-five the panic attacks resurfaced. At that time, I found a therapist who encouraged me to feel them fully rather than try to make them go away and to write about them in detail and rate their intensity. Then they receded again for many years with only an isolated one here and there that barely disrupted my life.

### WORKING ON IT IN RC

I started RC when I was thirty-four. I was eager to reclaim my mind and willing to do the work. I plunged in with little reserve and worked on heavy early material [distress] right from the start. At that time in my life I would have a panic attack only on rare occasions—even once in a session. But I had no idea how to go after [pursue] the early material. I would recount what had happened in my twenties and cry and cry about it but could not make the decision to actually feel the panic.

About four years ago at the age of sixty the panic attacks returned with a vengeance. For about three months I felt like I was going to die almost without any relief. I fortunately have many close relationships with very smart Co-Counselors who know me well. I discharged as much as I could on the early terror, but it was next to impossible to hold on to any perspective. I continued to live my life fully, but the grip of the distress on my mind felt unbearable. Taking a shower was terrifying. I had to steel myself before going out the door and heading to work. It took enormous decision. I had to give myself a pep talk before each thing I had to do at work. Exercise, which had always been one of my favorite and most attention-out activities, became fraught with feelings of imminent danger. It was like torture, and although part of my mind knew it was early, the distress was so believable I could not hold on to perspective for long.

The panic attacks disappeared for a few months only to return again for another few-month stretch. This pattern happened a few more times over the next two and a half years, with alternating periods of what felt like constant assault by my distress and months of relief. It seemed that my brain was repeatedly presenting ways for the material to resurface—vertigo, ophthalmic migraines in which there was loss of vision replaced by geometric designs, unexplained pain in some part of my body, and sudden-onset high blood pressure. Each of these would cause a torrential resurfacing of the panic. It was next to impossible to work on the distress if the material was not constantly in my face. When it was latent, I was just relieved to not be

under what felt like constant bombardment.

### A CHANGE

The past year has been different. Something has changed, and I suspect it might be permanent. I have recently been trying to fight my way toward working on this material consistently. The more I go after it, the more I have a feel for what my life was like right after my birth and the more I can discharge from a point of contradiction [to distress].

I wanted to write this article—for myself, so that I could take stock of the progress I have made with determined hard work and lots of help, but more so for others to know that even the most protracted, heavy, chronic, unbearable distresses can eventually yield to discharge. The distress I have been battling is not completely discharged, but I am more and more able to hold on to perspective for longer and longer periods.

I think several things have contributed to this. One comes from Tim Jackins’s persistent, insistent urging of us to go after the early unbearable distress—the “torture”-filled isolation that it looks like every one of us humans experienced from not having another human mind in with our mind, not having another human choose us, and not being seen and treated as fully human right from the start—and then the “icing on the cake,” not being allowed to discharge the distress that this installed on our minds.

I think I can do this because of many, many years of discharge on the distresses that got installed a little later on. I have worked for

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TASMANIA, AUSTRALIA • NICOLA OSSHER

many years on some heavy early sexual hurts that happened in early infancy but occurred after the hurts that were at the root of my earliest distresses. I suspect that the distress from the sexual hurts got attached to the earliest hurts, but I couldn't look earlier until a huge chunk of the sexual hurts discharged (though I am not done with that either). For a long time, physical closeness in sessions only seemed possible with a very select few. Now I can have this with many more, and I need a lot of it to discharge the early lonely place where I thought I would not survive. This closeness is the biggest contradiction to the early hurt.

I think I can do this because over the years I developed close Co-Counseling relationships with many strong Co-Counselors. They offer different kinds of sessions, and this has enabled me to discharge on different aspects of the hurts that were installed.

I think that counseling many others over the years and fighting for them to completely reclaim their minds and holding out perspective for them provides me with ballast from which to go after my unbear-

able material. I can know for them what I often cannot know for myself—that looking at the material is not dangerous, won't be the cause of their demise, won't pull them into a black hole from which they will never emerge. As I know this more and more for many different people, it slowly seems possible that it might be true of me, too.

I don't yet fully know the impact on my life of reclaiming more and more of my mind that I lost by not having thoughtful human connection in the very early moments of my life outside of my mother. As I unravel the inaccurate conclusions that I arrived at about me, other humans, and what it means to be part of this world, I am aware that I can enjoy people and life more fully. I am hopeful that my timidity will continue to lessen and that I will be able to make more contact with more people more of the time. I am hopeful that I will take ever bolder steps in the wide world to fight oppression. I am confident that I will get better and better at assisting others to fight with everything they have to reclaim their minds.

Wendy Ganz  
New York, New York, USA

## A Wonderful Gift

To those responsible for *How to Give Children an Emotional Head Start* [an RC pamphlet by Marjon Riekerk]:

Thank you for your Re-evaluation Counseling pamphlet *How to Give Children an Emotional Head Start!* It is a work of genius. First printed in 1988, it is just as fresh and relevant today as when you made it. The words are so thoughtful, good, and profound. The illustrations are priceless. I love the illustration on page five.

Now as I re-read the pamphlet, I see that it applies to everyone we meet, not just to children. For example, "Expect the best from children. They'll do everything in their power to prove you right," "Enjoy children. Children are strong, smart, able, loving, wise, beautiful, and a privilege to be with."

Thank you again for your wonderful gift to people everywhere.

Steve Brown  
Denver, Colorado, USA

## Overeating, Health, and Weight

[To an anonymous mom]

Thanks so much for writing and telling us about your struggle and being so open about where it has been difficult for you. I think lots of parents have these kinds of struggles, so you are not alone.

You are right that there is a lot of pressure on girls to look “pretty.”

I don't think weight is the problem for your daughter. She's struggling with some emotional hurts that she hasn't been able to tell you about and can't think about. When the body becomes the focus of the struggle, it becomes oppressive. It makes it seem like there is something wrong with the young girl. There is nothing wrong with your daughter; she is okay. What is wrong is the oppression that she has to put up with [endure] day after day as a young person, as a girl, and any other oppressions she faces.

We all have emotional hurts, so her distress is not any worse than anyone else's.

I would start by shifting the focus to discharging on your own struggles with weight. You can also discharge on how you have been oppressed by sexism and young people's oppression and on any other hurts you experienced as a young girl. Like all of us, you will need to spend a lot of time discharging on any struggles you've had. You also need to discharge on what you watched your family members go through in regard to weight. Go back to those struggles and discharge on the oppression you and your family members faced in regard to looks, sexism, class oppression, and so on.

We want to have enough attention that our young people can bring up anything they need to look at. In order for your daughter to have the confidence and attention to take on [work on] the issue of eating, she may need to work on a lot of other things first. That might take a while, and there is no hurry. And often we are not sure what our young people are working on, and that's okay. We're trying to help them build a foundation to work on whatever they need to.

Once you've discharged a *lot*, that will create more space for your daughter to show you her struggles. This may come in different forms, like being angry with you, breaking rules, picking on her younger siblings, and so on. You get to move in and be close when that happens.

Or she might want to be with you more. Try to spend more time with her, playing and being close.

As with any difficulty our young people face, the main thing we are trying to do is to figure out how to be on their side and communicate to them that we are on their side. We do this in a number of ways. “Special time” is at the top of the list. We also play with them, wrestle, snuggle, are silly. Mostly you want to be close to her, spend a lot of time with her, and communicate that she is perfect, just the way she is. Sometimes we set a limit, but the limit should bring the young person closer to us, not distance them.

I would recommend apologizing to her for all the mistakes you've made in trying to control her eating. I'd ask her what it has been like for her to have you do that. You might also apologize for taking her to a doctor who didn't really understand young girls. This will get the blame off of her.

Maybe there will be openings to ask more directly about school and friends or other things about her life,

*continued . . .*



SAN GABRIEL MOUNTAINS, CALIFORNIA, USA • VICTOR NICASSIO



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but if you are communicating concern or worry about her, that won't work. Once you understand that it's oppression that's the problem, not her, she may be able to show you more of her struggles.

Once you've discharged a bunch, so you have a handle on your own restimulation, you'll have more attention. Then, if she's eating out of control, you can play with it. You can say you want to be close to her and pull her toward you. You can lightly wrestle with her. See if it makes her laugh or cry. If it doesn't, don't do it.

If she herself ever decides to lose weight, it should be on her terms. You can be an ally, but you should follow her lead.

You are a good mom. Getting closer to your daughter and giving her a hand [some help] is a big project, and that's okay. All parents have big projects. It's worth taking on.

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



PUNE, INDIA • TIM JACKINS

## A Topic Table on Sleep

I attended the six-day and five-night "Mental Health" Liberation Leaders' International Conference in October 2019. I noticed that many Co-Counselors were talking about (and having sessions about) difficulties sleeping at the conference as well as in their daily lives. Although I am far from being an expert on the subject and have my own struggles with sleep, I decided to lead a topic table on sleep.

Ten people came. I said that many people were having feelings about sleep and that a conference with a hundred other Co-Counselors is probably the best place in the world to think and discharge about it.

I shared the following thoughts: For many of us, sleep and trying to sleep restimulate early difficulties with sleep, such as being isolated at night or being made to try to sleep and wake up on someone else's schedule. Some of us had hurtful, scary, and confusing things happen to us or around us at night. Also, night can be a hard time to call someone for a session. It's restimulating to ask for attention, because we couldn't get help at night as children. Also, we don't want to "bother" anyone who might be sleeping.

I said I thought we could come up with [find] good ways to work on sleep at this and other RC conferences and workshops. I had people discharge in pairs on what might help them get better sleep, especially at this conference. Then we did a go-around for people to share the ideas that had emerged. My favorite idea was that a Co-Counselor on the other side of the world would not be sleeping at the same time I am and therefore would not have to wake up to give me a session.

As an experiment, I invited my regular Co-Counselor (who was at the conference) to come to my room at any time in the night if she couldn't sleep. (I didn't have a roommate.) The first night she had trouble sleeping but wasn't able to come. The second night she came three times. We talked, she discharged, we snuggled, and she came and left as she wanted. She offered me session time, but I was relaxed and didn't need to discharge. In the morning I did not feel any less rested than usual.

What about having a "sleeping room" at future RC workshops? All participants would be welcome. Such an arrangement could significantly shift night and sleep distress. Maybe leading the "sleeping room" could become a regular workshop "job!"

*Kelly Johnson*  
Pine Grove Mills, Pennsylvania, USA  
Reprinted from the RC e-mail discussion list  
for leaders of "mental health" liberation

## From *The Benign Reality*

Since *The Benign Reality*, by Harvey Jackins,\* won't be reprinted for a while, we are printing parts of it in Present Time. Here are two selections.

### Attracting People to RC

I hear a number of people here say that they don't know how to attract people or keep them in RC. I think I heard them say, almost every one of them, that they pursue these people and do everything they can think of to interest them, but they don't reach them. Anxious pursuit is not exactly the model people are looking for. If you are so insecure you've got to clutch at somebody else, how are they going to get started feeling confident? People will make first judgments about RC by watching to see how it's working for you, its advocate, rather than by what you say.

To begin this discussion I would like to suggest that we make a commitment to ourselves and the Great Spirit of the Universe that we at all times act delighted with our situations, with ourselves, with the fact that there are always some problems still to be solved so we won't get bored, and as if our lives were sublimely satisfying. Which, of course, they are. Now, all of us may have to peel off a little distress now and then. Blows do fall in, you know, but at this point I think everyone here is enough of a theoretician to remember that, underneath the blah pseudo-reality, things are sublimely pleasant.

Isn't it great to be alive? If you are delighted with yourself, is this going to repel people and drive them away?

First of all, is it good for you to act delighted with yourself? Well,

it contradicts almost all of your distresses, doesn't it? Every joke on television will seem three times as funny, you'll laugh at it much longer. Sentimental stories or songs will bring more tears, and discharge will leak out in every possible way if you persist in acting delighted with yourself.

Is it good for attracting people? Sure. They don't usually come up to you and say, "I am attracted to you." Sometimes they do, and those are rare, golden moments. We are all theoreticians enough, however, to know that the way a person generally is able to hold out his or her pattern for melting is to hit you over the head with it. So instead of saying, "Tell me how you can be so delighted with yourself," they say, "What are you so goddamned smug about?" Is this any reason for you to become unconfident? They took your bait. They fell into your trap. That is exactly what it means. Of course, it was a benign trap, and it was the one they wanted to fall into.

They will, in most cases, although not always, hold out and rehearse their pattern as an indication that "I am ready to join the fellowship if you really have that much confidence." Instead of saying, "Help me," they say, "Here's my distress. Here's the way the pattern works." BANG!! All you have to do is remain delighted with yourself and (you know what happens) they get more and more upset. As they work deeper into the trap, you expand your functioning a little bit. You become delighted with them. (Of course, you know this. Many of you have people standing around you out there berating themselves, "I am not any good, I



BASQUE COUNTRY • TIM JACKINS

am evil!" You smile warmly at them. Sometimes they hit you and run away, but they are back the next day to restart the "fight.")

From pages 148 to 149  
of "The Uncovering of Reality"

### Eliciting Thinking, Proposing Solutions

#### SORT OUT WHAT YOU HEAR

When leaders start to elicit—draw out—the thinking of all the members of the group, put it together, fill in the gaps in between what's been elicited, and then communicate the whole program clearly enough that the group accepts it as their program—and there has been a real attempt to do more of this in RC since the principle first appeared on the cover of *Present Time*—they sometimes run into some difficulties, and they complain that when they go to elicit the best thinking of the members of the group, they often get a lot of patterns rehearsed at them.

*continued . . .*

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

## COUNSELING PRACTICE

... continued

This is to be expected. If a leader turns to a Co-Counselor and says, "I'd like to have your ideas," that Co-Counselor is sometimes going to feel an irresistible urge to haul out some of his or her distress and dramatize it in the hope that the leader will turn counselor and help him or her discharge. (That's all that's really behind any dramatization—the hope that if one holds out the distress, somebody will do something about it. Even the worst behavior is a pattern being held out in the hope that somebody will interrupt it so the person can discharge.) This great urge to be counseled will sometimes take over, and the leader will get a lot of garbage when he or she sets out to elicit the best thinking of the members of the group.

### THE DIAMONDS ARE THERE

But that's fine. It's the leader's job to pick through the garbage for

the diamonds. As one does a lot of this, one becomes more skilled at increasing the proportion of the diamonds and decreasing the proportion of garbage. It's possible to direct people's attention more to their ability to think rationally about the problem so that you can increase the proportion of diamonds; but you're always likely to get some garbage. That's just part of the job. What garbage you can't shut off, let it float past you and grab the diamonds as they come by.

Because everyone has something brilliant to contribute; everyone has a unique viewpoint—a unique understanding—of a situation that is extremely valuable if you can incorporate it into the general view. During my life I've spent time with some very distressed people. But I've never met anyone—among these or elsewhere—who, if I really listened to them, didn't startle

me occasionally with a brilliant observation that I would never have heard from anyone else. There isn't anyone who doesn't have something brilliant to contribute if you listen to them well.

### PROPOSE A SOLUTION WITH EVERY PROBLEM

Sometimes leaders, out of shyness or a confusion about what is "democratic," refrain from offering a proposal when they ask a group to think about and discuss a problem. It feels "democratic" to call a meeting and say to the group, "Here's a problem; does anyone have any ideas?" but this doesn't work in practice. In practice, saying, "Here's a problem; any ideas?" restimulates people's insecurity, and instead of rational discussion you tend to evoke a lot of patterned flak. It "sounds like" it would work, but it never works. Very rarely it appears to work, but then it is because someone else takes on the leadership role that we missed.

It is necessary, if we present a problem, to also present a solution, a proposal. This is a responsibility of the leader. It may not be a very good proposal, but if it's the best you can come up with [think of], you'll get a positive, rational response from the group. You'll get some constructive thinking. They may simply accept your proposal. Don't be confused if they say, "Gee, that's great," and don't want to discuss anymore but just go on to the next point. People are smart enough to recognize a good proposal, and they hate to waste time. At other times they may amend your suggestion, or they may completely reject it and replace it, but whatever response it is is likely to be a rational response.

From pages 281 to 283 of  
"The Nature of Leadership"



FOUNTAINS, PHILADELPHIA CITY HALL, PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA, USA \* SUE EDWARDS

## Anecdote

Een paar jaar geleden deed ik een sessie met een andere jongere. We spraken elkaars eerste taal niet en toen zij client was sprak ze Hebreeuws. Ik verstond er niks van, maar op een gegeven moment herkende ik de toon waarop ze iets zei. Ik reageerde met “nee, je bent niet dom”. Dit was precies de goede richting.

*Rob Venderbos*  
Groningen, Nederland

*English translation of the above:*

## Anecdote

A few years ago, I did a session with a fellow young person. We didn't speak each other's first language, and when it was her turn as client, she spoke Hebrew. I didn't understand a word, but at some point I recognized the tone with which she said something. I responded with, “No, you're not stupid.” This was exactly the right direction.

*Rob Venderbos*  
Groningen, the Netherlands  
*Translated by Rob Venderbos*



J. EISENHEIM

## Would Like Help with a Parenting Issue

Hi parents,

Maybe you can help me with a parenting issue. My four-and-a-half-year-old daughter has recently been having multiple tantrums a day. They generally start at the end of screen time, or when we say no to processed sugar, or when we set other limits that she finds restimulating. She starts by throwing the phone or some other hard object, which doesn't bring much discharge. Then, when we get close, she tries to bite, hit, or kick me, which also doesn't bring much discharge. In our efforts to simultaneously keep ourselves and our home safe and help her get her feelings out, she inevitably gets mildly hurt and then discharges hard. Pushing hard on us also sometimes brings discharge. She is adopted and had a rough birth, so none of this is surprising.

I actually have attention for her attempts to hurt me. What's most restimulating is when she throws things that could damage our home. I'm discharging as I write this because I know I have middle-class distress about my “stuff” getting broken. But at the same time, I think it might be okay for there to be some limits and consequences. For the first time, I'm thinking about there being consequences for her when she throws hard things.

Mostly, I'd like to get more adept at quickly getting close and helping her direct the feelings at me instead of at our stuff, partly because throwing our stuff doesn't seem to help her discharge anyway!

Do any of you have experience with this and some words of wisdom? Thanks so much.

[See next page for two responses.]

*Anonymous*  
USA

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

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## Being Flexible with a Young Person's Sessions

Hi parents,

I have developed some mobility issues that make wrestling difficult. Keeping track of both my daughter and my injury during wrestling sessions wasn't working.

So, I've been giving her sessions that start small and stay small but bring big discharge. I notice how she initiates a session. Usually it's when I set a limit or when something in our daily life annoys her—for example, when I want to be alone in the bathroom. I've invited her to slam the bathroom door as I open it, and we do this again and again. I've also covered my eyes and screamed and pretended that "something is there."

### Bringing a Limit

I am a longtime RC family worker. I have a twelve-year-old daughter who has had a lot of big sessions. She had a long and difficult birth. There were many big challenges in her first six years. The hard raging sessions she was able to have were invaluable. I've found that the more a young person can access fury and get it out with the loving attention of a trusted and dependable ally at her side—instead of keeping that material [distress] inside and pointed at herself—the better. I call this *bringing* a limit.

We need to have enough attention that we can step in before objects get thrown. We can interrupt at the moment a young person is about to do damage—bite, kick, throw something. In our own sessions we can work on how hard it is to pay attention at that moment. We can build enough attention to notice when a young person is about to head into fury and can no longer track what she is doing, when she is lost in big hard feelings she is desperate to get out. We need to be able to notice that.

When she is about to "launch," we can step in and warmly, lovingly, firmly *bring* a gentle limit. We can say something like, "I can't let you throw that (hurt me, break that), but I am going to stay close with you no matter what. I want you to get all the hard feelings out, but I can't let you hurt me or the house." You can pull her in close and gently stop her from going through with the motion. If you have enough attention, it can sometimes interrupt the material [distress] enough that the crying can come. Interrupting my daughter's kick or punch would sometimes lead to more attempts to hurt me, but if I could be active and engaged enough by wrestling and connecting with her, she could sometimes burst into tears and have a big cry.

I don't think *setting* limits works with young people. It is different from *bringing* a limit, described above. Very young ones, in particular, lack the judgment to think something through in the moment of fury. They don't "want" to break anything or hurt you, their minds are just consumed by a flash of rage they are trying to offload in the best

Basically, I look for the small thing that will lead to a session and then just make that thing happen repeatedly. When it looks like her raging will damage me or the house (or is more than I have attention for), I get one of these small things going. Sometimes my daughter will ask, "Can we play the door game?" which means she's asking for a session.



Anonymous  
USA

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

way they can figure out; they have stopped thinking clearly.

I think *setting* a limit can register as a punishment. It can leave a young person stuffing down hard feelings, feeling disconnected, and feeling bad about having the hard feelings and showing them. In my experience, setting limits when a child has lost her ability to think rationally is about where the adult has lost attention and just wants a session to stop.

I think our children want us to push up against our limits—they have to contend with our material all the time. They often choose the moments when things are most pressed and feel hardest for us. This offers us the opportunity to try to function past where it feels like our minds can go. This is really hard, but what an invitation—to go against where we feel most limited and try for more! The sessions we have after pushing ourselves in this way point us to the hardest places in our childhoods.

H—  
USA

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



## Leading “Mental Health” Liberation

*From a talk by Janet Foner, who was the International Liberation Reference Person for “Mental Health” Liberation, at a workshop in New Hampshire, USA, in November 2015*

The point of “mental health” oppression is to hold all the other oppressions and the oppressive society in place. People generally think that “mental health” liberation is about “mental patients” and “mental hospitals.” No, it is about ending an oppression that holds the oppressive society in place and keeps it going. “Mental health” oppression supports the oppressive society. All the oppressions do, but this is the one that beats you up if you try to change things in a big way. Or if you even think about changing things in a small way: it makes you feel like you are “crazy” if you try to do something different than what is so-called “normal.”

“Mental health” oppression makes it seem like we are in danger of losing our minds. There’s a lot of oppression going on, and distress piles up on us just living day-to-day in this society. We often feel like things are too hard and that there’s nowhere to go with it, even those of us in RC who have sessions.

This has to do with being prevented from discharging. A lot of what prevents us from discharging is “mental health” oppression. (As Tim Jackins has been saying, it’s not so damaging that we got hurt; it’s that we didn’t get to discharge and recover.)

If you have a few feelings from being targeted, then you get targeted more if you let the feelings out. Right? Does everybody remember trying to let them out and getting creamed [badly treated]? We learn not to let our feelings out.

### THE MYTH OF “GOING CRAZY”

As young people we weren’t allowed to discharge our distress. Because of that, and a lot of misinformation, we grew up believing the myth of “mental illness,” that there is “mental illness.” That we can “go crazy,” that we can “lose our minds.” When we got into RC, this myth did not vanish magically, unfortunately. A lot of us know better than that but still don’t get it [understand it] in a certain way. There’s a difference between knowing theoretically that the myths are untrue and discharging our way out of them.

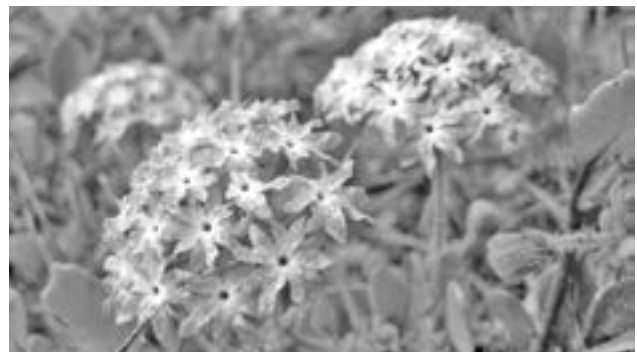
You are completely intelligent. That means you have a mind. So, you can’t “lose” your mind. It does not fly out the window or somehow go away from your body. Your mind is yours. No one can do anything to you to take it away except give you brain damage—and even then, your mind is still functioning to whatever extent it was not damaged.

I ended up in a “mental hospital,” and there’s a way that I was lucky. I had been discharging all my life because my mother had never stopped me from discharging. And she herself discharged all her life. Of course, out in the world I got harshly targeted for discharging. When I got into the “system” I was thinking, “Am I ‘crazy’?” You know, “because I’m in a ‘mental hospital’?” And then I thought, “No, I’m *thinking!* How can I be ‘crazy’ if I’m still thinking?” So, I didn’t ever really believe it. I believed that there were people who “went crazy,” but I did not believe that I did. It was a big wedge into the oppression that I understood on a deep level that I didn’t “go crazy.” And after being in RC for many years, I realized that there is no such thing. I was lucky. But it does take a long time to realize these are myths.

### THE WORK OF “MENTAL HEALTH” LIBERATION

The work of “mental health” liberation is to combat these myths. That’s the big work of “mental health” liberation. It’s also to get people discharging; in particular, to give them the opportunity to discharge about

*continued . . .*



LANCE CABLK



SEATTLE, WASHINGTON, USA • KATIE KAUFFMAN

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what happened to them and their families in relation to the “mental health” system.

This is an oppression that most people don’t talk about. They don’t talk about when they were in the “mental health” system or their family member was. They don’t talk about going to therapy or taking psychiatric drugs or family members taking them. They don’t talk about these things because they are stigmatized. You can be sitting in a room of a hundred people and everybody there has some connection to the “mental health” system, and you don’t know it. So, you can be thinking you are the only one. Every time I do an RC workshop, I have people raise their hands in answer to questions about their connection with the system. It creates a lot of safety. Almost everybody in RC is at least a relative of someone who has had therapy or been in a “mental hospital.” And almost everybody has had therapy of some kind. I don’t know if that is true in the larger society, but at every workshop I’ve led that turns out to be the case. There’s hardly anybody in RC who has not had contact with the system.

### “MENTAL ILLNESS”

“Mental illness” is what I like to call a long session without a Co-Counselor. Think about it: So-called “mental illness” is somebody having some distress that they are acting out, or trying to have sessions about, or replaying. Or they are having a lot of discharge. All of this without a Co-Counselor. Or somebody is not connecting right now with present time. Maybe they haven’t connected with it for several days, or maybe for several years. But they haven’t “lost their mind.”

“Mental illness” is simply distress. People don’t know what to do about it, so they label it in many ways. “Conditions” are diagnosed and labeled. They are

described in the Diagnostic/Statistical Manual (DSM). Whenever the DSM is revised, they come up with [create] more “mental illnesses.” Why? Because they are trying to sell drugs. The psychiatric drug companies are using the system to make a lot of money.

It is important to say that “mental health” workers are good people. They are trying their best to deal with an irrational system. They are oppressed as workers. They have to handle a large number of cases every day without any time to discharge, because in the context of the system they are “perfect” and don’t need to discharge.

Harvey Jackins knew that there is no “mental illness” because he saw so-called “mental illness” evaporate before his eyes. (See *How RC Began*, by Harvey Jackins.) Of course, as he went on developing RC this became clearer and clearer. And it keeps being confirmed as we do “mental health” liberation.

### PSYCHIATRIC DRUGS

Given that there is no “mental illness,” we certainly don’t need psychiatric drugs. People feel like they need the drugs because they have to go to work and the drugs help them do the work. Well, not really. Do the drugs really help them do the work? What the drugs do is put their feelings on a back burner. They are not focused on the feelings, so maybe they can focus on the work. But the drugs also shut down a piece of their mind, a piece of their ability to think, and they shut down their ability to discharge. The person is “functioning” in the sense that they are doing their job, but they are not functioning fully.

This doesn’t mean that everybody should stop taking drugs right this second. There are a lot of things to think about before stopping psychiatric drugs. The RC psychiatric drug policy is in the *Guidelines*. The purpose of an RC guideline is not for people to just read it and follow it—but to discharge about it, see what they think, understand it, work with it, and use it. The guideline is about how we would like things to be. It’s a direction. We don’t have to agree with it right this second. We do get to discharge on it and move our re-emergence in a direction that we’ve figured out is forward moving for the RC Community.

### BEING “NORMAL”

The society pushes us into little boxes of how we are supposed to behave. We get to open up those little boxes when we are doing “mental health” liberation. The oppression makes everybody feel like they are

supposed to be “normal.” Well, what is “normal”? It is an expression of the dominant oppressor roles. That’s “normal.” If someone is targeted by a particular oppression, they don’t fit into the dominant “normal” pattern. (When I say “normal” I’m saying it in quotes, because there is no such thing.) If you belong to any oppressed group, you feel like there is something wrong with you because you are not “normal.”

(There isn’t anybody who wasn’t oppressed as a child, but a lot of people have a number of oppressor roles and not a lot of oppressed roles. The people who carry a lot of oppressor roles got smashed into them. They got forced away from themselves in order to behave like the expected oppressor roles. So, even the people who carry the dominant oppressor roles and appear to be most “normal” don’t really fit into those roles.)

Discharging on “mental health” liberation allows us to notice the internalized oppression we carry, or the internalized oppressor roles we carry. It allows us to “see” them as what they are—things that made us look like somebody we are not. Things that tried to make us somebody else.

A big piece of “mental health” liberation is letting the real you resurface into reality. What does it take to move this forward? It takes persistence, over and over and over and over again. Many people keep wondering why Tim keeps saying some of the same things. (*laughter*) It’s because it takes time to discharge patterns. And I keep saying the same things over and over and over. (*laughter*) And you get to do this. And you get to figure out how to say it a different way each time, or to say it to different people, or whatever. It takes persistence.

Most of “mental health” oppression is hidden because we don’t talk about it, remember? It seems like the way to be is “cool,” right? Not getting upset, looking good, knowing all the right moves. (*laughter*) Knowing how to fit in, or at least trying to fit in. That’s the way we stay safe in this society, right? But being able to be cool and distant and looking good takes a toll. It hurts us very badly. It takes away our creativity. It takes out “you.” Really, the big thing it takes out is you, who you are.

### GETTING PRESENT AND LEADING

Another important thing is getting present. Most people won’t follow you unless you are—or at least seem to be—a little bit present. (*laughter*)

People don’t feel comfortable telling their “mental health” histories. Making it safe to tell them includes ensuring confidentiality and also showing that you can listen to their story. That it doesn’t bother you. That it’s not going to send you over the edge [make you feel upset and out of control] to hear how *they* feel on the edge. “Mental health” oppression says that people who have been hurt by it are “losers” and have no minds. Right? That’s one of the messages of the oppression. So, if you can show that you have great attention, that reassures people that you are okay, which makes it safer for them to talk to you about this.

Something to know about is my five-point program called “Getting Present and Staying That Way.” It’s on the RC website in the “Mental Health” Liberation section, at <[www.rc.org/fivepointprogram](http://www.rc.org/fivepointprogram)>. It’s also in *Recovery and Re-emergence* Number 5 (page 36) and Number 6 (page 28). It’s useful for keeping your attention out around this subject, which is very heavy for most people. There are five things that you need to do, and you need to do them all at once. They are all intertwined with each other. The five things are (1) have a big support system and lots of sessions; (2) decide to pay attention to reality and not distress by making that commitment and discharging about it; (3) in all your sessions, have some part of or hopefully all of your attention on benign reality; (4) have a life that you really want—figure out how to do that (if your life sucks [is awful], you will never get your attention out—think about it); (5) have fun, as much as you can.

“Mental health” oppression is everywhere. It’s all around us. Therefore, it is not only terrifying, it is also something that we can lead on everywhere. A good way to start is to set up a place where people can tell their “mental health” histories. It could be a table at a workshop, a topic group, your women’s support group, your artists’ support group, or any other support group.

*continued . . .*



MYANMAR • MAURA FALLON

## COUNSELING PRACTICE

... continued

Yes, there are “mental health” system survivors in your Area, and you didn’t know it because nobody was saying so. When you find out who these people are, you can set up a support group with them.

### BEING “MESSY”

When we lead “mental health” liberation, we have to be “messy.” I’m not saying, don’t do things in a correct way. That’s not what I mean. I mean we have to show ourselves. We have to look “uncool.” We have to be vulnerable. We have to be nerve-rackingly open. We have to be loose and real and discharging and showing who we are. That’s not easy in this society.

We have to show how badly we got hurt by “mental health” oppression in order to show that there is a way through it. We have to show it because it lets people know that it’s safe to show it. Also, if we don’t show it, they’re not going to show it. Being vulnerable and showing who we are helps people know that it’s okay to be who they are.

We have to be able to risk humiliation as “mental health” liberation leaders. We have to be able to say, “Yes, I was locked up in a mental hospital,” or, “Yes, I have a sister who is on psychiatric drugs,” or whatever. We get to say that—in a safe place, in a session, at a workshop. When I started leading “mental health” liberation, I couldn’t say I was an ex-inmate. It took me many years of discharge to be able to say that and not feel so humiliated that I couldn’t talk. It takes a lot of discharge to be as relaxed as I am now—and even now I’m not completely relaxed about it. Anyway, you get to show this. You get to show that it’s possible to survive looking at and working on these things that feel so humiliating.

### THE END OF “MENTAL HEALTH” OPPRESSION

Can we end “mental health” oppression without ending all the other oppressions? I think that’s probably impossible. Some mechanism in the society would re-establish “mental health” oppression in order to keep the oppressive society going. I don’t think somebody is up there in a little box planning all this. You know, looking down on the society and planning it. I think it’s just a big mechanism that arose out of oppression. It’s just a huge sticky mess that prolongs the mess of the society that we live in.

If we had complete “mental health” liberation, the oppression would be gone and we would live in a fun society. We would live in a society in which people would be having fun and discharging everywhere. If

you needed a session, your neighbor would know RC (they might not call it RC). But you wouldn’t have to go anywhere to get a session. Somebody who wanted to have a session could have one because everybody would be discharging. Nobody would be raising their children without discharge. It would be “family work” everywhere. “RC” would be everywhere. My favorite image is of people dancing in the streets, artwork on all the walls, no cubicles that people have to sit in all day. It’s of young people being supported to do what they want to do.

I could talk about this for a long time. But I wanted you to get an image of what it might be like. There are many, many ways things would be different if we didn’t feel like we had to fit in, behave, do what we’re “supposed” to do, conform to the oppressive society, and hold in place our oppressed and oppressor roles. What would it be like if we didn’t have to do all those things?

I assume there would be a transition period. There would be “mental hospitals” that were lovely like this site—by the ocean, by a lake, in the woods. They wouldn’t be “institutional.” People would do RC. They might not call it RC, but that’s what they would do. The residents and the staff would collaborate to make the whole thing work. And there would be no such thing as psychiatric drugs or seclusion or restraint or electro-shock, or psychosurgery—all those things would be relegated to the past, appearing only in history books or museums.

I don’t think there will be a “mental health” system when we get to the classless cooperative society.

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  
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Thanks very much!  
*Rational Island Publishers*

## Responding to COVID-19

*We all need to stay aware of the developing situation with novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19), discharge any restimulations we have, and thoughtfully take steps to protect ourselves and our Communities. Here are the first two communications put out to the RC Community to move in this direction.*

February 28, 2020

Dear RCers,

As the novel coronavirus continues to spread into more countries, it is important that we inform ourselves about it, think about each of our situations relative to it, have sessions on whatever the situation restimulates, and prepare ourselves to handle things, however they develop.

Governments have not taken the necessary steps quickly enough to keep the virus from spreading. It is important to contain and isolate it so that it does not have the chance to establish itself the way influenza has.

Our current situation has many unknowns and is changing rapidly.

Under these conditions, we in RC need to recognize that our gathering together people from many parts of the world can create a situation in which the virus can spread in that group and then in the individuals' widespread home communities. This needs to be thought about by workshop leaders and organizers.

Each workshop needs to be thought about: where the participants are from, where have they traveled recently, what presence the virus has in those places, and so on. Local workshops that are far from where the virus has appeared still seem reasonable to continue holding.

Any workshop that brings together people—participants and leader—from far distances needs to be thought about carefully, and postponement or cancellation needs to be considered.

We have already canceled several RC events because of the virus, in both Europe and East Asia.

The situation will continue to develop, and we will gain clearer information in the next few weeks. Please discharge on and think about the situation so that we can handle it most effectively.

With love and appreciation,

*Tim Jackins*

March 4, 2020

Dear RCers,

I am working to figure out the best way we can respond to the international spread of the novel coronavirus. We are hampered by a great lack of information about this virus and its transmission, by our restimulations about the situation, and by the confusions of capitalism and its influence on our governments and their policies.

The virus is transmitted very easily, and no one has immunity to it. Under these conditions, I want the RC Communities to take decisive steps to limit our transmission of it.

Over the past weeks, as we began to get an understanding of the situation, I canceled several workshops and other RC activities in several parts of the world. Now we will do more.

Here are the steps we will take in the next two weeks. We will also keep thinking and learning about the developing situation and modify these steps and take others.

- Staff at RCCR [Re-evaluation Counseling Community Resources] will not travel to other RC Communities to lead RC activities or attend workshops. (Seattle is currently a center of the virus in the United States.)

- Any workshop occurring in the next month that involves any international travel for the leader or any participant should be canceled. If the leader is from within the country and there are no international participants, the workshop can be held at the discretion of the leader and the organizer if it draws only from geographic areas where there is no "community transmission."

(When someone develops novel coronavirus disease [COVID-19] who has not been exposed to anyone known to be infected with the virus, and who has not traveled to countries where the virus is circulating, it is said that "community transmission" is occurring. "Community transmission" is an important marker of the spread of the disease and is commonly referred to in the media and by public health officials.)

- Similarly, if an RC activity in the next month draws people from significant distances within one country, including from locations where there is "community transmission" of the virus, that activity should be canceled or the people from locations with "community transmission" should not attend.

- In locations where there has been no "community transmission,"

*continued . . .*



## TEACHING, LEADING, COMMUNITY BUILDING

... continued

the workshop, class, gather-in, and so on, may be held at the discretion of the leaders of the local RC Community.

- In locations where there has been “community transmission,” all RC gatherings should be canceled.
- People from Regions in which there is “community transmission” should not go to workshops outside their Region during this period.

In place of these RC gatherings, I encourage people to use whatever electronic communications are possible for doing the work that would have been done at the gatherings. This includes using Zoom, Signal, FaceTime, Telegram, and other similar means for classes, support groups, talks that would have happened at a workshop, and so on.

Individual face-to-face sessions need to be carefully thought about.

Though many of us will never be infected with the virus, each of us needs to thoughtfully limit the possibility of acquiring or transmitting it in a session. Please read and follow as much as possible the suggestions that have been made by thoughtful people in the medical profession. I will list some of these at the end of this letter.

The situation with this virus is a real and immediate challenge for us in the RC Community. I think that we can handle it, and support each other in our efforts.

I understand that the above measures have large economic consequences for many people. But I think that’s unavoidable since these measures appear to be necessary for the safety of individuals, our Communities, and all of the people around us. There may be ways to lessen the economic difficulties by negotiating with workshop sites,

petitioning airlines, and so on. To the extent there are unrecoverable costs that would be a hardship to absorb, please contact Mike Markovits and the Re-evaluation Foundation.

Please reach for connection with each other. As with all challenges, one goal with this challenge is to emerge from it clearer and in better shape than when we first faced it. Let’s do that.

With love and appreciation,

*Tim Jackins*

Links to the websites for the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):

<[www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public](http://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public)>

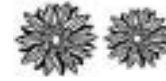
<[www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/home/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/home/index.html)>



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## Supporting the West Africa Francophone RC Communities



Since 2010 Ellie Putnam and I have been part of teams supporting Co-Counseling development in West African Francophone countries.

Prior to that I was part of teams that led Community development workshops in other African countries, with Tim Jackins's initiative and the support of the Re-evaluation Foundation. At that time Melphy Sakupwanya was the Regional Reference Person for Sub-Saharan Africa. She was always excited about the workshops. I remember sitting up with her the night before so she could welcome every participant personally. That work and bringing resource to the West Africa French-speaking RCers has been a joy and a privilege. It has been gratifying to see the growth of the Communities, the depth of RC knowledge, the effective use of RC, and the development of leadership. (There are also RCers in the French-speaking countries of Rwanda, Democratic Republic of Congo [DRC], and Gabon, and it would be useful for them to have similar resource.)

Over the years we became accustomed to getting e-mails from workshop participants excitedly saying that they went back to their workplace or community and organized a group to tell them about the ideas of RC.

We would often give an introduction to RC at the end of a workshop for the family and friends of attendees and would have thirty to fifty people attending. The participants knew this was a resource they wanted and could tell the difference it would make. One participant shared how he had laughed for the first time in a very long time. Some said they were feeling freer, more hopeful, and that they understood how these ideas would change their lives and the lives of their people.

One Community was started after a refugee, Cyrille Zounon from the Ivory Coast, by chance met the Togo RC leader, Missigbe Hokameto, and learned about RC. Cyrille attended our workshop and at the end said that he would start a Community in his country. That was in 2012, and he now has a Community of thirty-five people. The core group that he began with is still actively involved.

Since we have been providing resource to the Francophone Communities, another Community, also in Togo, has been started by Leonard Agoboyaya. He has twenty-five members in Kame, a rural area of Togo. The Community in Benin, led by Eric Amoussou-Guenou,

and the one in Lomé, led by Missigbe, have been in existence for nineteen and twenty-one years respectively.

At one point we shared RC with twenty-five people from a country that had recently experienced a civil war. A community elder, new to learning about RC, said to me with respect and sorrow, "If you had come earlier, we would not have had a war."

A few years ago, the leader of one country was pleased about his meeting place in a garden. The garden was outdoors and uncovered, and there were people moving about nearby. With the help of the Re-evaluation Foundation we helped him rent a small room where he could hold his Community meetings and have sessions.

I very much appreciate that the Re-evaluation Foundation supports the development of RC in Africa. I've made a personal decision to not take a fee for leading workshops there. This makes it possible for more people to attend RC activities and benefit from RC. Most of the attendees are poor and don't have the resource to pay a fee for workshops or for transportation to get there, so every cent is needed by many who are eager for these ideas.

The effects of colonization, racism, attempted genocide, imperialism, greed and graft, and the other unspeakably inhumane treatment of the marvelous people of the continent that has been carried out by Europeans, are enormous and devastating to this day.

My African ancestors were stolen from this continent. The pride, the brilliance, the persistence, the ingenuity, and the people's sense of forging on despite the challenges that are ever present, is heartwarming. It is personally rewarding to share the hopefulness of RC theory and practice with my brothers and sisters, so they have these tools to fight against the daily assaults from the oppressions. It is a joy to see the numbers of African RCers, teachers, country leaders, and Reference People that have developed and are leading their Communities.

These West Africa Francophone Communities that Ellie and I have gotten to know well are now being referenced by Chioma Okonkwo of Lagos, Nigeria. She has done a wonderful job developing RC in Nigeria and is now Regional Reference Person for West Africa.

*Marion Ouphouet*  
Seattle, Washington, USA

## ... More on the Francophone Africa Project ...

Marion Ouphouet, assisted by me, led a workshop in Lomé, Togo, this past January for leaders from several West African Francophone RC Communities—in Guinea, Ivory Coast, Togo, Benin, and Cameroun. There were forty-two participants with a range of two to twenty-one years of RC experience, the majority having between five and fifteen years.

We began leading workshops in the Francophone Communities of Togo and Benin in 2010. In 2013 a Community was started in the Ivory Coast. Cameroun and Guinée started RC following Sustaining All Life workshops, and their leaders now come to the Francophone workshops.

Currently there are seventeen certified RC teachers in these Communities who lead fundamentals and ongoing classes. About the same number of uncertified leaders lead support groups by constituency (young adults, women, men) or by geographical location. In the more established Communities of Togo, Benin, and Ivory Coast the membership is as follows: Lomé,

the capital of Togo, twenty-two active Co-Counselors; Kamé, three hours north of Lomé, thirty Co-Counselors; Benin, one hundred Co-Counselors in several coastal Communities around Cotonou, the largest city, and Porto Novo, the capital; Ivory Coast, twenty-five Co-Counselors in and around Abidjan, the capital.

Both Marion and I are committed to the development of RC in Africa. Our original goal was to contradict the language oppression of Francophone countries dominated by English-speaking countries. It helped that I am fluent in French. Over the years of working together in this project we have combined our leadership skills to communicate everything we know about RC theory and Community building and have developed life-long connections with everyone we have come in contact with. We know there are other Francophone RC Communities in other parts of Africa—the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Rwanda, and Gabon—that are eager for this resource, but we have not visited these Communities.

Chioma Okonkwo, Regional Reference Person from neighboring Nigeria, has been involved in these Communities for several years and is now referencing their leadership and development. She has also brought representatives from these Communities to workshops in Nigeria for women, young adults, men, and healing from war. The information and experience these Co-Counselors have gained from the Nigerian workshops have broadened the range of RC work in their respective Communities. Our contact with Chioma has been mutually enriching. We have worked closely together, and Marion and I have enthusiastically backed her leadership.

Each time we visit these Communities we are struck by [impressed by] the eagerness of Co-Counselors to learn and apply the theory and practice of RC, and we have noticed the steady progress in their re-emergence over the years. They understand the implications of RC for their own as well as for their people's liberation. They persist in meeting for classes and sessions under challenging conditions, such as lacking the easy access to transportation and communication that we in the economic North take for granted. Many of them spend hours traveling by foot or bicycle to attend a Co-Counseling class or workshop. Many Communities do not have a building in which to meet regularly.

Here are some highlights of the recent workshop:

- *Communicating the basics of RC theory and practice.* We especially emphasized the discharge process, the roles of client and counselor, RC policies and guidelines, Co-Counseling relationships, and telling our stories.



BESS HERBERT

- *A lively discharge-filled class on class issues.* Everyone divided into class-based discharge groups. The majority were raised poor and working class. There was a small middle-class group of teachers and professionals and an even smaller owning-class group consisting of government officials, landowners, and descendants of royalty. As a raised-poor leader, Marion was able to provide examples of how class oppression works, which created safety for people to work openly on class hurts.

- *A class on sexism that stirred up many feelings and much discharge.* The women, especially, could show outrage at how sexism had affected them as young girls, young adult women, and older women. Many of them could fight hard for themselves. The men listened respectfully and seemed affected by what the women showed about sexism in their lives. The group was divided into women's and men's groups. Some of the men stayed longer to discharge on male domination.

- *A class on care of the environment and climate change.* Everyone was concerned about the destruction of the environment in their countries caused by capitalist countries and corporations extracting resources from their lands, cutting down their rain forests, polluting their air and water, and changing their traditional agricultural practices. Many RCers are involved in community-wide efforts to plant trees, clean up the debris in their cities, ban plastic bags, and so on. We encouraged them to look at the discouragement, despair, and urgency they feel and to work on the early roots of these feelings along with taking action.

- *Working hard from early morning to well into the evening.* Although the 7:00 a.m. classes were

optional, almost everyone came, as they were eager for all the experience and information they could get. We talked about and demonstrated discharging embarrassment and counseling on fear.

- *Good work done on losses of family members.* Several of the participants had recently lost a partner or close relative. Death, separation, poverty, and disease are constant hurts and factors in their lives.

- *Interpretation throughout the workshop.* We emphasized the importance of language liberation, how their languages were taken from them by colonialism and how the Francophone countries are oppressed by the English-speaking countries. Several bilingual participants extended themselves to interpret during classes, support groups, topic groups, and topic tables. Everyone cooperated in slowing down and honoring the one minute of attention given to the interpreter and the one minute of silence.

Marion and I have both benefited enormously from supporting the development of Francophone RC

Communities. It has been personally rewarding for me to work with Marion, to form close, permanent relationships with many people in these Communities, and to care deeply about getting resource to the Francophone Communities.

This workshop, which was part of the Francophone RC project, could not have happened without the support of the Re-evaluation Foundation, specifically the Africa fund. As a member of the Foundation Board, it matters to me that as many RCers as possible be aware of fundraising for the Foundation—so that as opportunities present they can support them, or make non-RC family and friends aware of them, so that these kinds of projects can grow and multiply. Marion and I will be holding a fundraising report-back on our Francophone project for the Seattle (Washington, USA) Communities in the near future.

*Ellie Putnam*  
Seattle, Washington, USA

[There will be reports from participants at this workshop in the next issue of *Present Time*.]

## Newest RC Teacher Update Available Digitally

The newest *RC Teacher Update* CD (RCTU 62) is of Tim Jackins's talk "Boldly Working Together in New Ways."

Along with being on the CD, it is also available digitally.

Subscribers to the *RC Teacher Update* series will be e-mailed the link and the password. Non-subscribers can order the digital version for the same price as the CD.

For information about all the *RC Teacher Updates*, go to pages 103 and 104.

*Rational Island Publishers*

## Why I Want to Teach RC and Am Ready to Do So

### *An Application to Teach Re-evaluation Counseling*



I've been a Co-Counselor since 1984. I have taught and led RC off and on during those thirty-six years but have not taught formally since the 1980s. This has been due to many factors—disability and illness; the logistics of access and transportation; and a series of major medical crises, my own and those of my family, that have just made it too hard to take on. Also, in the past I felt like I was supposed to teach but didn't actually want to. I preferred to talk about RC as part of my public work as a writer and speaker.

I recently returned to my childhood home in rural Puerto Rico. I now live in a small community where I have many ties. The community is in the midst of a major disaster because of ongoing earthquakes, escalating extraction of resources, the corruption of the colonial regime, and racist U.S. policies. This is two years after a devastating hurricane from which we have not recovered.

My community and many Puerto Ricans have learned a lot about leaning on each other more. People are openly acknowledging the emotional traumas of our situation and asking for help with the anxiety caused by constant quakes. I have been informally counseling people, and it's been much appreciated. The timing feels right to offer RC to my neighbors. I now have access

to community spaces that are accessible to me, and I could teach people who live within walking distance of where I live.

These are the external factors that make teaching RC easier than in the past. In addition, leaving the United States to be in my own culture, not having to push back against patterns of individualism and privacy, and being in the midst of a shared crisis with my own people make teaching RC seem way more [much more] fun and also much more immediately and obviously necessary.

I have a good grasp of RC theory. I have been thinking for years about how I might teach in a rural Puerto Rican way, less modeled on school and more on other ways that people connect and learn. We need to develop a range of ways to teach RC that fit different lives and local cultures. I also take seriously the need to spread RC tools more widely as we take on the global ecological crisis.

Randi Freundlich, my former Area Reference Person, will reference me while I stay connected with the San Juan RC Community and with my International Liberation Reference Person for People of Puerto Rican Heritage, Maria Judith Colón.



*Aurora Levins Morales*  
Maricao, Puerto Rico

### Flexible RC Teaching

My weekly class has become a once-a-month class/support group because my travel has made it difficult to hold the class weekly.

In December I began teaching RC to a group of young African Americans who are involved in a "green project" in the city. We met in two long-evening classes with a follow-up class in January. I am hoping to convince some of the participants to join a regular class that I would teach, or get the project to agree to bring me back occasionally over the next year. We will see what I can do.

*"Mabel Red"*  
USA

Reprinted from the e-mail  
discussion list for RC teachers



## A Young People's Workshop in Nigeria

A young people's workshop took place in Lagos, Nigeria, in November 2019. It was led by me, Aaliyah Ejeh. I am twelve years old. I live in Nigeria with my family. I started RC when I was two years old. My mom is also an RCer and has been doing RC for more than fifteen years. My dad and siblings are also RCers.

I teach RC to young people. Our RC Community agreed that we needed a young people's workshop. I was excited about it. We prepared for it by meeting in RC classes on Sundays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays. Topics included language liberation and culture restoration. My mom and I discussed getting supplies for the workshop—balloons, balls, mats, and so on.

I was nervous, so we began meeting every day to discharge our feelings about the workshop.

November 16th came. It was time to show the young people our best work. We taught about young people's oppression, what RC is, ways of discharging, and more. After the teaching and Co-Counseling sessions we had a break. After that we presented a drama on climate change and talked about reducing its effects. We also discussed how to spread RC to more young people.

Most of the young people enjoyed the workshop. It was a great experience for me—it was great to teach RC to young people like me.



*Aaliyah Ejeh*  
Lagos, Nigeria

My name is Hadassah. I have been doing RC since I was five years old. I am seven now. Our classes before the workshop happened at a time when I am usually doing homework.

This was stressful because I had to do my homework late at night. The workshop was great for me. There were not a lot of people my age, but I got along with the people who were there.



*Hadassah Omomaro Ejeh*  
Lagos, Nigeria

My name is Treasure. I am nine years old and live in Nigeria with my family. I am new in RC. My mom is also an RCer. Before the workshop started, we learned about oppression, racism, sexism, and

climate change. Oppression makes a child feel less human. When the day came, we had a lot of fun. There were balls, mats, and balloons, and we played games. We also had classes, including a language liberation class, and discharged. The workshop made us happy. It educated me and the others.

*Treasure Chikwado*  
Lagos, Nigeria

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



### The Most Revolutionary Movement That Has Ever Come Along

I was a revolutionary long before RC came along. I knew about the good works of Lenin, Marx, Mao, and the Paris Commune. Then something happened. I accidentally discovered RC, and I found that the people around me, who were very frustrated and unhappy in their lives, if they would take turns listening to each other, would spontaneously start crying and laughing and shaking and yawning, and although on the surface they seemed very much the same (this didn't remove the bumps from their noses or anything like that), they were happier. They treated their children better. They treated each other better. They were slow but willing to learn more.

I remember a time when I had to decide if I should try to get back into revolutionary activity and fight the bad ideas I could see creeping into all the revolutionary parties, or if I should stick to this new development that I was beginning to call RC and see how important it would turn out to be.

I decided, well, there are a lot of people who are supposed to be pursuing revolutionary policies, but nobody's bothering with RC except me. So I decided to stick with RC. I had no idea at that time that RC and the people who would gather around me doing RC would turn out to be the most important revolutionary movement that has ever come along.

*Harvey Jackins*

From "Live Up to and Practice Our Theory,"  
on pages 15 to 16 of *An Unbounded Future*

## Bringing RC to a Church Community

Organized church communities can be great natural places to bring RC perspectives and to work on the climate crisis. The following are some of my thoughts and experiences.

### BRINGING RC PERSPECTIVES

I am an Episcopal priest. I have been working in a mid-sized (about six hundred people) Episcopal church for nearly five years. For two years I have had a paid job developing a “small groups ministry.” The core of the work is communicating and practicing the basic RC ideas that things go better when people are listened to thoughtfully and when there are leaders who guide the process.

I train leaders of small groups. The training focuses on helping people take turns and allowing them to explore their own minds, including processing their feelings, with support and confidentiality. We also practice appreciations, speaking order, and not “fixing” one another. (I’ve noticed that not “fixing” each other can be a big challenge for Protestants.)

After two years of working persistently with this model in every possible setting, the church as a whole is slowly developing a culture of listening. It is reinforced by the rector (the priest in charge), who uses the model regularly in his own work. I also have a column in the monthly newsletter called “Listening Hearts,” and each month I explore a piece of basic RC theory. This often gets interesting discussions going.

### ADDRESSING THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY

Whenever I preach, I speak to the benign reality, which is loving connection and seeing that we are all in this together. Connection, connection, connection. I have preached about the extinction of species and how to address that as Christians. The church has a group called Earth Stewards that meets regularly to address the climate crisis. I have met with the leaders of that group and offered to do a workshop on listening projects. When they do presentations on the climate crisis, they break into triads and allow time for each person to share their feelings and thoughts. The church overall is interested in exploring this topic and is ripe for more.

### WHAT MIGHT BE USEFUL TO OTHERS

Practice, persistence, patience. At first almost everyone balked at listening without responding and at not trying to “fix” the other person. As I got a few leaders to trust the process and practice it enthusiastically with me, more and more people tried it. It takes a lot of time and a lot of patience. I have to constantly discharge my discouragement. I have to be confident. The other thing is to have a few good, solid ideas and repeat them endlessly. No one gets bored, ever, with basic ideas like you are good, you can think about this, everyone has something to offer, and we can take turns, listen to, and support one another.

*Christine Marie*

Eugene, Oregon, USA

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



HAWAII, USA • TIM JACKINS

## Sharing RC Tools at Three Evening Meetings

We shared RC tools at three evening meetings in our rural United States community. Each evening had a focus. The first evening was on care of the environment, the second on ending white racism, and the third on ending classism. We tried not to use RC terminology—we had to slow down to think about what we were saying and who we were talking to. Each evening had a different leader and co-leader. All RCers were invited.

We are now ready to have an introduction to RC. We will invite those who came to the earlier “tool-sharing” meetings and their friends.

Below are comments from RCers who participated in the meetings.

*Marilyn McEnery*  
Danville, Vermont, USA

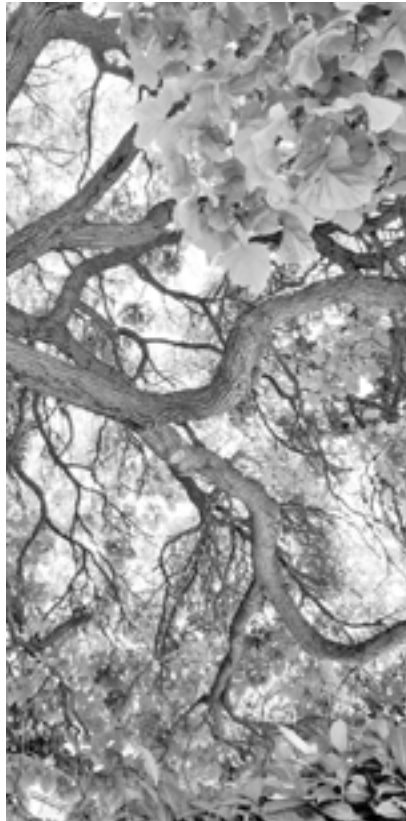


- I knew that if people felt noticed, were listened to, and felt heard that this would equal success. It was easy for me to invite people I care about, and it became even easier when we decided to avoid RC terminology.

- We didn't try to cover everything. We wanted to give people a taste of using RC tools in their climate change work. One person said, “I'm going to use this tomorrow!” We incorporated lightness and hopefulness throughout.

- The events allowed me to show more of myself to people that I don't know well. I already knew some of them and went away feeling more relaxed and hopeful about our connection. I'm also more confident about inviting people into RC and

expecting them to embrace it. Using issues like ending racism, the climate crisis, and classism gives people a reason to learn about RC.



KATIE KAUFFMAN

- I took away how smart it was to choose three topics and focus on one each night. I think this attracted people. The subject matter drew them in. It was a good way to show the power of telling our stories and the power of listening. I think everyone was having feelings about the chaos and pain in the world, and it was clear in the closing circle that people felt more connected and less alone and thus more able to take action.

- I first felt huge resistance to the project. I didn't want to invite anyone. I certainly did not want to lead. I quietly hoped that I had other activi-

ties scheduled on the chosen dates. I did ask myself to think about my resistance—and resistance immediately began to fade. I thought about (1) my love and admiration for my fellow RCers, (2) the urgency of the climate crisis, racism, and classism, and (3) that I'd already decided to become more involved with climate action. Reasons to resist were fading fast! I admitted that I really liked the idea of working with X—, in particular. And when prepared adequately, I know I am just fine in front of a group. I also knew that the worst consequence of inviting someone would just be hearing “no.” All my “rational” reasons to resist—gone! I am pleased with myself and with my RC Community. It's exciting to share what we know with other wide-world efforts.

- I got to look at my feelings of excitement and hopefulness in sharing these tools with others. It was also an opportunity to look at my internalized “mental health” oppression—I noticed my hesitation in inviting certain people because I didn't want them to think of me as “weird.” I saw how people were able to listen to others when they knew they would get a chance to be listened to. Folks were hungry to tell their stories and wanted to hear others; it brought us noticeably closer. During the climate crisis event, a meteorology student said he would use some of what he had learned when his group goes to schools to teach about the climate emergency. He was referring to paired listening, speaking order, and panels.

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



EL CASTILLO, CHICHÉN-ITZÁ, MEXICO • ANTHONY ROBLES

## Workshops, Playing, and Building the RC Community

It's tough building RC Communities of working-class and poor people. It feels like people are carrying the weight of the whole world on their shoulders. But when the Community gets together and plays, the atmosphere is electric. There is hope.

Playdays have played a good role in our Community. It has worked well to repeatedly invite the same people to our playdays, which are normally just one day long. The biggest drivers of the playdays are the young people.

My daughter is eight now and always looks forward to the next playday.

Also, the people who have grown the most in RC, who have taken on leadership, are those who have attended the most workshops.

*"Mngani"*

Eswatini

Reprinted from the e-mail discussion list for RC teachers

## Functioning Well at Non-RC Events

When several Re-evaluation Counselors happen to be present at a wide-world conference or other non-Re-evaluation Counseling event, they may find it very useful to counsel with each other, organize a support group, or briefly exchange their opinion of issues with each other.

They should not, however, "huddle." What time they spend together should be formally used for a session or a group session. They should reach out to and spend time with and establish communication with the non-RCers at the conference or event.

It is *not correct* for Re-evaluation Counselors in this position to attempt to dominate the policy of the broader event by, for example, "putting over" [pushing through] policies or decisions, on the basis of parliamentary maneuvering, which the majority of the people attending are not yet in agreement with. This "faction" type of organization (often used by leftists in the past) is an expression of despair and of lack of confidence in the majority of the people.

It is completely possible for Re-evaluation Counselors to be on opposite sides of certain questions in the wide-world organization as policies are being worked out, and it's crucial that they treat each other with respect and treat the non-Re-evaluation Counselors around them with complete respect also.

Co-Counseling, encouraging each other, helping each other prepare to publicly communicate well, yes. Parliamentary maneuvering on a narrow basis as a group, no.

*Harvey Jackins*

From *The List*, page 105

## Learning from Workshops in Northern Uganda

Chuck Esser and I recently led several workshops in Northern Uganda. I'd like to share some of what I learned.

The experience expanded my vision of the contexts RC can grow in. People here are sharing RC in ways that many of us are familiar with—among new refugees in a city, naturalized in a school community, in family and social relationships. But RC is also being taught in a Pentecostal church community, in refugee camps, and in a network of subsistence farming villages.

I saw that people can easily begin healing from war. There have been wars and armed conflicts in this region for over forty years. It was an honor to be present at a lunchtime topic group on war led by a man from South Sudan. There was an hour of deep discharge. Many people were able to face their personal war trauma for the first time.

I learned how RC can strengthen an entire rural community. I asked a man who leads a mostly young adult group in the network of farming villages how RC was impacting his community. He spoke of a reduction in alcoholism and the healing of rifts between groups of neighbors.

I was reminded of the irony of engaging with RC's liberating messages in English when English is the language of colonial oppression. I was glad for the RC practice of translating even when everyone can speak and understand English. It was good to hear some of the many different languages that are spoken in this part of East Africa.

I saw how slowing down the pace is helpful when people are listening to a second language—even as I noticed my Western-based patterns of impatience at the time it took. At one point I supported a local leader to lead in her own language for half an hour. I saw the impact of her communication. She had invited some of her high school students to the workshop, and up until that point they had only heard her speak English. They were thrilled to hear her speak in their common mother tongue.

In a class on early sexual memories, people were struggling to bring to mind an early memory. I suggested that they focus on what they had already absorbed about sex and closeness by the time they started school. It worked well.

I was reminded of the power of self-appreciation.

I was reminded of how powerful "special time" can be. It brought together a mixed group of people from ages thirteen to seventy—some very experienced, some very new.

It was useful to discharge on having more privilege and "more than enough" in comparison with the people at these workshops.

I was heartened by people's determination, commitment, power, and love.

*Pamela Haines*

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA

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

### 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 literature. 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. You can e-mail address changes to <litsales@rc.org>. Thank you!

*Rational Island Publishers*



## ◆◆◆◆◆ A South, Central, and West Asian Workshop ◆◆◆◆◆

In December 2019 a South, Central, and West Asian Workshop was held in Marrakech, Morocco. Approximately forty people attended—from Morocco, Israel, Denmark, the Netherlands, Sweden, England, and the United States. The following are some of my highlights.

Azi Khalili, International Liberation Reference Person for South, Central, and West Asian-Heritage People, did a great job of leading. She was clear, direct, loving, and standing proud. Azi and Iman Awadh, the organizer and main interpreter, both stretched themselves heroically and accomplished a great deal for our people's re-emergence and liberation.

It was wonderful to see how RC has grown in Morocco. Co-Counselors there have taught many new people, among whom are several young adult women from poor and working-class backgrounds.

I thought about how Sustaining All Life was nearby in Spain doing outreach at COP25 (the twenty-fifth

United Nations Climate Change Conference) and how our efforts three years ago at COP22 had led to such a hopeful and ongoing venture here in Morocco. For example, a Co-Counselor has been spreading RC ideas in the Moroccan "mental health" system. Another, a contact from the 2016 COP, was at the workshop with a friend he has taught one-to-one. My fundamentals student in Oujda, who couldn't come, has started teaching his fiancée one-to-one.

There was a lively culture sharing on Saturday night. It included music, dancing, and a demonstration of the daily ritual of preparing tea. Diane Balsler, International Liberation Reference Person for Women, and I shared a little RC history, with photographs of RC Arab pioneers and an appreciation of Betsy Najjar, an RC leader who recently passed away. A group of Amazigh, the Indigenous North African people, sang a song for Betsy wishing her well and saying we missed her and that we are still

connected. It was a moving moment on a lovely Moroccan evening on the terrace overlooking the old city.

The workshop included a meeting for working-class and raised-poor folks, our second annual Christian-heritage topic group, a mealtime table on care of the environment, and a Havdalah. (*Havdalah* is Hebrew for "separation" and refers to the verbal declaration made at the end of Shabbat, or a Jewish holiday, in which the holy day is separated from the mundane period that follows.)

On Sunday Diane led a workshop for women. I led one for men consisting of five Moroccans living in Morocco, one Turk living in the Netherlands, one Indian living in England, and one Lebanese man from the United States. At one point I told the story of how RC had started. There was group laughter when I talked about Harvey Jackins trying to get Merle to stop discharging laughter and take the situation more seriously. We talked about sex and frozen needs, which we hadn't talked about before. The latter was a big highlight for many of the men, who said that it wasn't talked about in their families and was the first time they had talked about it in the Moroccan RC Community. Someone asked if there is a conflict between RC and Islam. I said there is both wisdom and distress in most religions and we need to discharge and re-evaluate to tell the difference. We finished in a closing circle, arms around each other, and appreciated the workshop, ourselves, and the man on our right.

*Amin Khoury*

Los Angeles, California, USA

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



CHELAN, WASHINGTON, USA • ANTHONY ROBLES

## A Report from the Re-evaluation Foundation

The following is a quick snapshot of how the Re-evaluation Foundation did (unofficially) in 2019:

*Grants:* We provided slightly over \$700,000 in grants to spread RC around the world and develop RC leaders. This was a new one-year record for the Re-evaluation Foundation. Hurrah!

*Contributions:* We received just over \$550,000 in contributions. It was a relatively good year for contributions, although not quite as strong as each of the previous three years.

*Increasing our fundraising:* Most important, 2019 was the second year in a row that the Re-evaluation Foundation had run at a deficit. We are still financially healthy, since we had a surplus in previous years. Assuming we want the RC Communities to continue to grow as quickly (if not more quickly) than in recent years, we need to increase our fundraising for RC.

There have already been several fundraising activities in 2020, and others are planned in the coming weeks, especially for Sustaining All Life.

Please let me know how I can support you in your fundraising over the coming weeks and months. Our goal and focus are to raise funds from non-RCers. And thank you for everything that you have done to date.

Together we will make sure that money is not the limiting factor in the growth of the RC Communities and our ability to make an impact on the world.

With hope and love,

*Mike Markovits*

*President, the Re-evaluation Foundation  
Stamford, Connecticut, USA*

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



TOGO • ELLIE PUTNAM

### A Summer's Garland

Some five and a half thousand years ago,  
She was a young hunter-gatherer  
Perhaps sitting under a pine tree,  
Close to a lagoon,  
Cooling her warm dark skin  
While creating a buttercup garland  
For her dark hair.

Perhaps, chewing her small piece  
Of birch tar gum  
And humming quietly,  
Her inquisitive blue eyes  
Scanned the Danish summer meadow  
Seeking more blossoms.

Now, five and a half thousand years later,  
The scientists unlock her DNA,  
Her entire genome,  
Found on the "chewing gum."

She looks out at us,  
Her complete portrait known.  
Would that we could know  
What she was  
Thinking and feeling.

*Sojourner Truth*  
Seattle, Washington, USA



## A Mini-Workshop for a Class of Young Adults

I just led a mini-workshop for my fundamentals class. It went great! I want to tell you about it:

Until today, the whole group (seven people) hadn't all been together for a single class in eighteen weeks (that's how busy we are!). I put in a lot of hours finding a venue, and it was worth it. The venue was in the middle of our neighborhood, walking distance for everyone, with couches and a great yard for playing.

We started with eating lunch and hanging out [spending relaxed unstructured time] for forty-five minutes. People asked thoughtful questions of each other. Everyone was already laughing. I said we would take things slowly and focus on connecting and community building.

For the class, I said just a little about using this group to really "show" what we might not show with others—ways we are "weird," things about us that are not "shiny." I emphasized how, as "high-functioning" young adults, activists, and leaders, we aren't able to show a lot of this, even among our closest friends and peers. I discharged my own feelings about not feeling "cool" in front of the group and gave another person with similar struggles, a wide world leader of Jewish young adults, a demonstration, too. I think the group found this a welcome contradiction [to distress].

The only Black young adult, one of two People of the Global Majority (PGM), wasn't able to come until midway through the workshop—along with another member of my Area who came to lead PGM. The transition was perfect, and we started playtime as soon as they arrived. We played a fun, collaborative outside game and an inside game,

with everyone laughing and taking leadership throughout.

My assistant led the eliminating white racism group, and I was an ally in the PGM group, which the PGM leader from my Area led. He gave the Black woman a session, in part about me, which I think increased the safety in our relationship. The white people had dinner ready (we had each brought an item for a burrito potluck) when the PGM group finished, and while we ate, we did "show and tell." People shared items from their life (art from their grandmother, a family cookbook, and so on). They asked each other supportive, thoughtful questions—we learned even more about each other. We finished cleanup in ten minutes, had a "closing circle," and left on time—a total miracle!

I'm pleased that I decided to follow my thinking: that a mini-workshop was the next step for this

group on their way to participating in the larger RC Community. We learned so much about each other's lives and got to show more curiosity and caring than had been possible up to that point. The highlight for me and my assistant was the hanging out and playing. For everyone else it was the sessions, which I think speaks to the contradiction created by the workshop and the growing power of sessions for the students.

We are about to assign regular Co-Counselors and start the next chapter of our class. We'll keep building our relationships and counseling skills. I'm so glad we had this workshop as a launch point. I think I'll do one every quarter to keep building the class.

*Corinne Jager*

Boston, Massachusetts, USA

Reprinted from the e-mail discussion list for RC teachers



DIANE SHISK

## A Class on COVID-19

On March 3 I led an RC class on the novel coronavirus and COVID-19. [Editor's note: This was before the virus was established in Texas (USA). A class wouldn't meet now that the virus is established there.]

We were eleven people—ten white people, one Person of the Global Majority, nine women, and two men. Most of us were elders or close to being elders. All of us were part of an ongoing class.

The COVID-19 discussion has been dominating the airwaves. People have been flooded with information, some helpful and some not. They are worried, confused, and concerned about what is happening. They find it difficult to get good, dependable information about the impact and transmission of the virus. People's restimulations can push them to withdraw and "go it alone" [do things by themselves]. Many feel overwhelmed by terror.

We know that any feelings of panic and helplessness come from early hurts and that discharging can help us think more clearly and make rational decisions about how to proceed. I thought a class would be helpful.

We started by sharing "news and goods" and noticing that we are good and that we are connected with one another. I said a bit about why I wanted to do a class on this subject. Then each class member took a minute to describe what they had heard or knew about the virus and anything that concerned or worried them.

### THE VIRUS

The disease the novel coronavirus causes is named COVID-19 (coronavirus disease 19). This is a shortening of the first three words plus the last two digits of the year in which it was discovered. The name was chosen deliberately to avoid targeting of a particular group of people or location. (Calling the 1918 flu "Spanish flu" for the location of its early identification resulted in lots of discrimination against Spanish people.) For example, naming COVID-19 the "Wuhan flu," after the location in which it was first identified, would have invited more criticism of the people from that city and Chinese people in general.

There are many sources of accurate, current information. Suggested actions for preventing and transmitting the virus (hand washing, and so on) are available. It was heartening to notice that there are places where we can get information that will be helpful in prevention and

treatment. Here are links to the websites for the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):

<[www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public](http://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public)>

<[www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/home/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/home/index.html)>

### EARLY HURTS AND CHRONIC PATTERNS

I reminded the class about the early source of feelings of confusion, panic, helplessness, and so on. I invited them to look at the early roots of their restimulations about the situation. What had been our parents' and other adults' reactions to illness, contagion, danger, death, and so on? What had happened to people who became ill? Had your family, identity group, or community tackled a difficult situation in your community? What had you been told or not told about what was happening?

After mini-sessions, each person had a minute to notice the early hurts and chronic distress recordings that affected their reactions to the current situation. This helped prepare class members to support and counsel each other.

### IDENTIFYING AS USERS

We all identified as USers and necessarily had a U.S. perspective:

- We noticed how the United States has often regarded itself as exceptional (notably during the current administration but traditionally as well). USers can feel like we shouldn't have to deal with things if we don't want to. The United States has typically set itself apart, sometimes attributing its lack of involvement in difficult matters to geographical isolation. (The United States tried to keep out of World War II—what was happening "only affected people on the other side of the ocean.") Our country has often claimed special status because we have a lot of resources. We may have assumed that we are safe because we are USers.

- Our dominant culture is white, Protestant middle class, and we have often looked down on [devalued] people who don't fit that description and blamed them for what has happened to them, as if things would be different if they had adopted dominant U.S. values. A veneer of righteousness has justified and hidden our colonialism and imperialism.

*continued . . .*

## TEACHING, LEADING, COMMUNITY BUILDING

... continued

### PEOPLE OF THE GLOBAL MAJORITY

- People of the Global Majority are (and have been) disproportionately affected by systemic problems, including by climate change. They have often been blamed for their situations. People of Asian heritage were immediately targeted for the rise of COVID-19. The news media reinforced the assumption that the virus was a “Chinese problem” and if the Chinese had used their resources in a different way, they could have prevented its rise and spread. There is an expectation that Asian people should take care of the problem because “they created it.”

- Because the virus has animal-to-human transmission and seems to have developed in places where people live in closer proximity to animals than is general in the United States, people with that lifestyle have been blamed and criticized.

- The media seems to have reported white people’s illnesses most often, suggesting that white people are more important than People of the Global Majority. Health care for People of the Global Majority (in the United States and elsewhere) is often unavailable and inferior to health care for white people. COVID-19 is seriously impacting People of the Global Majority because they often lack access to needed resources.

### ADDITIONAL IMPACTS

We know that capitalism is collapsing, but we didn’t know it would look like this!

- The U.S. stock market has reacted negatively to the COVID-19 spread. Companies have failed. Businesses and schools have closed, with far-reaching impacts on people who live paycheck to paycheck. People whose jobs are affected are often not paid and cannot care for their families.

- When schools close, parents have to care for their children instead of going to work. Children who rely on getting meals at school do not get fed there. People sometimes can’t find the items they need to care for themselves and their families.

- Health care and service workers have been expected to keep serving in spite of their potential exposure to the virus. In spite of being the richest country in the world, the United States has a poorly functioning health care system; millions of people have little and no access to health care. Some people may be reluctant to be tested for the virus, which means that detection and treatment will be difficult.

- Mass gatherings have been canceled, impacting local governments, businesses, and individuals.

- Without discharge and a perspective that treasures connection, support, and cooperation, many people struggle to make realistic decisions and take action. Many assume there will be a shortage of resources and are restimulated into hoarding supplies as well as blaming others, lashing out, becoming isolated, or giving up.

### DISCHARGE, DECISION, APPRECIATION

We had long mini-sessions on how people and the environment are being affected by the virus and where we could take action and move things forward.

Each person took a minute to reflect on their “take away” from the class. People felt much more hopeful, had clearer thinking, and were more connected to each other than they had been at the beginning of class.

We had noticed that we all were carrying vestiges of the many oppressions—racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, anti-Jewish oppression, and so on—but that together we could deal with the challenge of COVID-19.

We speculated on the good that might result as we all pull together to handle the challenge. Perhaps there can be a reduction in the acquisitiveness that is so encouraged by capitalism. Perhaps we can care more for each other. Maybe things can slow down; maybe we can interrupt the inhuman pace that is a part of capitalism. Who knows what good could result?

*Kathleen Hamilton*  
Austin, Texas, USA

Reprinted from the RC e-mail  
discussion list for USA political issues



DRIFTWOOD • CHRISTINE MARNANE



## The Climate Emergency

*Based on a talk by Diane Shisk at the International RC Climate Change/Climate Justice Conference in December 2019 near San Francisco, California, USA*

I hesitate to try to communicate about the seriousness of the climate emergency in an article. At a workshop I try to spend at least the first twenty-four hours getting people laughing and discharging in other ways about hearing “bad news.” We work on early memories of hearing bad news, the early material [distress] restimulated by what we have already heard about climate change, what we’re afraid I’m going to say. I hope you have already had those sessions!

And some people think that knowing how dire the situation is doesn’t help people to take action. Most Co-Counselors know the situation is bad; it’s probably not a lack of understanding that is keeping us from moving faster. (Actually, I am very pleased with how fast the RC Community is picking up speed and engaging with the climate emergency. But I would like more of us involved, wherever it makes sense to do so.) But I do think it helps to have an accurate picture of the situation if we’re going to frame a correct response, and I think information about the seriousness of the situation helps this understanding. (And I think most of the world doesn’t know the situation, and we can play a big role in helping people understand it. See Tim Jackins’s article, “Reaching Many People’s Minds,” on page 3.)

We’re in a climate crisis and we’re not ready for it. We’re too busy, our plates are full. We already have our life planned! We have no time or attention for another major project, especially not one that threatens our survival and restimulates us. How can we think about it, much

less take some action? And what action should we take?

Fortunately, we can still say that most climate scientists think it is not too late to avert a major disaster. A lot of damage is happening now and will continue to happen from climate change, but if we act quickly and globally, we can avert catastrophe.



MARGIE DOYLE PAPADOPOULOU

Unfortunately, we have already put too many greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. We know that. I want us to know a few more details. A really important report came out sixteen months ago from one of the United Nations organizations (the IPCC, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) written by climate scientists studying thousands of reports about the global situation. This was done by independent scientists; they were not paid by the United Nations. They were volunteers; they did the work because they care. (This is the report that caused all the t-shirts to appear saying “12 Years.”)

Essentially the scientists said it is really important to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius

(1.5 C). That’s what the Paris Agreement aims for, but before this report we weren’t sure what the difference was between warming of 1.5 C or 2 C. (It will be extremely difficult to keep it below 1.5 degrees so people were hoping 2 degrees would be okay.) The report came out really strongly that yes, it really matters. There will be significantly less loss of life, fewer harmful impacts, and less risk of crossing “tipping points”<sup>1</sup> if we keep the temperature increase to 1.5 C instead of 2 C.<sup>2</sup>

Also, if we don’t make the huge changes needed to do that, we are on track for global temperatures to rise to around 3.5 C by the end of the century (which would be really, really bad). Temperature increase so far is 1 degree C.

To keep the rise in temperature to 1.5 degrees (or to quickly bring it back down when we pass 1.5 C) we must do the following (and a bit more):

- Drastically cut our consumption and use of fossil fuels while we make a major transition to renewable energy

*continued . . .*

<sup>1</sup> As the earth and atmosphere warm, it causes changes in many earth systems including the ice sheets, permafrost, ocean and atmospheric currents. At some point, the heat impacts a system so much that the changes in that system multiply the changes occurring in another system and the systems change so quickly that the rapidly escalating impacts will become irreversible, at least for many thousands of years.

<sup>2</sup> Actually, the report talks about the fact that the temperature will probably rise past 1.5 C and that we must quickly remove CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere to bring the temperature back down to 1.5 C. We don’t know how to do that on a large scale yet.

## WIDE WORLD CHANGING

... continued

- Undertake a major restoration of our ecosystems (wetlands, mangroves, forests, the soil, and so on)
- Stop deforestation and change agricultural and food practices

(For more details see the Climate Change Draft Program for the RC Communities <[www.rc.org/climatechangedraft](http://www.rc.org/climatechangedraft)> or the article referred to below.)

As a global society, we know how to do all of these things and we have the resources to do them. It's all possible. But we must do them quickly and on a large scale. As an example, just in the area of renewable energy (probably the most important, along with the drastic reduction in

fossil fuel use) we would have to install more renewable energy every year for the next eleven years than has been installed globally over the last two decades.

Since the United Nations report came out sixteen months ago, many other reports have been released, most saying that the 2018 IPCC report was too conservative. The report I found most readable and useful was this one,<sup>3</sup> which currently has been signed by 13,324 scientists from 156 countries. I recommend that you read the following in a session and arrange

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<sup>3</sup> "World Scientists' Warning of a Climate Emergency," *BioScience*, Volume 70, Issue 1, January 2020, Pages 8–12, <<https://doi.org/10.1093/biosci/biz088>>

other sessions to download and read the whole report:

"... we declare, with more than 11,000 scientist signatories from around the world, clearly and unequivocally that planet Earth is facing a climate emergency. . . .

"Despite 40 years of global climate negotiations, with few exceptions, we have generally conducted business as usual and have largely failed to address this predicament. The climate crisis has arrived and is accelerating faster than most scientists expected. It is more severe than anticipated, threatening natural ecosystems and the fate of humanity."

The authors give us details about the situation and concrete steps to take to address it. In conclusion:

"Mitigating and adapting to climate change while honoring the diversity of humans entails major transformations in the ways our global society functions and interacts with natural ecosystems. . . . The good news is that such transformative change, with social and economic justice for all, promises far greater human well-being than does business as usual. We believe that the prospects will be greatest if decision-makers and all of humanity promptly respond to this warning and declaration of a climate emergency and act to sustain life on planet Earth, our only home."

This is not only a short-term challenge. To sustain and improve this work, it will be necessary for our RC Community to grow and strengthen as we take it on. We need to continue to get our minds back more fully and give others access to our tools so that they can become more effective. Building our Community remains crucial. There will continue to be challenges after we solve this one.

### "We Cannot Eat Money"

The general atmosphere in my country, Denmark—and most Western Protestant-dominated countries—is denial, pretense, isolation, individualism, and a tendency to blame other individuals or groups for whatever difficulty we are facing. The blaming culture makes us less aware that what we need to be after [pursuing] is a fundamental system change in which life in all its forms has higher priority than profit.

At a recent demonstration my speech was short:

"We cannot eat money, we cannot drink money, we cannot breathe money. When all has turned into gold because of the never-ending greed, we will find ourselves dying—of hunger, thirst, and suffocation, and in deep loneliness, because most life will have expired.

"So let us unite to stop the fires, to stop the exploitation of this planet and humans, and reach for each other instead."

*Susanne Langer*

Copenhagen, Denmark

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

## ≡≡≡ The Moment We Have Been Waiting For ≡≡≡

As a young adult, I've had the exponential urgency of the climate crisis revealed to me over the course of my lifetime. I was in high school when Al Gore ran for U.S. president, lost, and ended up making the film *An Inconvenient Truth*, bringing climate change into mainstream awareness.

In the last ten years the unworkability of an economic system based on a history of imperialism, genocide, and domination has become very real to me; not at all abstract. My peers and I face a system that has become so irrational, destructive, inhuman, and cruel that we spend much of our time together commiserating about it. We have tried to hold and love each other in the face of systems that constantly assault our value and goodness. Capitalism has infiltrated deeply into our lives, and we are constantly fighting it—on micro and macro levels.

The climate crisis does not stand apart from any inequity or injustice. It unifies all the “issues” we may have attempted to fight separately. They are not separate. This is why taking a stand on the climate crisis is important to me.

I think that those of us in the United States are more complicit in, and responsible for taking a stand on, climate change. Our lives are energy-expensive! When we have children, they use up several times the resource that children in other nations do. Patterns of living we consider commonplace are completely unworkable.

Also, I am not satisfied with letting white people lead and dominate the environmental movement. The world belongs to me and my people. We are the ones who can tell [see] that fighting climate change is not separate from fighting racism, capitalist modes of production, sexism, and so on.

### NOTHING MORE IMPORTANT FOR THE RC COMMUNITY TO DO

I can't think of anything more urgent, important, and transformative for the RC Community to do than prioritize addressing climate change. This is the moment we have been waiting for, that we were made for. This is our time to shine and build the future we want. It is a potent moment in which the connections between many disparate “issues” are being revealed. Why would we sleep at this moment?

I don't think there is a disconnect between fighting for our liberation and re-emergence and building a more rational society. That is why I am a member of the RC Community. And in the urgency of these times, we need to put direct attention on the crisis at hand.

*Raha*

Brooklyn, New York, USA

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



DENMARK • WYTSKE VISSER

## Women and Care of the Environment

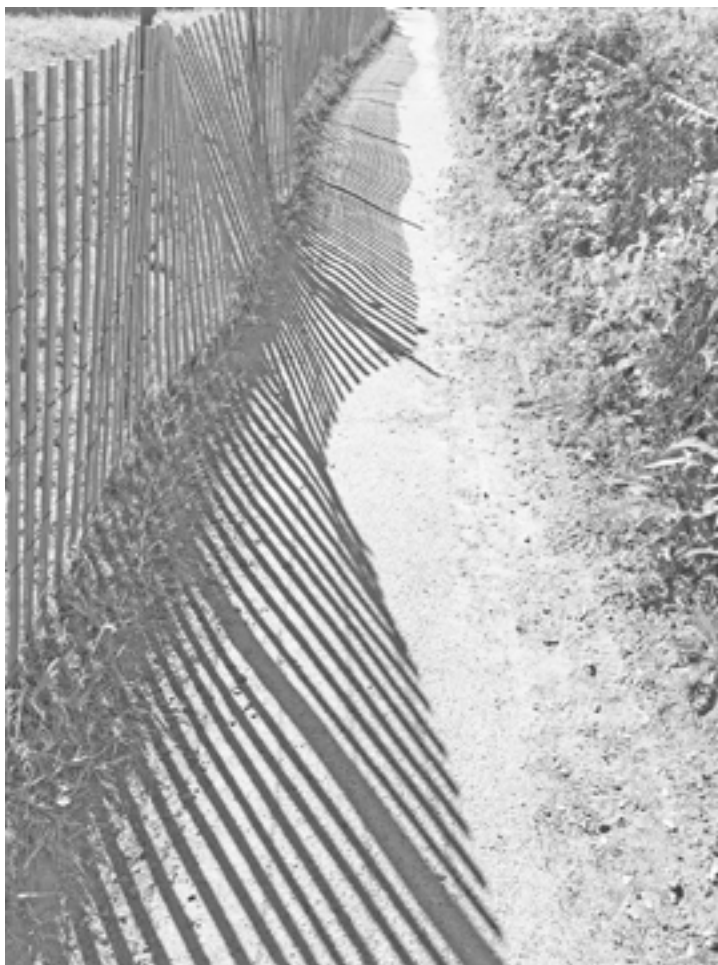
Azi Khalili (the International Liberation Reference Person for South, Central, and West Asian-Heritage People) and Diane Balser (the International Liberation Reference Person for Women) recently led a workshop on women and care of the environment.

Azi shared information about the climate crisis and how it exacerbates already challenging conditions for females. She pushed hard on the fact that our female minds are needed to solve this crisis. She asked us to discharge about the world we want to create and figure out what it would take [require] to get there.

I had known that female minds are important, but I hadn't thought that I needed to fully engage *my* mind with the climate crisis. Like many females, I have preferred to be in the background, working there to make things go better.

Azi asked us to look at what gets in our way of knowing what we want and thinking about economic systems. She asked us to work systematically on the distress that keeps us from having our minds front and center.

*Tresa Elguera*  
Brooklyn, New York, USA



CAPE COD, MASSACHUSETTS, USA • ALAN EPSTEIN

Because of the nature of sexism, hurts connected to being female don't easily get challenged. They are often put on the back burner of [not prioritized in] our re-emergence, resulting in a world and a movement that are fraught with male domination—that are organized by males, and ideas generated by males (many of which are carried out by females).

It seemed that the question both Azi and Diane were asking was, "How can we go after [pursue] the biggest crisis facing human beings without facing the biggest hurts in our lives?"

Having had to rely on men for our existence throughout the history of class society, females have been left with heavy chronic distress about our existence. And in Western society, in which some females have been given access to capital resource, there is pretense that the distress has already been discharged. Therefore, we in the West must discharge on quasi-women's liberation—on where we have been lied to, betrayed, and used—and also challenge ourselves to see ourselves as key leaders, specifically in the fight against climate change.

*Lori Leifer*  
New York, New York, USA

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



## Protecting the Climate Movement from Anti-Jewish Oppression

I was a member of the RC Sustaining All Life/United to End Racism (SAL/UER) delegation to the New York (USA) Climate Summit (NYCS) in September 2019. I led the RC Jewish constituency and a workshop called “Jews and Climate Justice—Building a United Front.”

As we were preparing for the workshop we heard about an anti-Jewish incident and attempted attack in one of the key national climate justice organizations. Over the years we have seen anti-Jewish oppression disrupt and derail progressive wide-world conferences, particularly using Israel-Palestine as a flashpoint. Because of the above we prepared ourselves to handle possible anti-Jewish attacks at NYCS.

Cherie Brown (the International Liberation Reference Person for Jews) shared some of the thinking and tools for interrupting disruptions and attacks that she has developed over the years in her wide world work. In phone calls with Cherie and others, workshop team members learned how to recognize an attack and diffuse disruptions. We made a plan for handling a possible attack. We also had sessions prior to the NYCS about that possibility. All of this contradicted the isolation and targeting of Jews and developed skills and confidence for handling attacks as we take RC into wide world movements.

Diane Shisk and Barbara Love’s (Barbara is the International Liberation Reference Person for African Heritage People) statement (“A Call to Unity: Standing Together for Climate Action” in the October 2019 *Present Time* and on the SAL/UER website) builds on our understanding that such attacks are an entering wedge designed to weaken working-class and progressive movements. It suggests a process for building unity in the climate movement. It acknowledges that disagreements, mistakes, and oppression may occur within the movement and states our intention to address these and resolve differences while moving forward on our common goal of ending the climate emergency. The statement is a step forward in understanding the role we can play as RCers in wide world movements. We can use it to protect the climate justice movement and other progressive movements from distractions and splintering by the mechanisms of division.

The Jewish workshop at NYCS went well and without disruption. Our workshop team members did a lovely job of showing themselves and how they have used RC in their wide world work. A highlight was the presence of an Israeli leader of a Palestinian/Jordanian/Israeli climate action organization. I worked with him briefly in front of the group. The attention that had been put to ending anti-Jewish oppression seemed an important contradiction [to distress] for him. He and other Jewish climate action leaders are interested in learning more about SAL/UER. We plan to teach them RC and help bring it to their organizations.

We were oddly disappointed not to have to try out our plan for handling attacks. However, we now have a foundation for when they do occur. The anti-Semitic attack in the wide world climate organization was diffused with the help of RCers who are close to that organization’s leaders and who listened to them and shared RC perspectives on Jewish liberation.

Billy Yalowitz  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA



### A New Rational Island Publishers Website!

After resolving numerous technical challenges, we have a new Rational Island Publishers website up and running!

On it you can do everything you could on the old website (along with some added features)—all made easier with a clean, updated, and more user-friendly interface.

You can find the website at <[www.rationalisland.com](http://www.rationalisland.com)>. We’d love for you to give it a try!

*Rational Island Publishers*





## Día Cinco en la COP25

A continuación se muestra el informe sobre lo realizado por el equipo de *Sustaining All Life* en el quinto día en la COP25 [Conferencia de las Naciones Unidas sobre el Clima celebrada en diciembre de 2019 en Madrid, España]. Se pueden leer otros informes en las páginas 61 a 64 del *Present Time* de enero de 2019 o en [www.rc.org/publication/environment/salcop25sp](http://www.rc.org/publication/environment/salcop25sp).

### Taller de padres

Liderado por Judith Bautista Pérez y Fernando Aguilera

Vinieron padres y madres con sus hijos e hijas. Mientras estaban en el grupo aprendiendo sobre la opresión de padres, los niños estaban teniendo tiempo especial con los jóvenes del equipo.

Los padres tuvieron la oportunidad de hablar y expresarse sobre ser madre o padre. Uno de los padres dijo que lo mejor que le había ocurrido en su vida era haber tenido a su hijo e inmediatamente comenzó a llorar. Otro dijo que su más grande desafío era ser padre. Una dijo ser una madre muy estricta, luego de una mini sesión reconoció que su madre lo había sido con ella. Otra más reconoció que no tenía atención en sus hijas. Fue muy dulce saber que los padres contaban con un espacio para expresar honestamente lo que sentían.



Los padres y madres jugaron divertidamente, pudieron conectarse, estar presentes y físicamente cercanos. No pararon de reír mientras jugaban y la pasaban bien.

### Grupo de católicos

Liderado por Silvina Spagnuolo, Dulce Cisneros Peralta, y Yara Alma-Bonilla

Las líderes abordaron la codicia en la historia del catolicismo. Mencionaron la forma que ésta nos ha formado a lo largo del tiempo y cómo se enraizó este sentimiento avaricioso tan profundamente que nos ha dejado desconectados de nosotros mismos, de otros seres humanos y de la naturaleza en general.

Revisaron que la herencia católica fue parte del proceso colonizador. Fue particularmente difícil discutir estos temas en Madrid, pero valió la pena. Una monja participó en el taller, mencionó que estaba feliz de conectar con el grupo de mujeres católicas. También se habló sobre cómo la herencia católica se relaciona con la conexión con la naturaleza. Las líderes hicieron un buen trabajo explicando las herramientas de co-escucha.

### Taller de mujeres

Liderado por Yara Alma-Bonilla, Amparo Vigil, y Malinali Castañeda

Acudieron mujeres que ya habían tomado talleres, volvieron porque sabían que el grupo de SAL, impartiría este taller.

Se hizo un panel con tres mujeres co-escuchas. Hablaron acerca de cómo el sexismo había afectado su vida cotidiana. Se discutió bastante sobre el sexismo internalizado.

Se enfatizó en la importancia que tiene la interpretación (traducción de español a inglés y viceversa) para que todos se sientan incluidos desde el comienzo. En un primer momento puede ser incómodo o parecer que el taller va lento. De cualquier forma, ofrecer clases y talleres con intérpretes vale la pena. Es una forma de integrar por completo a cada uno a pesar de las barreras del idioma.

El simple reacomodo de sillas para estar más cerca unas de otras, hizo posible que todas se sintieran más cómodas. En círculo, hablaron abiertamente sobre su opresión como mujeres y cómo ésta afecta su capacidad para pensar sobre la crisis climática. Las participantes estuvieron agradecidas por el espacio y por haber podido expresarse como mujeres.

### Reunión jóvenes

Liderado por Jade Castilla y Daniel Vela

Hubo ocho jóvenes de varias edades. En especial asistieron dos muy jóvenes; uno de once años y otro de doce, ambos se quedaron durante toda la clase. Debemos seguir aprendiendo de la esperanza que tienen los jóvenes. Hubo muchos juegos y los participantes se sintieron unidos y abiertos.

Estar con jóvenes, personalmente me abre el corazón. Cuando Jade preguntó cómo se sentían acerca del impacto climático, el chico de doce años dijo: "Las personas mayores nos están dejando un mundo en cenizas y nosotros (los jóvenes) tenemos buenas ideas para mejorar, pero los mayores deben escuchar lo que queremos decir". No pude evitar llorar cuando escuché eso.

Luego hubo otra ronda de juegos. Después, se preguntó a los participantes sobre qué es lo que creían que debería suceder. Una de las respuestas fue que más jóvenes ocuparan puestos de gobierno donde se toman decisiones para asegurar que haya más esperanza e ideas claras.

### Taller de salud

Liderado por Lety Gonzales y Jade Castilla

Nos dieron un espacio nuevo con micrófono. Las líderes compartieron información sobre las heridas que se acumulan desde que nacemos. Estos sentimientos se van manifestando en nuestro cuerpo mediante enfermedades crónicas. Tales enfermedades nos desconectan de nuestro cuerpo físico porque ya no podemos pensar en nada más sino en el dolor que sentimos.

### Taller de activistas y racismo en los blancos

Liderado por Brian Lavendel, Heather Dean, y Elvin Landaeus Csizmadia

Vino mucha gente al taller, aunque se estaban preparando para la gran marcha del medio ambiente en la noche.

Hubo un momento que una chica de Corea después de escuchar la teoría del racismo preguntó: ¿Por qué el racismo no es culpa de las personas blancas? Entonces se clarificó que son las personas blancas los agentes de racismo pero no es "culpa" de las personas blancas. Nacieron sin racismo y que esta opresión fue impuesta en las personas blancas. La explicación de los líderes fue tranquila y esperanzadora. La chica Coreana se quedó pensativa porque se le contradijo una mentira que creyó verdad toda su vida. La mentira de echar la culpa a alguien.



Varias personas dijeron que es urgente dar a conocer esta información para evitar la separación. Unas seis personas volvieron de otros talleres, porque ya conocían el trabajo que se empezó a construir durante la semana. Los co-escuchas hicieron un trabajo espectacular en crear vínculos con las personas que hablaron y que invitaron al taller.

### OTRAS ANÉCDOTAS

Una co-escucha estuvo con un letrero en nuestro quiosco. El letrero decía: "¿Te sientes estresado? ¿Te sientes desesperado? Yo te puedo escuchar. Cinco minutos hace la diferencia". Nos dimos cuenta que los minutos que ella mostraba el cartel, la gente no se acercaba. Eso fue un gran aprendizaje; la gente tiene mucho miedo de la opresión de la salud mental. Una vez que quitamos el cartel, la gente volvió a acercarse para preguntar sobre la información.

Hemos aprendido que en España la perspectiva de ser católico es otra historia. Los españoles tienen que desahogar una historia opresiva donde ellos se sienten mal con ellos mismos.

### LA MARCHA

Fuimos a la marcha por el medio ambiente. Fue muchísima gente, al menos medio millón de personas en el centro de Madrid.

Hicimos muchos carteles defendiendo la naturaleza y también estuvimos cantando algunos lemas cómo:

- El agua es un tesoro que vale más que el oro.
- Usa la bicicleta, no más gasolina.
- Nadie nos para, otro mundo es posible.
- Los bosques y los ríos se defienden con la vida.
- Por qué, por qué, por qué nos asesinas, si somos la esperanza de América Latina.
- Es emergencia, lo dice la ciencia.
- La tierra se defiende no se vende.
- Que se eleve la unidad pero no el nivel del mar.
- Jódete al sistema no al ecosistema.
- Ni un grado más ni una especie menos.

Patricia Ibarra

Santa Cruz, Bolivia

Re impreso de la lista de discusión por correo electrónico de RC para líderes del cambio mundial

(Un agradecimiento especial a María Limón, de Colorado, USA, por ayudar a nuestra delegación con el trabajo de traducción.)

English translation of the preceding article:

## Day Five at COP25

Below is a report on what the Sustaining All Life team did on their fifth day at COP25 [the United Nations climate conference held in December 2019 in Madrid, Spain]. You can read other reports on pages 61 to 64 of the January 2020 Present Time or at <[www.rc.org/publication/environment/salcopy25](http://www.rc.org/publication/environment/salcopy25)>.

### Parents' Workshop

Led by Judith Bautista Perez and Fernando Aguilera

Parents attended with their children. While the parents' group learned about parents' oppression, the children got special time from young adults on our team.

Parents had a chance to share their feelings about being a mother or father. One father said the best thing in his life was having a son, and he immediately cried. Another father said his greatest challenge is being a parent. A mother said she was very strict, and after a mini-session she recognized that her mother had been strict with her. Another mother realized she had no attention for her children. It was sweet knowing that parents had the space to honestly express what they felt.

The parents played a fun game during which they connected, stayed present, and got physically close. They couldn't stop laughing during the game and had a good time.

### Catholic Workshop

Led by Silvina Spagnuolo, Dulce Cisneros Peralta, and Yara Alma-Bonilla

The leaders addressed greed in Catholic history. They discussed how it has shaped us throughout history and how it is so deeply rooted it has left us disconnected from ourselves and from all of nature.

They reviewed how part of being colonized had been inheriting Catholicism. It was particularly challenging to speak about these issues in Madrid, but it was worth the effort. A religious sister participated, and she said she was pleased to be in a group of Catholic women. We also talked about how our Catholic heritage relates to our connection with nature. The leaders did a good job explaining our listening tools.



### Women's Workshop

Led by Yara Alma-Bonilla, Amparo Vigil, and Malinali Castaneda

Participants at our other workshops returned because they had come to know us as part of Sustaining All Life.

A panel of three Co-Counselors addressed how sexism has affected their daily lives. There was much discussion about internalized sexism.

They emphasized the importance of interpretation for making everyone feel included from the outset. Having interpretation may feel uncomfortable at first. It can seem to slow things down. However, offering classes and workshops with interpretation is well worth it. It's a way of fully integrating everyone in spite of language barriers.

Simply rearranging the chairs so everyone sat closer to each other made everyone feel more comfortable. The women in the circle talked openly about their oppression as women and how it affects their ability to think about the climate crisis. Participants were grateful for the space and to be able to express themselves as women.

### Youth Group

Led by Jade Castilla and Daniel Vela

There were eight young people and young adults of various ages. A special highlight was an eleven-year-old and a twelve-year-old who stayed the entire time. We can continue learning from young people's hope. There were several games, and the participants felt united and open.

Personally, being around young people opens my heart. When Jade asked how they felt about the impact of climate change, the twelve-year-old said, "Older people are leaving this earth in ashes. We young people have good ideas for improving things; adults should listen to what we have to say." I couldn't keep from crying when I heard that.

There was another round of games. Then the leaders asked what the participants thought should happen. One answer was that more young people should hold official government positions from which decisions are made, to ensure that more hope and clearer ideas are present.

## Workshop on Health

*Led by Lety Gonzales and Jade Castilla*

We were given a new space with a microphone. The leaders shared information about how hurts accumulate, beginning at birth and earlier. These hurts may show up in chronic health conditions and can make us feel disconnected from our physical bodies. We may be unable to think of anything other than the pain we are feeling.

## Eliminating White Racism Workshop

*Led by Brian Lavendel, Heather Dean,  
and Elvin Landaesus Csizmadia*

There were many participants even though everyone was busy preparing for the big march for the environment that evening.

A woman from Korea, after listening to racism theory, asked, "Why is racism not the fault of white people?" A few points were clarified. White people are the agents of racism but are not "at fault." They were born without racism; the oppressor role was imposed on them. The leaders' explanation was relaxed and hopeful. The woman became pensive because the lie that someone is to blame, which she had been told all of her life, was contradicted.

Several people commented that it's important to share this perspective in order to avoid separation and division. Six participants came to other Sustaining All Life workshops because they understood the work that we had built over the week. The Co-Counselors did a spectacular job of connecting with the people they invited to the workshop.

## ADDITIONAL NOTES

A Co-Counselor held up a poster at our booth saying, "Do you feel stressed? I can listen to you. Five minutes can make the difference." We noticed that while she held the poster up, no one approached our booth. It indicated how afraid people are because of "mental health" oppression. Once the poster was removed, people again approached our booth to ask for information.

We learned that some perspectives about being Catholic are the result of a particular history in Spain. The Spanish people have to discharge about an oppressive history and on feeling bad about themselves.

## THE MARCH

The Sustaining All Life delegation participated in the march for the environment in the center of Madrid. No less than half a million people attended.

We prepared many posters defending nature. During the march our group and other groups around us shouted out rhyming chants in Spanish, translated here:

- Water is a treasure that is worth more than gold.
- Use a bicycle; no more gasoline.
- Nothing will stop us; a new world is possible.
- The forests and the rivers are defended with our lives!
- Why, why, why do you murder us if we are the hope for Latinoamérica?
- It's an emergency. The science says so.
- The earth is to be defended, not sold.
- Let the level of our unity rise but not the sea levels.
- End the system, not the ecosystem.
- Not one degree more nor one species less.

*Patricia Ibarra*

*Santa Cruz, Bolivia*

*Translated from Spanish by María Limón*

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

(A special thank you to María Limón, from Colorado, USA, for helping our delegation with the translation work.)





## Contradicting the Patterns of the Rigid Economy

Our early distresses can be like wallpaper or the air we breathe. It's hard to imagine there could be any other reality. It's just "normal," the way things are, the way things will always be. We tend to experience our economic system the same way. It surrounds us like the air and seems equally normal and unchangeable.

### INDIVIDUAL SOLUTIONS

Because we were hurt and didn't get attention to heal when we were young, many of us isolated ourselves, turned inward, and focused on making the decisions that seemed necessary for our own survival. Seeing nobody we could trust to think about us, there seemed no choice but to fortify our own little castles and try to survive inside them. Our current economic system is based on similar isolation and dependence on individual decisions for survival. Think of the messages we get: Look out for yourself. Make the choices that will maximize your self-advantage. Build up your own security, because nobody else will do it for you.

These messages do not lead to well-being, either in individuals or in society. In RC we see how separation distorts our relationships with each other and diminishes us all. In our economic system we see how the pursuit of individual gain is leading to an ever-increasing wealth gap and the drive for continuous growth is threatening the ability of the planet to support life.

As members of the RC Community we are encouraged to hold directions against patterned behavior, to hold out confidence that both we and our beloved clients can reclaim our flexible intelligence, and then work in that direction. We have a

similar opportunity with regard to our patterned and rigid economic system. We can hold a vision for an economy that functions in a way that meets everybody's needs, and we can look toward ways of moving in that direction.



TIM JACKINS

### THINKING ABOUT THE ECONOMY

Many of us have difficulty believing that we can think about the economy. This is based in old feelings. When we were little, we knew that many things around us were wrong, but we lacked the information and power to make them right. Many of us got messages that we didn't know enough or weren't smart enough. When adults who self-define as experts, such as parents or economists, hold out the position that they have all the answers, we can easily believe that we have no place in the conversation.

But, in reality, most of the people who claim to be experts aren't thinking well about the whole picture. Economists may assert that their field is based in hard science and complex mathematical formulas, but at root the issues we are dealing with are moral ones. The experts may have one piece of the puzzle, but what we know is badly needed.

### "THE COMMONS"

We know that it makes sense to find each other and work together for the common good. One powerful way we can start thinking about the economy from this perspective is to focus on what we share, what we hold in common. How can we bring more of our economy, which has been increasingly privatized, into the "commons"?

Public libraries and parks are commons. The air, the water, and the entire planet are held in common. We share a commons of accumulated culture and knowledge. There is the potential for more: The idea of the commons can help us form a vision. About health. About security in old age. And about wealth and ownership, including a money supply that is held and regulated in common.

To get from vision to practice is harder, but we can start with what we know. We are learning to challenge the patterns in our own lives that keep us isolated and feeling that we, alone, are responsible for our well-being. We can expand to our communities, building up the resources that support others to do the same. We can join together to build alternatives in which we are working together for the common good. On a larger scale, we can chal-



lunge the laws and structures that have accumulated around patterns of individualism and greed in our economic institutions. We can look for wedges in public policy that challenge the dominant assumption that protecting the pursuit of private gain leads to greater public well-being.

If we can remember that we are thinking about the economy the way we would think about a beloved Co-Counselor caught in distress, we will see more and more opportunities to shift toward more human behavior. Here are some questions people are working on:

- With people increasingly separated by a growing wealth gap, what about policies that tax corporations whose CEOs make more than a hundred times the salary of their average worker? What about a tax on every computerized transaction in the financial markets?
- With the money supply increasingly controlled by private banks

(that essentially create it by making loans, then profit from the interest), what about the idea of banks that hold public money in the public interest?

- With elections increasingly bought by the highest bidder, what about public election funding?
- With fossil fuel companies profiting off of climate change, what about eliminating their public subsidies?
- With more and more working people unable to make ends meet, what about a guaranteed minimum income and health care for all?
- With our economy biased toward private finance and capital, what about policies that support shared wealth in co-ops and land trusts?

While these efforts may not stave off collapse, they can offer some protections and some building blocks for a new system.

We may be tempted to use the idea of the “collapsing society” as a justification for passivity in the face of old feelings of despair—big bad things are happening and there’s nothing we can do about it. Within this frame, it’s easy to numb ourselves, give up trying to play a role, and cling to the survival patterns we learned when we were little.

Let’s reach for a response that’s consistent with the reality of our power. The current system is laboring under built-in contradictions that will cause ever-increasing hardship for ordinary people until the contradictions get addressed. Just as we can think about helping our clients with their distresses and working with them toward re-emergence, we can think about the contradictions in our society and look for levers that will shift them. Assuming that we are not capable of this is settling for old distress.

*Pamela Haines*  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA



SANDRA MCDONALD

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## The Revolutionary Point of View

The “liberal” and “conservative” positions are just two versions of supporting the status quo. They both act for the persistence of the oppression. The viewpoint that is really different from both of them is the revolutionary point of view, which calls for the replacement of the oppressive society, which would mean public ownership of any significant chunk of the means of production.

*Harvey Jackins*  
From “‘Liberal’ Versus ‘Conservative’ or  
‘Intelligent’ Versus ‘Patterned?’”  
on page 127 of *An Unbounded Future*

## A Wonderful Climate Leaders' Workshop

I'm writing about a wonderful workshop—the December 2019 Conference on Climate Change/Climate Justice in the RC Communities, in California, USA, led by Tim Jackins and Diane Shisk. For me it was a huge contradiction [to distress] to spend time with so many RCers who are taking on the climate crisis.

Participating were a hundred or so RCers from all over the world, about half of whom were People of the Global Majority and Native people. Most participants came from the U.S. west coast (California and Seattle). There were a number of people from Mexico and Central and South America who had been at COP25 with Sustaining All Life. Also attending were people from Japan, Canada, and the Netherlands.

Language liberation was prioritized. This was one of my favorite parts. Everything that happened up front (except demonstrations) was interpreted. There were breaks every twenty minutes for one minute of silence and to give attention to those whose first language was not English. This slowed the pace of everything, which I think was wonderful for all of us. Speaking of pace, I noticed that Tim and Diane spoke only in short chunks before calling for a mini-session. Never more than ten minutes of information was given before we got to discharge. Again, this meant everything was slower. But doing this was clearly necessary—after only five minutes of information about the climate, everyone was ready for discharge!

The workshop focused mostly on working on our early hurts. Many years of institutionalized distress recordings and harmful ways of treating each other have left us confused. We've grown used to the distress recordings that we've lived with for our entire lives. In a way we are comfortable with them. We have a frozen belief that the distress is real. In particular, we have been left thinking that we are isolated and alone. Tim asked anyone who feels "odd" to raise their hand. All hands went up. He had us look around and notice that "the distress makes you feel that there's something wrong with you—there's nothing wrong with you."

We all had to make an early decision to give up, go away, and close the door. That was the right decision at the time. But now we need thinking that is more flexible than thinking based on decisions we made when we were two years old. The distress looks and feels just as real as it did back then. We will want to

give up over and over again, but we have to keep returning to it and discharging it. The climate emergency requires as many people as possible having their full flexible intelligence, and that means we have to go after [pursue] the early distress and liberate our minds from it.

We had a mini-session in which we asked our counselor, "Are you on my side? Can I count on you [depend on you] to be on my side—could you decide that about me?"

Diane led a dinner table where she took notes as everyone said what they thought needed to happen in the wide world to end the climate crisis. In another round, the question was what needed to happen in RC. She suggested that we all go home and lead a one-day workshop on climate. Also, if we're not already teaching RC, we need to consider starting—we need to get RC into as many people's hands as possible.

Diane talked about how the United States misuses its influence in the world—for example, by manipulating the Kyoto treaty and the Paris agreement. She suggested that USers, in particular, need to take on the climate crisis.

There were many chances to share with activists—who are doing similar work, doing very different work, and haven't figured out what to do. I got to meet several times with activists who are in a group that I am part of, and we have stayed in touch since the workshop.

I led a fun topic table about the importance of getting activists laughing (so they can discharge some fear) and using games to make that happen. I also got to back [support] someone who led a table about "the joys of getting attacked," which led to work on our early hurts.

Tim said many of us are being run by our patterns in our choices about the climate crisis. Our material [distress] pulls us to "freak out," numb out, tell people what to do, and so on. People need to work enough on their early material that they can find their own clear thinking about the climate crisis.

*Adrie Rose*

Northampton, Massachusetts, USA

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

## Planting Five Hundred Trees in a Catholic Parish

I have been a member of my local Parish Council for about two years. Three months ago, I saw an opportunity to take action on the environment and at the same time help build the Parish community.

I put a notice in the Parish bulletin asking people to join an environment group. Ten people turned up [came], and we started work. Our first project was to plant five hundred trees on the grounds of the Church.

I quickly learned a lot about the environment. For example, Ireland was once so forested that a squirrel could travel from Belfast to Cork (three hundred miles) without touching the ground. However, today forest is only about ten per cent of Ireland's total land surface. This is the second lowest level of any country in Europe.

For this and other reasons we decided that planting trees together was one of the single most important actions we could take to help the environment.

Organising the two-day event involved collaborating with many different people and organisations (religious, political, community, voluntary, and educational). I learned to stand (have a place) with other community leaders.

### THE RESULT

The project exceeded all expectations, both in terms of the number of trees planted and in the level of community engagement.

We had only three months to get organised. It seemed impossible at the beginning, but now five hundred trees have been planted. About two hundred people took

part. There could have been more people—we had to turn some of them away at the end when we ran out of trees.

People clearly had a sense of community while they planted the trees. There is something about digging in the earth and planting something for future generations that draws people together. People were relaxed and talking together in a way that I think is less likely to happen at other kinds of events.

*"Marbropa"*

Northern Ireland

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



CHILE • © STAN EICHNER

## "What a Handy, Concise, and Useful Publication!"

Wow! Have you seen the Sustaining All Life pamphlet *Tools for Climate Organizing*? What a handy, concise, and useful publication! And with creative and wonderful illustrations by Ana Liza (AL) Caballes. Thanks to the team who put it together.

If you haven't seen, read, and *shared* this pamphlet with all the climate activists you know, don't wait any longer!

With love and appreciation,

*Brian Lavendel*

Madison, Wisconsin, USA

## Building the Relationship Is Key

I'm a white female who grew up in the rural U.S. Midwest. I was raised and currently am working class. I've been reaching out to people who disagree with me and am getting more skillful at handling upsets and attacks.

I'm noticing that a certain kind of upset occurs when I and my white working-class family and friends disagree (usually about climate issues and other important issues of the day). These interactions often elicit harsh and lengthy diatribes. The harshness mirrors how this group is being hurt. Though we are all constantly being restimulated by the oppressive society, as U.S. capitalism escalates it needs fewer workers. As a result, many working-class people have been mercilessly pushed into poverty. They are joining others who are targeted for destruction by the society. This causes huge upsets in working-class families and communities. Addiction, incarceration, and suicide are increasing in this population. There is also increased support for nationalism and authoritarianism.

The following quote is from "Rising Morbidity and Mortality in Midlife among White non-Hispanic Americans in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century," by Anne Case (see <https://www.princeton.edu/faculty-research/research/item/rising-morbidity-and-mortality-midlife-among-white-non-hispanic>). *This paper documents a marked increase in the all-cause mortality of middle-aged white non-Hispanic men and women in the United States between 1999 and 2013. This change reversed decades of progress in mortality and was unique to the United States; no other rich country saw a similar turnaround. The midlife mortality reversal was confined to white non-Hispanics; black non-Hispanics and Hispanics at midlife, and those aged 65 and above in every racial and ethnic group, continued to see mortality rates fall. This increase for whites was largely accounted for by increasing death rates from drug and alcohol poisonings, suicide, and chronic liver diseases and cirrhosis. Although all education groups saw increases in mortality from suicide and poisonings, and an overall increase in external cause mortality, those with less education saw the most marked increases. Rising midlife mortality rates of white non-Hispanics were paralleled by increases in midlife morbidity. Self-reported declines in health, mental health, and ability to conduct activities of daily living, and increases in chronic pain and inability to work, as well as clinically measured deteriorations in liver function, all point to growing distress in this population. We comment on potential economic causes and consequences of this deterioration.*

To keep perspective, I have to keep discharging on being attacked and watching beloved family members being attacked. I've figured out that building the relationship is key. Showing how deeply I care about the person is a much-needed contradiction that allows our relationship to grow. Honestly, it's not easy. It's easier with family because we have a long loving history. It's more difficult when I haven't yet built a solid footing with someone.

*Anonymous*  
USA



I think planting trees and other green things is one of the great solutions to climate change. Our industrial world has stripped away so many ancient trees, and unending growth, development, and resource use jeopardize the entire planet.

Here in Central New York (USA) I'm on the Steering Committee of the United Climate Action Network (UCAN). Our goal is to plant 1,000 trees. This spring we will have a tree-planting; we expect to plant 220 trees.

The Oneida Nation are joining us and will lead a sacred ceremony. They will plant a white pine, the "Tree of Peace" for the Haudenosaee Confederacy, commemorating the beginning of 400 years of peace among five warring Native tribes. The ceremony was started by a Native elder—Jake Swamp, Wolf Clan, Mohawk Nation, now deceased—who planted trees around the world as co-director of the Tree of Peace Society. The Oneida Nation also plan to share sacred dancing at the ceremony.

*Phil Rose*  
Cazenovia, New York, USA  
Reprinted from the RC e-mail  
discussion list for leaders of Catholics





## Talking with a Self-Proclaimed Climate Denier

I was in a cafe and randomly started chatting with the two people next to me—a middle-aged, probably owning-class, white couple from New Zealand who were visiting California (USA). We had a nice connection about California—surfing, shark attacks, property values on the beaches in Los Angeles and New Zealand. And then the man suddenly says, “What do you think of Trump?”

After sharing my thoughts (the words “disaster” and “racist” were part of my response) and then listening to him talk about why he supports Trump, which I wasn’t interested in listening to, I changed the subject to climate. And then he says, “Climate change is a hoax.” (What did I get myself into?)

Thankfully, I remembered a direction from a recent RC climate conference and I thought, “Okay, here’s my chance!” I looked at him kindly and directly and said, “Are you serious? Why would you say that? There’s so much data on how bad it is and how humans are the cause!” And then he talked about solar cycles and how we’re just in a hotter solar

cycle, and so on. I listened more but also chimed in with things like, “You know about the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) right?” (“Yes, yes I do”) and, “Well, it’s either a hoax or it isn’t, but if we believe it’s a hoax and it’s not, we’re really in trouble.”

I think the key is that I actually listened to him and stayed engaged and *connected*. Maybe I was lucky that I was fairly well discharged post-conference. I promised I would look into what I could find out about solar cycles (which I still plan to do). At some point his daughter called, and he said to her, “Sorry I can’t talk right now. I’m having a fun conversation.” (Oh, he’s having fun!) And guess what

he said at the end? “I agree with everything you said about climate—and look into solar cycles, too” (“yes, yes, I will”).

That’s when it became clear. Oh, he wants to engage and connect! And he’s doing it by being provocative and looking for a “fight.” Oh yeah! This is one of the ways that guys are allowed to connect with people! I was lucky enough to have had an older brother who would “fight” with me (play? wrestle? steal my fries?), which was mostly him trying to connect and work through some feelings, so it felt familiar and I was able to engage with it more than I expected.

After the 2016 election, I was so discouraged that I avoided these types of conversations. And guess what? I not only survived this one, I also felt more connected after it. And the fact he closed the conversation saying he agreed with everything I had said about climate—an unexpected and sweet surprise ending! And hopefully something moved for him, too, in getting to have that conversation with me.



*Alma Soongi Beck*  
San Francisco, California, USA

### Asking Leaders to Mention the Climate Crisis

I asked the new mayor of Watsonville, California (USA), to mention something about the climate crisis every time he has an opportunity to speak. He agreed right away. I will be sending him suggestions.

We can ask all the leaders around us—on school boards, city councils, boards of directors, planning commissions, and so on—to include something about climate change in every report they make and every speech they prepare. They can include how it’s connected to housing, homelessness, tribal rights, work conditions, education, and so on.

We ourselves can do the same whenever we have an opportunity to speak—whether it is with individuals or in meetings.

*Nancy Faulstich*  
Watsonville, California, USA  
Reprinted from the RC e-mail discussion list  
for leaders in the care of the environment



## Climate Songwriting and Leadership

I recently taught “Climate Songwriting and Leadership” at a music camp that I attend each summer. Like each class at this camp, we met every day for seventy-five minutes for seven days in a row. People could attend on as many or as few days as they liked; there were always many wonderful classes to explore at each time slot of the day.

We started with a few climate basics: (1) It is not too late, but there is no time to waste. (2) To reverse global warming will require each of us and all of us. (3) It helps to break it down into smaller tasks.

I gave each student a two-page list of thirty-eight proven climate solutions (my favorites from the book *Drawdown*).

Then I encouraged them to use brainstorming, listening turns, and research to help them pick a single, tangible goal for the songs they would write. We talked about how the lyrics, rhythm, vocal range, genre, instrumentation, performance venue or medium, and other aspects would grow out of the basic goal.

Let’s say I’m writing a song for six-year-olds. I want to encourage them to plant bamboo in half-barrels on the blacktop near their classroom and cut it down each year and watch it grow back. Bamboo will cool their playground, clean their air, and capture carbon from the atmosphere. (Bamboo is particularly fast at bringing carbon out of the air.) My song for the six-year-olds should use simple clear language and have no sarcasm. It should have a playful chorus in which they use arm gestures or dance moves so they can get up from their desks, enjoy singing together, and use their bodies to help them remember a basic, benign lesson about the carbon cycle. It should use the notes right above middle C because those notes are easiest for six-year-olds to sing without hurting their voices.

On the other hand, if I want people with jackhammers to be proud to tear up the blacktop and install porous paving, a more complex and aggressive polyrhythm in a hip-hop style might be more motivating. Or, if I want to offer the news that “immigration is a climate issue” to white North American working-class Christian people who have been told that climate change is not real and that immigrants are bad, I might be more likely to be

heard and believed if my song tells one person’s story, does not blame or generalize, and sounds in many ways like a song that belongs on a country music radio station.

The following are some things that were challenging about teaching at this music camp:

- People expect to drink a lot of alcohol and play music much of the night as well as during the day, so as the week goes by people have less and less free attention. I went to bed relatively early and did not use alcohol but was often awakened by wonderful outdoor dance parties with live music. My students were increasingly exhausted. I needed to use all my ingenuity—including having them get



KAISLI SYRJÄNEN

up and run around in circles during a brainstorm—to keep blood flow going to their creative minds.

- There is no access to telephone service. I loved being “unplugged” from my cell phone, but this meant I could not call anyone for a mini-session when my distresses got restimulated. I had to either get attention from people not trained in RC—some of whom did a great job—or wake up when my spouse/Area Reference Person crawled into the tent and try to get a session with him. As far as I know, he was the only other RCer among the five hundred campers. This worked well enough for me to keep thinking quite well during the camp, but not well enough for me to enjoy handling the various crises that awaited me when I got back to cell service/work life/extended-family life after camp.

- Most of the people who attend this camp are not there to discuss political and environmental issues. Climate change is scary. Two other people, each of whom has made a whole career of performing and recording original music, had already been recruited to teach songwriting at this camp, whereas I have an unreliable singing voice, don’t play any instruments, and have a busy work life in the medical field. It took courage to even ask if I could teach this new class that I had invented.

The following are some things that were successful or enjoyable about teaching this class:

- I did it!

- Many people who were too scared or too busy elsewhere to take the class were not too scared nor too busy to ask me about the class. They would come up to me in the dinner line and ask how the class was going. If I told them it was a complete delight, they would then quickly unburden themselves of a great deal of hopelessness about climate change and end up talking themselves into taking action in the near future.



- It is traditional at this camp to introduce oneself to other people at meals and ask which classes people are taking and/or teaching. This was a very easy way for me to bring up climate change, a topic that is interesting to me all year but that is often hard for me to start talking about. I could simply answer a (usually standard) question and find myself in an important conversation with a new friend.

- I was pleasantly surprised at how many people immediately understood what I meant if I said, "In my class we are working on how to bypass the amygdala." Lots of people now know that the amygdala is the "fear center" in the brain. They quickly understood that I had ideas about how to convey ideas in songs in such a way as to change minds and inspire action instead of igniting violence or making people turn away. People showed great relief at this.

- Class participants helped each other in many ways. The go-rounds, brainstorming, and games released a lot of initiative.

- One person in my class said, "This process worked for me. I started out with wanting every good thing to happen at once, but then I broke it down. For this one

song I set a goal of getting more ranchers to practice managed grazing. I created a story with lots of sensory information to help the listener connect with the character before the character gives any generalizations or advice. Then my friends added good ideas for the bridge and an amazing guitar solo. I love my song!"

- One person said, "I don't think my song is complete, but I am glad I learned that writing songs can be done with help from a group and not always alone. I learned the importance of listening to each other and of making time to do that."

- One person said, "I came into this class pretty [quite] hopeless about climate change. I don't have a song yet, but now I am hopeful."

- On the second-to-last day I reached out to the two other songwriting teachers. We created an event at which any songwriting-class participant could perform for an audience on the last night of camp. At the performance we showed a variety of styles and instrumentations. The audience was extremely supportive, and some people said that our music moved them deeply.

- I got to combine many things that I care about. I have always loved music and dance, I adore RC, I love learning what is being discovered scientifically about brains and minds (much of which corroborates RC theory), and for the last year or more I have dedicated all my vacations and much of my other "spare time" to climate activism (not only in song form!). This meant that I was "being my whole self" more than usual—a great experience for a mixed-heritage gal!

*"Song Writer"*  
USA

## Neighbors Meet about Climate Change

I held a meeting about climate change with a dozen of my neighbors in the mobile home park where I live. We started with a go-around on what people liked about our environment. Then I gave a presentation on the basics of climate change. I presented charts that I use when I teach climate change in middle and high schools in Santa Cruz County (in California, USA). People paid good attention. We had a mini-session followed by questions and answers. At the end I handed out a list of things that people can do individually and collectively. Several people asked to have another meeting next month, and all thanked me for starting this.

Next time I plan to have "news and goods" about climate change and a report back on people's use of the suggestions for things to do. Then I'd like to address people's feelings more directly. I may show parts of a documentary I helped make of interviews with people in Santa Cruz county who are affected by climate change: <[vimeo.com/134785744](https://vimeo.com/134785744)>. A second documentary deals with soil and climate change: *The Dirt on Climate Change*: <[vimeo.com/265117298](https://vimeo.com/265117298)>. It was also made here in Santa Cruz.

*Roland Saher*  
Santa Cruz, California, USA

## Slavery, Colonization, Genocide—and Climate Change

I would like to initiate a conversation about climate change and its relationship to slavery, colonization, and genocide. How are these atrocities showing up in relation to climate change? The following are some examples that are drawn from my work in agriculture and land use. They include current impacts, projected impacts, and serious impacts caused by efforts to prevent catastrophic climate change.

### CLIMATE CHANGE AND SLAVERY

Biofuel has been promoted as a climate-friendly alternative to fossil fuels. However, some workers who produce it work under conditions of slavery. For example, sugar cane is a source of ethanol for fuel, and many Brazilian sugar cane workers have been held in “slave-like” conditions. (Producing biofuel also leads to deforestation.)

Food production is a major contributor to emissions and is also linked to contemporary atrocities. For example, slavery has been common on shrimp fishing boats



YUKO HIBINO

in Thailand. Also, about two kilos of fossil fuel are used for every kilo of wild-caught shrimp. Slavery is not uncommon in oil palm plantations, especially in Malaysia. (In Southeast Asia peatlands are being destroyed to clear land for oil palm plantations. Peat soils hold over a third of all soil carbon on only 3% of the world’s land, so it is extremely important that they be protected.)

Scientists project that if climate change continues, there will be 200 million additional refugees in 2050; that’s five to ten times more refugees than there are today. Migrants and refugees are prime targets for contemporary slavery, and many more people could potentially become enslaved in the coming decades.

### COLONIZATION AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Indigenous and tribal people’s forests and farmland are being bought up by large companies and converted to crops like oil palm. This is done without their permission. There have been massive human rights violations in Indonesia—people have been murdered, tortured, and forcibly evicted when they refuse to give up their land.

Activists describe the above actions as “land grabs.” There’s increasing concern about “carbon grabs,” a type of land grab in which the goal is to obtain profits from carbon offsets or other climate finance measures. A big future concern in this area is Bioenergy Carbon Capture and Storage (BECCS). BECCS systems, which don’t yet exist on a large scale, burn biomass like wood and turn it into electricity. While doing so they capture the

carbon that would have returned to the atmosphere so it can be buried or otherwise stored for a long time. Many policymakers and others seem to be planning on massive implementation of BECCS so that radical reductions to consumption and fossil fuel use are not required. The problem is that growing all of the wood for BECCS takes a huge amount of land—in some plans, as much land as all of the world’s cropland today! That means an enormous potential for carbon grabs this century.

As the world’s temperature rises, the most livable and farmable parts of the world are Indigenous and tribal people’s lands: Siberia, mid-to high-latitude Canada, Sámi land in Scandinavia, New Zealand, and Patagonia among others. It is easy to imagine a new wave of colonization of these lands by denizens of wealthy and powerful lands who are forced to move by climate change.

### GENOCIDE AND CLIMATE CHANGE

While it may not technically be genocide to doom millions of people to lose their homeland or have to leave it because it has become a desert or is underwater, it is certainly an atrocity.

Island and low-lying nations are already suffering from sea level rise and increasing salt in their drinking water. Many will become uninhabitable this century. As climate change gets worse, many agricultural regions will become too dry, too stormy, or otherwise not able to be farmed anymore. Central America, South Asia, and Africa are particularly at risk. Pakistan is one of many regions in the world

that rely on irrigation water from summer glacier melt. When the glaciers are gone (which is already well underway), these regions will no longer be able to produce food in the ways they have for millennia. Many, many people have already lost their lives, and millions more will lose their lives, if catastrophic climate change is not prevented. These are mostly People of the Global Majority and Indigenous and tribal people. Food security and health are more perilous in many of their communities, infrastructure and government services are often less able to respond to disasters, and extreme weather is more extreme in the tropics where so many people already targeted by racism, colonization, and genocide live.

“Geoengineering” has been proposed to address climate change. Chemicals would be released into the atmosphere to make the Earth cloudier so it reflects away more sunlight to cool it down. This strategy would likely disrupt the monsoon rains that so much of Africa and South Asia depend on to produce crops as well as dry out the huge and populous region of the Sahel.

While these vulnerable regions and their peoples are perhaps not being deliberately targeted for extermination, clearly fossil fuel-based capitalism does not consider them worth changing for.

**WHAT IS POSSIBLE**

On a more hopeful note, mitigating climate change can help to make things right. For example, one of the more powerful climate solutions is to return land rights of forests to Indigenous and tribal people. The science is pretty [quite] clear that when Indigenous and tribal people have rights to their own forests, it greatly reduces the risk of deforestation (and the huge emissions that come with it). About fifteen percent


of global forest land is already held securely by Indigenous and tribal people, and this area is actually growing quite impressively each year.

In RC we have a good understanding of slavery, colonization, and genocide and therefore have a unique and powerful contribution to make. Let’s talk about these atrocities in discussions of climate change, which will also help ensure that efforts to mitigate climate change do not themselves cause additional atrocities.

Avoiding future atrocities has been the main reason I have dedicated my life to preventing catastrophic climate change. I have been able to do this because of the Co-Counseling sessions I have had over the years on historic slavery, colonization, and genocide. Let’s turn the power of our decades of work on these and other atrocities to the issue of climate change and see what impact we can make.

*Eric Toensmeier*  
Holyoke, Massachusetts, USA

New pamphlet!



**Tools for Climate Organizing**

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## Taking Climate Action

At an Allies to Native People's Workshop led by Marcie Rendon (the International Liberation Reference Person for Native Americans), I made a life-changing decision. (I think one of the great gifts of going to RC workshops is that you get enough discharge and perspective to think clearly about life and make important decisions.) I decided to leave one of my jobs and devote the time I would have spent there to working exclusively on climate issues.

Earlier I had given a sermon at my Catholic church on the Pope's encyclical (formal statement) "Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home," which calls on all people to take swift action to care for our planet. When I thought about that, I realized that I am in the perfect position to lead.



THREE CAPES WALK, TASMANIA, AUSTRALIA • LYNDALL KATZ

I've been using the RC commitment against pretense\* to stay focused. I feel "completely incompetent" in these matters, but "I'm the best person available." Discharge of fear is abundant as I (mostly joyfully) implement my decision.

Over the past several years I have done the following:

- I have created an organization of over two hundred people whose work has led to the banning of hydrofracking (deep-well gas drilling) in the state of New York, USA.

- I have joined and am now on the board of directors of a local renewable energy education program that reaches hundreds of youth and adults every year.

- I have joined and taken leadership in a regional political action organization of several hundred people that in the last election helped to defeat a strong climate change denier and elect a strong environmental candidate.

- I have joined and am leading in a regional climate change action group, United Climate Action Network (UCAN).

- I'm on my local solar committee and determining how to integrate large solar arrays into our rural landscape and farming community.

- I've been appointed to our U.S. congress representative's Environmental Advisory Committee.

My goal is to help create a regional organization of several thousand people who are addressing the climate emergency in our part of the world.

I am making the road as I go and need lots of discharge to stay focused and move ahead. For example, I work on keeping my sense of humor when I make mistakes ("Oops, there I go again").

My personal goal is to make a lot of friends along the way and stay closely connected to my "gang."

*Phil Rose*

Cazenovia, New York, USA

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\* "I'm obviously completely incompetent and completely inadequate to handle the challenges which reality places before me. However (fortunately or unfortunately), I happen to be the best person available."



## Responding to the Climate Emergency

Tim Jackins’s initiative on climate change [see page 3 of the April 2019 *Present Time* and <www.rc.org/publication/present\_time/pt195/pt195\_003\_tj>] thoughtfully and clearly states the situation and how distresses and oppression interfere with our ability to solve the crisis.

My Protestant, owning- and middle-class patterns of “don’t be loud, don’t draw attention to yourself” have kept me quiet. I have been working on these old patterns, so they don’t get confused with my response to the climate emergency. It is a real emergency. I think Greta Thunberg, the Swedish climate leader, said it best: “Our house is on fire.” When the house is on fire, it is urgent, it is an emergency. It is not time to be quiet, it is not time to silently stand around. It is time to act.

The RC direction of “decide, act, discharge” has been useful for me. It has allowed me to decide and act now although I may only be able to see the next step or two. Having taken that step or two, discharge helps me decide to act again.

*Bill Darnell*

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



UTAH, USA • KIRSTEN JOHNSON

## ||||||| The Ripple Effects Go Beyond What We Know |||||||

I participated in a four-week workshop through Project Drawdown New York City (USA). There were eighteen of us in the group. The book, *Project Drawdown*, edited by Paul Hawken, informed us about solutions for reversing global warming. We each created our own action plan based on one of the solutions.

At our final class I announced an upcoming Sustaining All Life (SAL) workshop. Then a group member stood up and talked about what an amazing organization SAL is! Unknown to me, she had been to two SAL events in New York City during the United Nations Summit

Climate Week in September 2019. She talked about how SAL creates space for all types of people, the listening and empathy we engage in, and our understanding of oppression. She pointed out SAL’s uniqueness compared to other climate organizations. She spoke enthusiastically and at length. It was a tribute to all that we collectively accomplished during the United Nations Summit Climate Week and the decades of work building up to it. In the end, four people from the Project Drawdown workshop came to the SAL workshop and had positive experiences there.

This moment was a much-needed reminder that as with all ecosystems, it is not always apparent and visible how one living organism or colony can and does impact another. But we are all interconnected, and the ripple effects of SAL’s human bonds and caring go far beyond what we know or can imagine.

With hope,

*Rachel Landsberg*  
New York City, New York, USA

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

## Attending a Climate Change Workshop via Satellite

I joined a workshop on climate change via satellite. It was my first International RC workshop. It was led by Tim Jackins and Diane Shisk. It was quite an experience. I learnt so much.

My heels are on fire about human impact on the planet. It is clear we need to do something and do it *now!* Diane pointed out that each country and region can find its particular approach to the climate emergency. Nigeria's approach will be different from that of the world's large industrial economies.

Thank you, RC, for the experience.

*Ugochukwu Joseph*  
Abuja, Nigeria

## Reflections on War

The oppressive society is dividing us, and war thrives in such a situation. It follows that if humanity bonded together, there would likely be no more wars. Re-evaluation Counseling creates such a coming and working together in many ways, including with programs such as a recent Healing from War and Genocide Workshop.

Humanity stands divided by racism, sexism, age-related divisions, anti-Jewish oppression, ethnicism, and language oppression, among others. The world today is saddled with more wars than ever. The situation has led to increased poverty, inequality, limited resources, and this, in turn, has left us more confused about the nature of humans. And why not?! Confronted with the massive destruction, it certainly doesn't look like humans are creative and smart.

Re-evaluation Counseling teaches us that people are inherently good, cooperative, and zestful—but we are inundated with tales of and recordings from war, torture, genocide, and the like.

Ultimately, war affects everything and everybody. At the workshop we were reminded that war is not necessarily the direct cause of every distress we have. However, every distress we have finds support in war and war stories.

*Onii Nwangwu-Stevenson*  
Lagos, Nigeria

## Interactive Art at a Listening Project

The Sustaining All Life art team at the Climate Summit [the United Nations Climate Action Summit in September 2019 in New York City, USA] found interactive art to be a wonderful way to do a listening project. We had a fabric banner in many shades of blue that read "Water Is Life." We had paper "bubbles" that could be pinned to the banner. We asked people to write or draw on the bubbles a memory of water, a special body of water, or their hopes for water on earth. People got a nice break from presentations and meetings and a chance to express themselves. The bubbles eventually filled the banner with thoughts about beloved places from all over the world. We were also able to strike up [begin] conversations, listen to people's thoughts, and tell people about Sustaining All Life forums and workshops.

Working with other Co-Counselors was a wonderful contradiction to artists' isolation. It was a great collaboration, from initial brainstorming (what are we going to make?) to implementation (how can we get it to hang on the wall?). It had to be easy to understand, easy to move, and easy to set up. When and where to set it up evolved as we moved through the week. We had to keep discharging and problem solving. We got to think about what worked and what didn't and how we might do future projects.

The experience confirms for me the central role of artists in movement building. It is a powerful way to lead—with color, creativity, and yes, *fun*. I'm looking forward to doing it again!

*Eurhi Jones*  
Bala Cynwyd, Pennsylvania, USA  
Reprinted from the RC e-mail  
discussion list for leaders of artists

## Listen to the Voices of Iranian People

It's important to listen to the voices of Iranian people.

In the days since Trump ordered the assassination of a leading Iranian government official, General Soleimani, almost everything I have read on the topic in the U.S. media has been written from a U.S. perspective.

Whether the argument is in favor of or against Trump's act of war, there is a shared assumption that the U.S. government and military have a right to be in the Middle East, determining whether people live or die. The only issue is how

governments and militaries will respond among themselves to the most recent provocations.

We rarely see any context. We rarely see the scope of the U.S. role and how it affects the lives of real people in Iran. We don't see how they have suffered from U.S. aggression—from the 1953 coup d'état to the recent abandonment of the nuclear treaty and the crippling economic blockade enforced by the United States.

The reality is that countless Iranian lives have been upended, made excruciatingly more difficult,

or been completely destroyed by what our country, the United States, has done.

The U.S. government and military have acted lawlessly in the Middle East and dehumanized an entire people to justify their actions.

*Azi Khalili*

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

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

## Movements and Policies

Eric Braxton has a great article in the April 2019 *Present Time* on movement building and policies. [See "Climate Change, Capitalism, Movement Building, and RC" on page 26, or go to <[www.rc.org/publication/present\\_time/pt195/pt195\\_026\\_eb](http://www.rc.org/publication/present_time/pt195/pt195_026_eb)>.] He points out that policy changes, without the strength of a movement behind them, don't move things forward very well.

That made me think about how good policies can be changed or removed when a new government comes into power. For example, Australia had some good agricultural climate-change-mitigation policies that were removed when a conservative government was elected.

Seeing good policies reversed has been hard for me. Eric's article was a great reminder that even good policies are not much good without a mass movement behind them.

*Eric Toensmeier*

*Holyoke, Massachusetts, USA*

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



SCHIERMONNIKOOG, THE NETHERLANDS • ROB VENDERBOS

## Anti-Semitism in the Current Period

Incidents of anti-Semitism are increasing. Individual Jews and Jewish communities are being targeted with violence. Anti-Semitism is also playing a more visible political role in many places around the world.

A parallel development is the growing global right and the role anti-Semitism plays in that growth. Right-wing governments are in power in Russia, Turkey, India, Israel, Hungary, Poland, the United States, and now Great Britain.

Most recently, Jeremy Corbyn and the English Labor Party were defeated by Boris Johnson and the Conservative Party in a national election. Corbyn and the Labor Party were accused of anti-Semitism, and this seems to have played a significant role in the Conservative Party's victory. It's important to note that Corbyn's politics differ significantly from Boris Johnson's. Corbyn identifies as a Democratic Socialist.

I was in England a week before the British election. When I got off the plane I was almost immediately confronted by newspaper headlines showing a large photo of England's chief orthodox rabbi attacking Corbyn for anti-Semitism and for "making Britain unsafe for Jews."

Some Corbyn supporters are saying that the accusations were intended to demonize Corbyn and Labor in order to defeat them and their more radical policies. At the same time, some Corbyn supporters thought there actually was a problem with anti-Semitism in the Labor Party, although nothing like the anti-Semitism that has existed historically in the Conservative Party.

In the end, the allegations of anti-Semitism had a big effect on both Jews and Gentiles and played a role in the election. The attacks on Corbyn have also circulated in Jewish circles in the United States, and the British election is being



used to discourage people from supporting U.S. presidential candidates Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders and more radical solutions to today's problems.

There has been a big move toward the right in regard to Jewish and Israel-related issues. The Trump administration moved the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, pulled out of the Iran nuclear deal, and recognized Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights. President Trump also issued an executive order targeting anti-Semitic and anti-Israel speech on college campuses. The order is ambiguous as to whether Jews are a distinct nationality or a "minority race." (It's important to note that Jews are *not* a race.)

All the above has been done in the name of being pro-Israel and pro-Jewish. But instead of actually supporting Israel, these policies, which are also supported by right-wing leaders in Israel, have led to greater isolation for Israel. They have also increased the racist targeting of Palestinians and brought

more division on college campuses in discussions about the Israel/Palestinian conflict. The policies strengthen Israel's role as oppressor and middle agent and make it more visible. They also divert attention away from racism, global economic disparities, and climate change. We can remember that anti-Semitism is always used to distract attention from a country's major problems.

It needs to be said that Israel has become a country dominated by the right. In recent years Israel has also been supported by right-wing populist governments around the world.

There are hopeful developments. For example, in Israel there is the growing strength of the Arab List, a political alliance of the main Arab-majority political parties. In the United States, progressives increasingly understand that anti-Semitism needs to be faced and openly addressed.

There is much here to face and work on. Discharge, discharge, discharge! What early distresses do we need to face? What makes them hard to face? What are the challenges ahead of us? How do we challenge our isolation from each other during these difficult times? How do we communicate what we know from RC? We have much information, including in the pamphlet *Anti-Semitism: Why Is It Everyone's Concern?* about the historical and present role of anti-Semitism. What stands need to be taken in the wide world by Jews and allies?

*Diane Drezel Balseer*

Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts, USA

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

## Addressing Climate Change and Racism Together

As we urge Co-Counselors to take action to stop climate change, some are likely to feel that this means reducing our commitment to ending racism. I think we must all work together to see that ending racism remains front and center. In fact, I don't think we have a chance of ending the threat of climate change without addressing racism directly. The two are entwined and closely related.

People of the Global Majority around the world, including in the United States, are already experiencing more of the effects of climate change and will continue to be the hardest hit by it.

Racism divides us, making it difficult to recognize that we are in this together and share a common worldwide interest in stopping climate change. Thus it keeps us from building a movement strong and unified enough to stop it.

In the United States racism is used to manipulate voters into supporting politicians who deny the existence of climate change and oppose taking action to stop it.

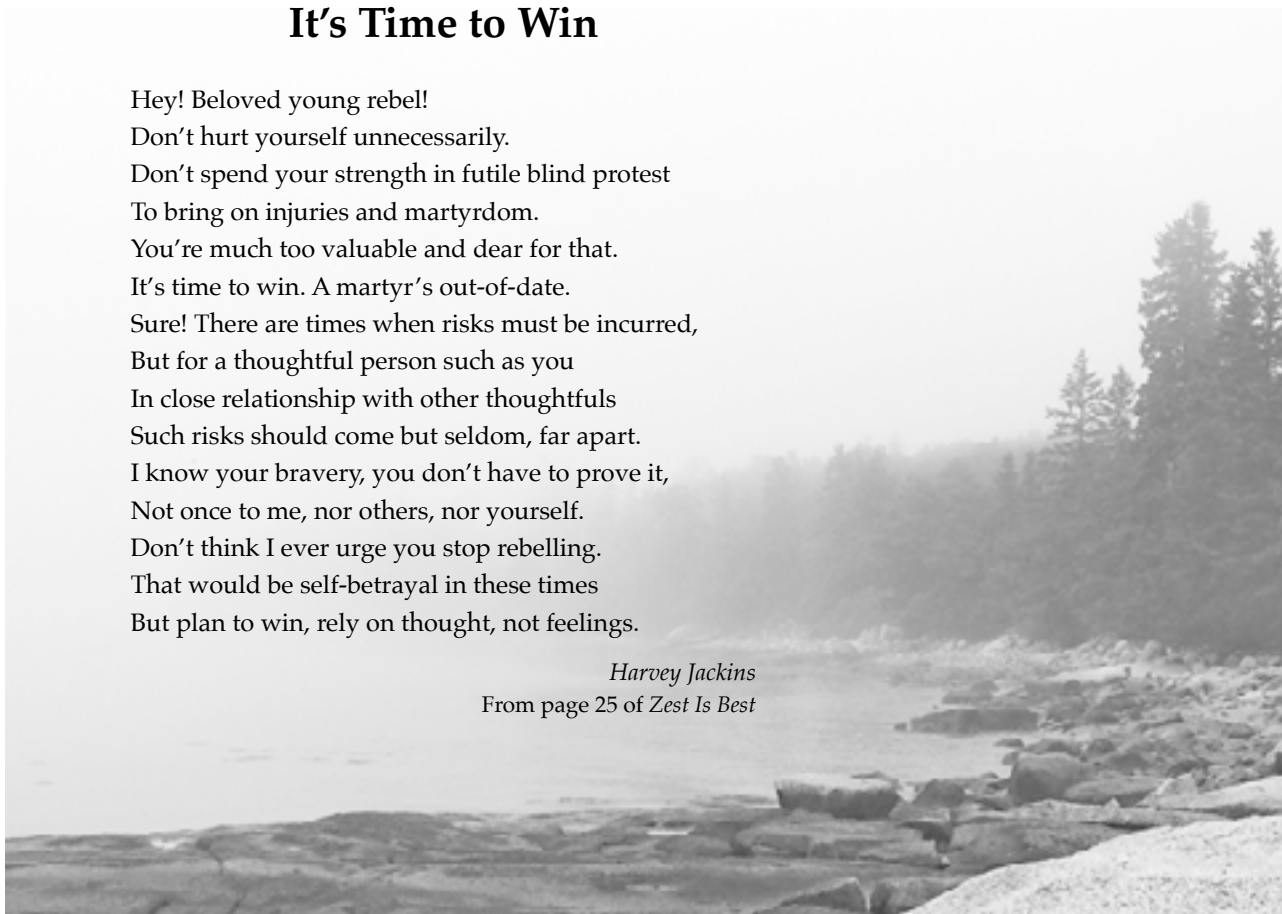
Climate change and racism must be addressed together, and we need to become skilled in communicating clearly how connected they are.

*Russ Vernon-Jones*  
Amherst, Massachusetts, USA  
Reprinted from the RC e-mail discussion  
list for Regional Reference Persons

### It's Time to Win

Hey! Beloved young rebel!  
Don't hurt yourself unnecessarily.  
Don't spend your strength in futile blind protest  
To bring on injuries and martyrdom.  
You're much too valuable and dear for that.  
It's time to win. A martyr's out-of-date.  
Sure! There are times when risks must be incurred,  
But for a thoughtful person such as you  
In close relationship with other thoughtfals  
Such risks should come but seldom, far apart.  
I know your bravery, you don't have to prove it,  
Not once to me, nor others, nor yourself.  
Don't think I ever urge you stop rebelling.  
That would be self-betrayal in these times  
But plan to win, rely on thought, not feelings.

*Harvey Jackins*  
From page 25 of *Zest Is Best*



MAINE, USA • SUE EDWARDS



## A Culture Shift on the Climate?

What will it take to build greater consensus on the urgent need to act on the climate emergency? I've been thinking about what we know in counseling about the power of relationships and wanted to share this thought.

The United States seems so bitterly divided. How can we move forward together? A friend and I were talking about culture shifts, and he mentioned the example of Gay marriage, and how supportive laws ended up passing in state houses across the country and sailing through the court system faster than anyone would have believed possible. The critical ingredient, he reflected, was that by this time everyone, even in the most conservative context, knew and loved someone who was Gay.

That made me think of youth climate activism, and the goal of the Sunrise Movement—for one example—to get hundreds of thousands more young people active in the next big thing, a climate strike on Earth Day. I've seen the power of young people's passion about the earth, to shape their families' practices and require grown-ups to rethink their priorities. I've seen the hunger of young people for a way to express their fears about the climate crisis. What can we do to support youth movements like Sunrise to help us reach a point where everyone, even in the most conservative context, knows and loves a young person who is deeply concerned about the future of the planet and is in motion to make a change?

This thought is helping me focus my climate energy. I'm listening regularly to several activists in Sunrise, teaching them RC, and helping keep them centered in their work and their lives. I'm letting the youth in my circles (and their parents) know about these opportunities for activism. I'm supporting the movement financially. I'm encouraging everyone I know to do any and all of the same.

*Pamela Haines*

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA  
Reprinted from the RC e-mail  
discussion list for USA political issues



KATIE KAUFFMAN

## A Big Win

We had a big win: "Fracking is finished in the United Kingdom thanks to the power of public protest." (See the *Guardian* article <[https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/nov/05/fracking-uk-protest-gas?CMP=tw\\_t\\_a-environment\\_b-gdneco](https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/nov/05/fracking-uk-protest-gas?CMP=tw_t_a-environment_b-gdneco)>.) There has been long and hard-fought grassroots resistance to this unnecessary, damaging, new fossil fuel industry. I am proud of the courage, love, and determination of all those who have taken part. It is encouraging to see that when we commit to working together, we sometimes have a big win.

Many RCers came from across the country to Extinction Rebellion's October protests in London. We conducted listening circles and short workshops. People who came to our events seemed hungry for what we were offering, quickly recognising it was needed and useful. The fact that we RCers had long-term relationships and could rely on each other meant that the organising was relatively easy and enjoyable.

We have a big job to do. It is so good to have RC and each other.

*"S.M."*  
England

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



## Every Human a Potential Ally



*From a talk by Diane Shisk at an RC Community Building Workshop in England, February 2020*

We are more and more fully facing that we are in a climate emergency. That's great. But what do we do now? Yikes!

### THESE ARE THINGS WE KNOW

We know how to apply our minds to a problem. We don't wait for somebody else to solve problems or tell us what to do. We think together. We pool our collective intelligence and keep thinking about what to do. We stay in good touch with an ever-larger group of people who are thinking and taking action and share our thoughts about what we think makes sense.

We have already developed a climate emergency draft program for the RC Communities (see <[www.rc.org/climatechangedraft](http://www.rc.org/climatechangedraft)>). It's on target. We know what steps need to be taken, and groups of us are putting that into practice where we live.

We know we have to keep having big sessions on the early distresses that get restimulated as we work at the edge of what we can do. We've pushed ourselves and done what we have figured out.

### WE NEED TO PUSH FURTHER

We need to push further. We need to keep building our Communities so that our minds have more and more resource.

We want to get our ideas out into the world. We want to make our Communities work well for a wide diversity of people.

We need a huge movement, one with many people, including

Indigenous people and people on the frontlines of climate change. We need the working class. The working class has the power to shut down industry—we need that power with us, and we don't yet have it.

Tim Jackins recently led a small workshop at which we looked at the intersection of capitalism, the collapsing society, and the climate crisis. We have to solve the climate crisis, but we don't want to shore up [strengthen] capitalism in the process. Instead, we can use the climate emergency to expose how capitalism works and the damage it causes. Some of where he pushed us was on where we have limited our use of RC, especially in reaching for people who don't easily agree with us.

### WE NEED EVERYBODY

We know we need a movement to make such a big change. We know we need a lot of people with us—and we need people who are not yet with us. It's time to use all we know about reaching people. In general, we are still letting our fears and timidities—about people rejecting us, or not liking us, or criticizing us, or fighting with us—limit the people we reach out to. We are too often staying away from people who are difficult for us—and we need some of those people.

In the long run [eventually] we need everybody. We need to remember that everybody has a mind and that everybody can think about the climate emergency to the extent that they aren't lost in a lifetime of distresses—which to some extent we still are, too. But

we have RC theory and practice to free our minds.

I don't think it is the best strategy, in the limited time we have, to reach for everyone. But we need to keep in mind our long-term goal of having everyone with us. Otherwise we run the risk of narrowing our contacts and writing off [dismissing] many potential allies—which I think would be a big mistake.

Tim is pushing us to look at every single human as our potential ally in this work and to communicate to them that we are thinking about their interests, not just our own, and that we want to know what they think. We need to listen to them and communicate that we want them with us.

Early powerlessness, defeats, and struggles with relationships can make us stay away from some people, or we might try to connect a few times and then give up and go away. We can forget that it might take many, many repetitions of "I like you" or "What do you think?" or "Could you help me with this?" before someone can feel we are thinking about them and can open up to communicating with us. We need to set aside any patterns of arrogance that tell us we are right and that we know what to do and they don't. It's not possible to reach and bring people in with that approach. We can remember how hard life is on people. We can remember that everyone has done their best.

In our work, including our work on the climate emergency, we try to

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get people's agreement on rational policies. By rational policy we mean one that works well for everyone. If two people cannot agree on a rational policy, it must mean that one or both of them are caught in distress and not fully present in the way we know is possible or that there is a lack of information.

People have had to construct a "public person" that protects who they really are from the harm and danger they feel. They don't often show us the hurt individual inside. They interact with us from their "public person"—but we know that's not who they really are, and that's not who we are trying to reach. We are trying to reach

past that. We need to reach for the human instead of only engaging with the shell that people put up to function in the world. These understandings are so basic for us. It's important not to forget them in any panic about the climate emergency. We can discharge all we need to in order to reach for each human.

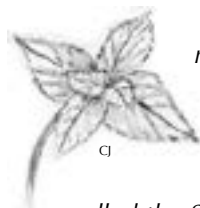
Think about how scared we still are, how much danger we feel from things out there in the world—even with all the discharge we have done—and how easy it's been to give up on people.

Tim gave us homework—talk to somebody new every day about

climate change. Practice reaching for people. Practice showing ourselves and who we really are. Practice reaching past their "public person" to the real person—and discharge about it!

For me, all the above is connected with the U.S. presidential election. We need a president who will act on the climate emergency. In order for that to happen, we don't need everybody, but we need to reach a larger percentage of people than we already have. I plan to keep reaching past people's public construct to the human inside. I am excited about the possibilities.

## "Sound Bites" on the Climate Crisis



*Starting in 2019 I was asked by a local radio station, KRSM 98.9 FM, if I would be willing to record one-minute sound bites for the station to air. I think I am one of five other Native people and people of color who do what is called the Southside 60. I have chosen to use my minute to talk about the climate crisis and hold out action and hope for people. Here are two of the "sound bites." I would encourage everyone to search out opportunities like this to make our viewpoint heard.*

This is Marcie Rendon, and this is my Southside 60:

The earth that has sustained human life is in a period of rapid change. As humans, and caretakers of the earth, we are in a place and time in history where our compassion, kindness, and flexible thinking will be required more and more to meet the challenges of a warming earth. Each human has the capacity to think well of all other humans, to think well of all life on earth. We have the capacity to think flexibly in each and every new situation. And each situation is a new and different moment, a new and different situation. We have a responsibility, I think, to grow ourselves into the people we were meant to be. To be more kind, more compassionate. To use our thinking for the good of all life that exists. We can do this by tapping into our own goodness without fear or shame. We can do this by deciding to take leadership to see that

everything goes well for everyone around us. It sounds like a big task, but when taken one step, one moment at a time, it is doable and will develop the capacity to sustain human life over the long term.

This is Marcie Rendon, and this is my Southside 60:

We are all born with a deep excitement about life, with big dreams and hopes for what we might accomplish. Life has a tendency to wear us down. Some of us give up on those hopes and dreams but they are never gone, they are just covered with layers of dust—the dust of oppression, the dust of abuse, the dust of addictions, the dust of too many hurts that it seems impossible to get rid of. While it may seem impossible, it is completely possible to dust off those hopes and dreams and live them to fruition. This coming time of climate change is going to require more and more of us to decide, to actively decide, to move beyond the hurts and oppression we've had to live with to a more powerful place of deciding to fulfill our birthright to live those big dreams and hopes. Each of us is capable of deciding to live well and to see that the lives of those around us can go a bit better. If enough people in a community make the decision to live well, with a caring attitude toward everyone else, everything, even the coming climate change hardships, will go better for everyone.

*Marcie Rendon  
Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA*

## Language Liberation in Oregon, USA

I am a woman of Latin American heritage who was born and raised in the United States of America. For most of my life I have been working through many layers of language liberation and oppression.

### MY STORY

My parents' first language was Spanish. My mom was the first generation born in the United States. Both her parents came to the United States from Mexico as young adults, fleeing the devastation after the Mexican revolution. My father grew up in Puerto Rico and migrated to the United States as a young adult. I was born in the 1960s in Detroit, Michigan, USA.

My parents made a decision that many U.S. immigrants and first-generation people make, which was to make their home an English-speaking home and not teach their children Spanish. They wanted to help us assimilate into the dominant English-speaking culture of the United States. Doing this meant that my sisters and I wouldn't have accents or be targeted by language oppression in the way that my father was. It also meant that I couldn't speak with my beloved grandparents who spoke minimal English. I spoke minimal Spanish, just enough to answer the phone when they called or ask for some milk or juice.

In spite of the language barriers I loved spending time with my *abuelos* (grandparents), and we used a mixture of our limited second lan-

guage skills and a lot of pantomime to communicate. When I got to high school, I made a decision to reclaim Spanish so I could write letters to my abuela, who lived in Michigan



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(USA). My beloved abuela died while I was in high school.

I kept learning Spanish, eventually majoring in it in college. This was a big step and one that changed my life in many ways. Being in college opened the doors to much of my heritage and history. It connected me with information about the history of Latin America, colonization, and my people. It allowed me to be connected and have relationships with so many more people, my people.

It's also true that Spanish is a language of colonization and was imposed on some of my people. I continue to discharge on my Native heritage and face what has been lost through the imposition of Spanish in both Mexico and Puerto Rico.

I had a chance to study in Spain for a summer while in college—yet

another layer of learning about some of my roots. Another step in my language journey was receiving a fellowship to work in Costa Rica for a year, where I got to push my Spanish language skills forward even further. I got my first taste of a powerful RC direction from my sister Nanci, who introduced me to RC around that time. We were in the Miami airport waiting for my flight to Costa Rica. I was scared of not knowing enough Spanish, making mistakes, and looking stupid in a professional setting. I remember sitting with my sister as she gave me the direction, "I love making mistakes," in a delighted tone of voice.

I remember repeating it over and over, both at the airport and that entire year.

### LANGUAGE LIBERATION IN OUR RC COMMUNITY

I've shared my story because I think it is important to understand why I would want my RC Community to be more accessible to Spanish-speaking people and why there needs to be an active language liberation team in Oregon (USA). Spanish is Oregon's most spoken language next to English, with roughly nine percent of our state speaking Spanish in the home.

Our RC Community (in Portland, Oregon), like many around the United States, has been pretty [quite] white and exclusively English speaking. Also, the Latinos/as in our RC Community have all been fluent English speakers.

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## LIBERATION

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Most of the Latinos/as in our Region are bilingual in both English and Spanish, but many do not wish to participate on an interpretation team for reasons that are complex and unique to each person's experience. It is important not to assume that because a person's first language is Spanish, and they are bilingual, they want to interpret or are good at it. Many people whose first language is Spanish carry lots of hurts around speaking and interpreting Spanish as a direct result of racism and language oppression. The job also requires a level of fluency, confidence, and attention that isn't for everyone.

My husband is a Mexican immigrant who speaks Spanish. He is learning English and is getting closer to being fluent. I taught him RC one-on-one for several years. Eventually we found our way to a fundamentals class. Because the class was taught in English, I interpreted for him. During the class we used practices that are used by RC worldwide, such as twenty minutes

of talk and then one minute of attention and silence.

### *Building our Spanish-speaking community*

Our fundamentals class continued as a mixed fundamentals and ongoing class, and we started to build our Spanish-speaking community within the RC Community. We teach our Spanish-speaking friends RC and invite some of them to the bilingual ongoing and fundamentals class. Our class is now primarily Latino/a, and fully bilingual. We have two to three interpreters who rotate that job throughout the class.

When it was time for our 2015 Area workshop, our Area Reference Person fully supported having it be bilingual. I organized the other Spanish-speaking Co-Counselors (who are white) to interpret. There were four of us. It was a success and a "first" for our Area. The two newer Spanish-speaking Co-Counselors attended and loved their first RC workshop, one that was fully accessible to them.

### *What has worked best*

We have found it works best to have "up-front" interpretation. This has been agreed to and supported by our Area Reference Person. Up-front interpretation slows down the rhythm of the workshop and allows everyone time to absorb the information and be aware of any feelings that come up. Workshop leaders and participants agree that the slower pace allows them time to think and process, but it does cut down on the amount of content a leader can communicate. Our interpreter team is also able to do whisper interpretation (the interpreter whispers while the leader is speaking).

The interpreter team meets before a workshop along with the Spanish-speaking Co-Counselors who need interpretation. This has helped the team and the Spanish-speaking Co-Counselors be connected, get closer, and build our relationships, and it helps make the workshops a more welcoming space for the Spanish speakers. It's also an opportunity to share some language liberation theory, talk through our plan for the workshop, and discharge together.

Our interpreter team of eight people now functions state-wide. Whenever possible, we use technology, primarily Google "hangouts," to enable interpreters who don't live in the Portland area to participate in our meetings.

We always evaluate a workshop after it is over. We gather feedback from everyone on the team and from the Spanish-speaking Co-Counselors via e-mail and a Google document. We ask what went well and what we could improve. These evaluations, especially in the first few years when we were all new and learning this from zero, have helped us figure out how to make this work go well.

I have to say, I am now quite comfortable making mistakes of all kinds, including mistakes speaking Spanish.

### *An RC Spanish-English glossary*

One of the interpreters comes from an RC Community in California (USA) that has had longer and deeper language liberation experience. She knew about an RC Spanish-English glossary and got us a copy. The glossary has been helpful because most members of our team are not native Spanish speakers. We continue to add to and enrich the glossary as we increase our language skills and knowl-



ELBA ISLAND, ITALY • HOLLY JORGENSEN





MAINE, USA • PAM ROBY

edge. We have created templates in Spanish for workshop agendas, job lists, and so on. All these tools and resources are available in a Google folder that is accessible to the interpreters and all Oregon RC leaders. We want these tools and resources to be readily accessible to any RC leader in our state and not just reside in my head or in the heads of the interpreters. I hope this will make it easier for others to step into my role of language liberation leader in the future. One of my goals in writing this article has been to share these resources so that all RC Communities know about what we've learned. Area Reference Persons are welcome to contact me for access to these tools and resources: ritaj65@yahoo.com.

#### *A support team*

Another vital part of this work is having support. I have had an organizer. Also, at each workshop there is a support team for interpreters and another for the Spanish speakers. As we've deepened the work, our interpreter support team has become a treasured part of it. It is a good contradiction [to distress] that we don't do this on

our own [alone]. We have seasoned members who enjoy being on the team and have excellent attention. Knowing we have support team members who "know the ropes" [are experienced] and know how interpretation works has made each workshop go better.

#### *RC literature*

A recent *Present Time* article encouraged Co-Counselors to share how RC literature supports their Co-Counseling and re-emergence. For me, RC literature has been fundamental. I am grateful that there are excellent booklets and articles about interpreting, and I have used and shared them with the team. The literature and the experienced interpreters' knowledge has guided us every step of the way. Articles by Xabi Odriozola, International Commonality Reference Person for Languages and Interpreting, have been essential for learning about language liberation.

Before every workshop that is interpreted, the organizer sends an e-mail to all participants with links to two articles: one on language liberation for Native English speak-

ers and the other on the "minute of silence." Everyone attending such workshops needs to be thinking about language liberation and oppression. The *Heritage* journals [journals about Native liberation] have also been useful. From them I have learned more about the intersection of language liberation and Native liberation and about discharging on the loss of language and on assimilation and genocide.

#### *Challenges*

I would not want to gloss over the difficulties and challenges. One is that we do not always have enough resource to support language liberation in places where it is needed. For example, the two active Spanish speakers are men, and our interpreters are primarily female. This means that men's liberation support groups and workshops aren't interpreted most of the time. Because the men have some knowledge of English, leaders have used the one minute of attention every twenty minutes for the Spanish speakers, and minute of silence, to help these events go better.

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## LIBERATION

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Another difficulty arose when white English-speaking Co-Counselors formed a monthly support group to discharge on learning Spanish. This happened without consulting me and at the same time when I was struggling to get the support I needed to organize and lead language liberation. Our Spanish-speaking Co-Counselors (who are working class and learning English) were not getting RC Community support to help them discharge on learning English. It wouldn't have occurred to them to even ask for it. The resource devoted to white Co-Counselors learning Spanish was restimulating for me and other Latinos/as. Their group dissolved after I explained that we needed to prioritize resource for Spanish speakers and language liberation.



While it is important that English speakers learn other languages and use sessions to discharge on it, I do not believe it makes sense to invest the RC Community's resource in that learning. I think we should focus our Community resource on People of the Global Majority, particularly working-class people.

Overall, my Community and Region have embraced this focus with support and love.

### INTERSECTION WITH OTHER RC GOALS

Language liberation intersects with and supports the RC goals of

stopping climate change, eliminating racism, and supporting Native leadership. In the Americas people of the Global South are the most impacted by climate change. Many Global South leaders are fighting to protect the environment. Some people are migrating northward due to the impacts of climate change (among other reasons). RC Communities in the United States need to be thinking about how to be more accessible and welcoming to migrants, many of whom are Native. Language liberation work as well as work on racism, genocide, and Native liberation are essential for ensuring that all people have access to the vital healing tool and resource of RC for liberation.

*Rita Jimenez*  
Portland, Oregon, USA



EXTINCTION REBELLION (XR) OCCUPATION OF WATERLOO BRIDGE, UNITED KINGDOM • MARY THOMPSON

## Remember to Read Existing Issues of RC Journals!

Please give serious consideration to reading, re-reading, and promoting our already-published journals. These publications contain long-term reference material.

In Tim Jackins's words, "We have produced with great effort a marvelous collection of theoretical and practical writing. How can we see that RCers read all the published RC literature? How can we promote and sell the existing literature about our constituencies, to all and sundry, far and wide?"

"The journals tend to be treated like magazines. Sales decline steadily for the most recent 'number' of a journal and fade to almost nothing for superseded 'numbers,' even though the superseded journals are full of excellent articles."

*Heritage* No. 4 is an example of an excellent journal that should continue to be circulated and read again and again. It includes a large and wonderful collection of interviews of Native people about their lives—stories with experiences and insights that will never go out-of-date. The "counseling on genocide" section will help everyone be better counselors for people who have the related distresses. And now, more than ever, we urgently need Native people's

clarity about living on planet Earth and preserving the environment.

**Please consider promoting, ordering, reading, and re-reading *Heritage* No. 4.**



\$3.00, plus postage and handling

Ordering information on page 107 and at <[www.rationalisland.com](http://www.rationalisland.com)>



COP25, MADRID, SPAIN • ROB VENDERBOS

## Allies to Muslims

In September 2019, I led a weekend workshop in my Region for allies to Muslims. Here I share some of what we did in hopes that you will decide, act, and discharge on the topic.

### GOODNESS AND CONNECTION

As allies, we must notice our goodness. Feeling bad can stop us before we even get started. In Harvey Jackins's book *The Human Side of Human Beings*, there's a drawing (on page 60) of a brain that has had many hurts installed on it (and we can assume that many of the hurts are from having been targeted by oppression). Ninety percent of it is filled with junk, represented as arrows going in all directions. The caption reads, "The successful adult by today's standards: 90% inhibited, 10% still functioning." We hung a poster of the drawing on the wall to remind us that it's not our fault that sometimes we get stuck. We get to feel proud that we're taking responsibility for it.

We did long mini-sessions and moved around singing songs so that we could tell we were connected. People discharged on noticing their relationships with each other. We have to notice our connections to take on ally work.

### DOING IT FOR US

We're not trying to think about others for them. We get to do it for us: to push our minds, to end our separation, and to make our lives richer. We don't need to "save" or "help" others. We need to end the oppression of others because it ruins our lives, too. We may need to discharge to understand this.

### ANTI-MUSLIM OPPRESSION

Anti-Muslim oppression is a global crisis. It's not new, but after September 11, 2001, it increased. Colonial and imperialist powers have long had interests in the lands of Muslim peoples and have justified stealing from them by creating lies about them. Today, the oppression is so bad that just being Muslim can make you a suspect of the state and put you under surveillance. The climate crisis is disproportionately affecting Muslim countries, partly because of the aftermath of war. We get to face how bad it is so that we can do something about it.

### NO TO INDIVIDUALISM, YES TO GROUPS

We need to look at where we are conditioned by the oppressive society to see ourselves as "individuals."



SUE YOSHIWARA

Looking at this seems to have everything to do with ending the oppression of Muslims.

In capitalist societies, especially in the United States and Europe, people are subjected to the myth of "individualism." That means we're taught to think of ourselves as unique, "independent" persons, separate from families or groups. This promotes isolation, prevents us from noticing that we are connected, and discourages us from working in teams. How can we stop the oppression of Muslims if we don't have a team or group to do it with?

We are trained to see ourselves as "individuals" and to see Muslims as a "group." We are deeply confused here. This confusion allows anti-Muslim oppression to flourish and stops us from interrupting it. Governments reinforce and manipulate this confusion to justify war. The United States has used this idea to wage numerous wars in South, Central, and West Asia.

There are nearly two billion Muslims on earth. The fact that they are represented as one group without any differences shows the extent of anti-Muslim racism and Islamophobia (fear of Muslims).

### A PANEL OF WOMEN

We had a panel of four women from different cultures and religions. There was a South Asian Indian Hindu female, a white Jewish female, a Latina Catholic female, and a white Protestant female. They each shared what was good about being a female of their constituency and being close to Muslims and how they had been made to be separate from them.



**WORKING EARLY**

It's always important to work on early memories, such as our first memory of meeting someone Muslim or hearing the word "Islam."

**WHAT WE SHOULD, COULD, AND WANT TO DO**

Last year at a workshop to end nuclear war, Julian Weissglass (International Commonality Reference Person for Wide World Change) had us do a series of mini-sessions on what we "should do," "could do," and "want to do." He said that all the "shoulds" are rooted in distress. Because there is so much work to be done, this focus can help us figure out what to do. We found it helpful to discharge on all three while thinking about taking action as allies to Muslims.

**WRITING**

We broke into writing groups. Each client had a primary counselor and "a scribe," someone to write down or type what they were saying. It was a challenge to take ourselves seriously, but Azi Khalili (International Liberation Reference Person for South, Central, and West Asian-Heritage People) has asked us to write down what we have figured out so that the work can be shared and continue to grow.

**NEXT STEPS**

If you would like to lead this work or already are, please reach out to me at [stephaniercgirl@gmail.com](mailto:stephaniercgirl@gmail.com).

*Stephanie Abraham*

Covina, California, USA

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

*Traducción al español, por el autor, del artículo anterior:  
Spanish translation, by the author, of the preceding article:*

## Aliados a los musulmanes

En septiembre de 2019, dirigí un taller en mi región para aliados a los musulmanes. Aquí comparto algo de lo que hicimos con la esperanza de que usted decida, actúe y descargue el tema.

**SOMOS BUENAS Y CONECTADAS**

Como aliadas, debemos notar nuestra bondad. Sentirse mal puede detenernos incluso antes de comenzar. En el libro "El Lado Humano de los Seres Humanos", hay un dibujo (en la página 60) de un cerebro que ha estado bajo angustia por la opresión. El noventa por ciento está lleno de basura, representada con flechas que van en todas las direcciones. El pie de foto dice: "El adulto exitoso según los estándares de hoy: 90% inhibido, 10% aún funciona". Colocamos un póster del dibujo en la pared para recordarnos que no es nuestra culpa que a veces nos quedemos atrapadas. Podemos sentirnos orgullosas de asumir responsabilidad.

Hicimos muchas mini-sesiones y nos movimos cantando canciones

para darnos cuenta que estábamos conectados. La gente desahogaba notando las relaciones entre sí mismos. Tenemos que notar nuestras conexiones para asumir el trabajo de ser aliados.

**ESTO ES PARA NOSOTROS**

No tratamos de pensar en otros sólo para ellos. Tenemos que hacerlo para nosotros: empujar nuestras mentes, poner fin a la separación con la que hemos sido atacados y enriquecer nuestras vidas. No necesitamos "salvar" o "ayudar" a otros. Necesitamos poner fin a la opresión de los demás porque también arruina nuestras vidas. Es posible que tengamos que desahogar para entender esto.

**LA OPRESIÓN ANTI-MUSULMANA**

La opresión anti musulmana es una crisis global. No es nueva, pero después del 11 de septiembre de 2001, aumentó. Las potencias coloniales e imperialistas siempre han tenido intereses en las

*continuación . . .*





## LIBERATION

... continuación

tierras de los pueblos musulmanes y han justificado su robo creando mentiras sobre ellos. Hoy, la opresión es tan grave que el hecho de ser una persona musulmana puede convertirte en sospechosa del estado y ponerte bajo vigilancia. La crisis climática está afectando desproporcionadamente a los países musulmanes, en parte debido a las secuelas de la guerra. Nos enfrentamos a lo malo que es para poder hacer algo al respecto.

### NO AL INDIVIDUALISMO, SI A LOS GRUPOS

Necesitamos observar dónde estamos condicionados por la sociedad opresiva para vernos a nosotros mismos como "individuos". Parece que tiene todo que ver con poner fin a la opresión de los musulmanes.

En las sociedades capitalistas, especialmente en Estados Unidos y Europa, las personas están sujetas por el mito del "individualismo". Eso significa que se nos enseña a pensar en nosotras mismas como personas únicas, "independientes", separadas de familias o grupos. Esto promueve el aislamiento, nos impide notar que estamos conectadas y desalienta a las personas a trabajar en equipo. ¿Cómo podemos detener la opresión

de las personas musulmanas si no tenemos un equipo o grupo con quien hacerlo?

Como aliados, estamos entrenados para vernos a nosotros mismos como "individuos" y para ver a los musulmanes como un "grupo". Estamos profundamente confundidos aquí. Esta confusión permite que florezca la opresión anti musulmana y nos impide interrumpirla. Los gobiernos refuerzan y manipulan esta confusión para justificar la guerra. Los Estados Unidos ha utilizado esta idea para hacer muchas guerras en el sur, centro y oeste de Asia, incluso con Irán en este momento.

Hay casi dos mil millones de personas musulmanas en el mundo. El hecho de que estén representadas como un grupo sin diferencias muestra el alcance del racismo anti musulmán y la islamofobia (miedo a las personas musulmanas).

### UN PANEL DE MUJERES

Tuvimos un panel de cuatro mujeres de diferentes culturas y religiones: una mujer hindú india del sur de Asia, una mujer judía blanca, una mujer católica latina y una mujer protestante blanca. Cada una compartió lo bueno de ser una mujer de su circunscripción y estar

cerca de los musulmanes, y cómo habrían sido configuradas para ser separadas de ellos.

### TRABAJANDO TEMPRANO

Siempre es importante trabajar en las memorias tempranas, como el primer recuerdo de conocer a alguien musulmán o de escuchar la palabra "Islam".

### LO QUE DEBEMOS, PODEMOS Y QUEREMOS HACER

El año pasado, en un taller para terminar con la guerra nuclear, Julian Weissglass nos hizo hacer una serie de mini-sesiones sobre lo que "deberíamos hacer", "podríamos hacer" y "queremos hacer". Dijo que todos los "deberes" están arraigados en la angustia. Hay mucho trabajo por hacer, esto puede ayudarnos a escoger qué hacer. Encontramos útil descargar en las tres áreas mientras pensábamos en tomar acción como aliados de los musulmanes.

### ESCRITURA

Nos dividimos en grupos de escritura y cada cliente tenía una co-escucha principal y una "escriba" (relatora), alguien para anotar o transcribir lo que estaban diciendo. Fue un desafío tomarnos en serio a nosotras mismas, pero Azi Khalili nos ha pedido que escribamos lo que hemos descubierto para que el trabajo se pueda compartir y seguir creciendo.

### PRÓXIMOS PASOS

Si desea dirigir este trabajo o ya lo está haciendo, comuníquese conmigo a [stephaniercgirl@gmail.com](mailto:stephaniercgirl@gmail.com).

*Stephanie Abraham*

Los Ángeles, California, EE. UU.

Reimpreso del debate por correo electrónico lista para los miembros de la comunidad de RC



LINCOLN PARK, SEATTLE, WASHINGTON, USA • KATIE KAUFFMAN

## Native People Raised Black

I attended the Native Raised Black Workshop in August 2018 in Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA. Four of us attended, along with Marcie Rendon (International Liberation Reference Person for Native Americans) who led the workshop. An additional person attended by Zoom. We were all female and ranged in age from late thirties to late sixties. We spent time counseling, cooking together, and thinking about our constituency of Black Natives. We also spent some time at a park and attended a Native play festival that featured all-Native casts and crews.

The weekend was a great reminder that we exist—that Black Native people exist! It was wonderful to be with my people, wonderful to be with a group that is willing and able to acknowledge who we are and all that we are—we are Native and Black. It was a safe place to openly be who we are—Black and Native.

Our work includes separating out and discharging the anti-Black racism that we've experienced growing up in North America, racism directed at us from the dominant mainstream society and also from within the Native community.

We get to work on how we are disappeared/"genocided" by the dominant mainstream as well as within the Native community. As in the Black community, we are pressured to choose one of the two identities. We can be considered a "sellout" [having betrayed our cause or associates for personal gain] if we choose to identify as all of who we are.

I am obviously mixed with Black (with browner skin, curlier hair, fuller lips), and I have Native patterns. I grew up on two of my reserves. I came home from the hospital to Xwemelch'stn (Homulchestan) reserve. I was around one year old when we moved to the Eslha7an (Uslahan) reserve. I was raised by three Native women: my birth mum, my maternal aunt, and my maternal grandmother. I am the oldest Squamish person mixed with Black to have grown up in my community. I'm pretty [quite] sure that there are Black Squamish members older than I am who were raised outside the community.

### "COLOURISM"

Those of us who are Black Natives and Natives raised Black have an important place in Native liberation work.



ERIC TOENSMER

We've been discharging on internalized racism for a number of years now. "Colourism" is a central piece of the hierarchy caused by racism. We do get judged by the colour of our skin. There are a tonne of stereotypes and falsehoods associated with various skin colours and tones. Darker skin colours and tones are associated with less access to resource and with negative attributes. Lighter skin colours and tones are associated with greater access to resource and privilege along with positive attributes. Colourism is real. Society assumes it knows or understands an individual's life story by her or his appearance alone. We base many of our thoughts or beliefs about a person on skin colour. We assume to know x, y, or z about her or him by seeing her or his skin colour. It affects every single one of us whether we're aware of it or not.

Colourism has been used in an insidious way to divide and conquer. It has divided Black people from all other people. It has interfered with the connection that Black Natives and Natives raised Black have with our Native communities. We are told we don't get to claim our Native people. Therefore, it is clear that we don't get to exist as Native people because we are deemed to be Black.

### ATTEMPTED GENOCIDE

Attempted genocide of the Indigenous people of this continent is at the beginning of the establishment of mainstream North American society. Discharging on internalized genocide is a key piece of Native liberation work. We've been doing this work for a number of years. The work is key due to the fallacy that Native

*continued . . .*

## LIBERATION

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people were killed off or have died out and no longer exist.

### **STEREOTYPES AND FALSEHOODS**

There are a tonne of stereotypes and falsehoods associated with being Native or Indigenous to this continent. The mainstream perpetuates these myths and tropes about Native people. It gives the impression that we are all intimately acquainted with and have full knowledge about Native people and their experiences. A prime example is the story of Pocahontas. This Disney fairy tale has no basis in reality and no resemblance to the actual lived experience of Pocahontas. This false account is troubling to say the least. It leads us down the garden path [to be overly optimistic] in regard to the reality of Native people, our lives, and our continued existence on this continent. This, too, affects every one of us whether we're aware of it or not.

The images that go along with such stories are problematic, too. This continent stretches from the Arctic Ocean down to the Gulf of Mexico. Native people have lived throughout those vast reaches, in very different situations and climates, for thousands of years. We speak different languages, wear different clothing, eat different foods, and have unique cultures and appearances. Our commonality is that we are of this land. There is no one particular look or appearance that can be said to be the definitive look or appearance for all Native people of North America.

### **ASSIMILATION MOSTLY UNSUCCESSFUL**

We continue to exist. Our land and its resources were stripped from us. Once it was determined that the genocide wasn't completely successful, assimilation was attempted. Residential schools were one of the tools used in an attempt to destroy our cultures, languages, and worldview. Assimilation into the dominant mainstream society was the endgame [final stage]. This was not very successful either, as we've mostly been excluded from the political economy of both Canada and the United States. It becomes difficult to assimilate when one is kept from fully participating in mainstream society.



There is a pragmatism that has allowed some of us to see that the current system, capitalism, does not work for us. We are aware that the system is not set up to be inclusive and does not work for the majority of people. It often goes counter to the interests and concerns expressed by Indigenous people. One way the system can be summed up is with two words: resource extraction (the extraction of oil and gas).

The trials that Native people have faced in our attempted assimilation butt heads with the forced assimilation of Black people into North American society.

Native people don't want to assimilate and have been unable to successfully assimilate en masse into mainstream society due to the extremely limited roles that we have been granted within mainstream structures. It has made more sense to opt out and to stay in our communities.

The forced assimilation of Black people, including Natives raised Black, has meant that some of us have bought into the lie that the current system simply needs to be tweaked in order for it to work for us. There is a faulty belief in the lie that we could gain equality and full participation in society within the current system. It's true, there has been some forward momentum in terms of the civil rights movement. Unfortunately, even with those gains the system is not set up to be inclusive and to work for the majority of people. This is the only system that Black people are familiar with, having been taken from our Indigenous lands; having been stripped of our languages, cultures, and worldview. Black people and Native people raised Black need to discharge on the current system as a foreign system that has been imposed on us.

Black Natives and Natives raised Black are Native. We need to name, claim, and discharge on our Native identity. This is a discharge issue. We get to discharge on our early hurts—attempted genocide is the earlier hurt tied to this land. This does not mean that we have to give up any part of ourselves. We do not have to give up being Black. The only expectation is that we do the discharge work on our internalized genocide. That we commit to discharging on the internalized genocide that has been passed down to us through our Native ancestors. Fortunately, or unfortunately, this is not “feel good” work!

*Kerrie Johnston*

West Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada



## Thoughts about Being Mixed Heritage

EILEAN DONAN CASTLE,  
SCOTLAND • © STAN EICHNER

It has been interesting and good to read people's thoughts about being mixed heritage in recent issues of *Present Time*. This is a complex issue, and as time goes on, we will have more and more people with this identity. *Ahemdillah!* (As we say in Arabic, that is a good thing!)

I have been working on this for almost twenty years and would like to add my voice to the discussion. My dad is Arab, with Syrian and Lebanese heritage, born and raised in Egypt. Some of his people are Catholic, some are Muslim. I was raised Catholic. My mom is Irish, Scottish, and German, and born in the United States.

When I was growing up, we were called "biracial." I am light skinned with blue eyes. Many people from West Asia and North Africa look like me. Some are mixed heritage, and some are one hundred percent Arab, or Iranian, or Turkish, and so on.

West Asians and North Africans all over the world have been and still are under threat and terrorized by war and exploitation.

My family was heavily targeted by both racism and anti-immigrant attitudes in Seattle, Washington, USA, where I grew up. We were

called horrible names like "towel heads" and "sand n-word." We were teased at school, sometimes by teachers. We were asked if we were terrorists.

My dad was attacked by a mob of white men in California (USA) when he was seventeen because he went to a Protestant church with a white girl. She distracted the men, and he was able to run away. But the fear never left him. He identified with Latinas/os in California and later with African Americans in Seattle. He helped start the Black Student Union at his college. He was accepted by the Black students as one of them.

When I joined RC, I wasn't sure which group to go to, white people or people of color (that's what the group was called at that time). I was at my first workshop, a women's liberation workshop, and on the first night Diane Balsler (International Liberation Reference Person for Women) gave each woman of the Global Majority a few minutes of attention. I didn't participate, but I noticed that an Iranian-heritage woman did, and I asked her about it. She encouraged me to claim my full heritage as an Arab female and introduced me to other light-skinned women, one Native and one Latina.

At my second workshop I went to a topic group for immigrants and children of immigrants in non-white families. It was a revelation to experience the safety in that group. After that, with the encouragement and counseling of my Regional Reference Person, I started going to the People of the Global Majority groups. I encountered many funny [strange] looks and sometimes hostility. It was sometimes hard for people with darker skin to understand why I belonged in that group. I'm sure this is still the case sometimes.

Of course, I need to do the work of claiming my white identity and the oppressor patterns that go along with it. But I find I do not have the safety to do that work in a room full of only white people. White people are not clear about this, and I have had some very confused counseling. So instead of going to eliminating white racism groups at workshops, I often call a topic group for mixed-heritage people to work on their oppressor role, and I also do this work consistently with my mixed-heritage Co-Counselors.

Many mixed-heritage people who look white were not raised white. I was raised by two parents, one white and one not white.

*continued . . .*

## LIBERATION

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Society might call me white because of my appearance, but I have experienced racism, directly and indirectly. I have internalized racism, handed down through generations. For many of us, our first experience of racism was in the womb, targeted by our own mothers or fathers. For most of us, this was never talked about. We grew up with a lot of confusion, not knowing who we were or why we were targeted. We internalized that there is something wrong with us and that we do not belong in either group. That is why I'm not sure we should be separated and put solely in groups with

other mixed-heritage people. This can reinforce the very way that we have been hurt. Sometimes it makes sense for us to work this way, but it also makes sense for us to be with the people that assimilation and genocide have tried to separate us from. We also do not deserve to be blamed for our hesitancy and confusion; this is part of how we've been hurt.

We are lucky to have discharge and re-evaluation to help us figure this out—*insha'allah* (if Allah wills it). We all need to work on it. Most of us are "mixed" in some way. I take the direction, "I am com-

pletely whole and just right, and I belong everywhere." Our RC commitment (below) says we are the future!

Mary Toutonghi  
Seattle, Washington, USA

### The RC Commitment for Persons of Mixed Heritage

Recognizing that we are the people of the future, and that every one of our cultures and our heritages is valuable and to be respected and appreciated, we proudly proclaim ourselves to be 100% universal humans, and we invite all human beings to join us in this claim. (From *The List*, Appendix, page 5)



ILANA STREET

## About Draft Policy Statements

In working to eliminate the patterns of oppression, draft policy statements are an important formulation of the way the oppression operates and provide a program for liberation from the oppression.

In preparing such a draft policy statement, allies can be of great help because they tend to have a sharper view of certain issues through seeing them from outside the oppression. It often works well to have a dedicated ally draw up the first draft of the liberation policy statement and then have people from the oppressed group review it, add to it, criticize it, sharpen it, and re-draft it. . . .

The second draft policy should be circulated as widely as possible to members of the oppressed group. Their opinions should be sought in person, by mail, in writing, over the telephone, and in group readings of the policy (with following discussion and note-taking) to expand the completeness of the draft policy's coverage and sharpen it in every possible way.

The new draft policy should still be clearly labeled as a draft policy. The perspective adopted that every policy will be a draft policy is important. Any policy will be a temporary expression of the aims and plans of the liberation movement, to be clarified and improved as the experience of the liberation movement accumulates.

Harvey Jackins  
From page 162 of *The List*



## Contemporary Women's Issues in England

I attended the Contemporary Women's Issues Conference in England in November 2019. It was led by Diane Balser (the International Liberation Reference Person for Women) who is fiercely and powerfully determined to keep us all looking at sexism and sexual exploitation. Under the influence of neo-liberalism politics, many of us have settled for "comfort." However, there is still much to discharge! It is still painful and unbearable. We need to keep discharging on all the places where we as girls had to tolerate the harshness of sexism, sexual exploitation, and male domination, and the ways it ruined our lives.

Sexism intersects with other oppressions in various ways. For example, some women are enforced into servitude and are expected to reproduce. Women experiencing genocide oppression may be prevented from reproducing. Owing-class women may be enslaved to one man. Poor, working-class, and Global Majority women may be made available for anyone to exploit. Middle-class women may appear to be happy with their so-called privileges, but the oppression is there in subtle forms. However, the experience of male domination unites all females the world over. We all have this to face and recover from. We can find unity and solidarity with other women. It was important to me to be with my raised-poor sisters in a support group in which we tried to face the harshness we have experienced as female babies, girls, female teenagers, and women.



KUBOTA GARDEN, SEATTLE, WASHINGTON, USA • TIM JACKINS

I have been attending these workshops for many years and have always dreaded the thought of going. I realised that this shouldn't be surprising as they bring up lots of misery and depression and a reminder that my life was utterly miserable as a young girl experiencing sexual exploitation and male domination. We all have our own experiences of the oppression. I was raised poor and working class and was available to be targeted by anyone—male relatives, strangers—never feeling that I was worth anything and that I only existed for others' satisfaction. I've realised that I have not been able to live my life truly for myself.

I feel more hopeful since the workshop after some big discharge. However, the journey out feels daunting, and I need all my sisters to do this together. What can we face and tell each other? Where are we compromising? Where have we assimilated into being a "proper woman"? Who is the "right kind of woman"? I look forward to continuing to look at these vital issues and to assisting younger women to look at all this before they get as old as I am.



*Belinda French*  
Bristol, England

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

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## A Parents' Workshop in Nigeria

A Parents' Workshop recently took place in Lagos, Nigeria. It was led by Marya Axner (International Liberation Reference Person for Parents), Fela Barclift (Regional Reference Person for North Brooklyn, New York, USA), and Dorann van Heeswijk (Regional Reference Person for Surrey and London West in England).

The workshop included the following topics:

*Appreciating ourselves as parents:* Parenting is one of the amazing gifts of nature. Watching and nurturing a newborn into adulthood is wonderful—but sadly, parents are not paid for doing this great job. Parents must sometimes pause and appreciate themselves. A lot of sessions are required.

*Difficulties:* Parenting is never an easy task. We must provide all that our children need. We must protect them from the oppressive society. We must train them to be “good.” A child will often disagree with our instructions and fail to appreciate all that we have done. This is never our fault or the fault of the child—it is because of the system. We must prepare for these difficulties by having regular Co-Counseling sessions.

*Effects of colonialism on parenting:* We are not accustomed to handling situations according to our own culture; much of what we do is based on what we have learned from colonialism. For example, our forebears were enforced in almost

everything. So, it feels normal to force children to obey and do whatever we ask them to do. We were reminded that we can handle our children in better ways than this and avoid passing these hurts on to them.

*Chronic distresses:* We develop chronic patterns when we are continually hurt but do not have the opportunity to discharge. When we are parents, it can be easy to notice our chronic distresses—we need many Co-Counseling sessions to discharge them. We also need a close relationship with a Co-Counselor.

*Mothers and fathers:* Mothers are not paid for raising children and are not adequately appreciated. If men were responsible for childcare, the system would have looked for a way to compensate them.

Men are trained to oppress women. They are oppressed by the society but not by women. Fathers are supposed to provide for their family, work hard, fight wars, and do tough work. They often don't have the opportunity to be close to their children. Being conditioned not to discharge makes it harder for them to love and be close. In a world without oppression, both father and mother would share equal responsibility for their children.

When the first baby comes, attention is focused on the child. This is a big change for the parents. For example, it can affect their

sexual life. The man gets less attention and may feel lost. Both parents need lots of sessions.

*“Discipline”:* It will take a long time to heal the hurtful effects of colonialism. The way we treat our children is a direct result of what happened to us during colonization. The following are some ways to approach our children: We can talk with them, understand what is important to them, pay attention, know that they are good, have high expectations, advocate for them, love them and show it, listen and do not jump to conclusions, and play! play! All will lead to a closer connection with them.

*Leading and Community building:* Leaders have the power to make things happen. Parent leaders can guide other parents in making things work well. Top priority is having sessions—to be a good leader it is important to have at least one Co-Counseling session a week. Honesty and vulnerability are key to being a good leader. We can back [support] our leaders even when we disagree with them—and have a session about it.

We can all be Community builders. For example, we can build RC around our family. We can form a parent support group. We need to think about the kind of person we bring to the Community. We can build the RC Community the way we would build a beautiful family.

Alfred Asika  
Lagos, Nigeria



SKAGIT VALLEY, WASHINGTON, USA • DIANE SHISK

## More from the Parents Leading Parents Workshop

Parents are precious. Parenting is a tough job. I think it is the most important job that we will ever undertake. It's also a job that we don't get any training for and we don't get paid for. As parents we also don't get listened to enough—we don't get to tell how much we love our children. Parents' oppression makes us feel like we are bad parents—we parents need to be appreciated and also appreciate ourselves.

Black people were often hated during the centuries of slavery, and this can leave us hating ourselves as much as we were hated. We were whipped, beaten unmercifully, and traumatized into silence. Because of this it may seem that spanking children is the best way to discipline them. However, no one deserves spanking, and it creates distance between parents and children. It's likely that a majority of parents around the world feel that spanking is the fastest and most effective way to change a child's behavior. Once we recognise that our children are not inherently bad, the rest will slowly fall in place.

The adult-child relationship is at the core of building a strong community—we need to nurture and empower it.

*Zainab Musa*  
Abuja, Nigeria



LICHEN-COVERED POST • CHRISTINE MARNANE

## Appreciating the Parents Leading Parents Workshop

I joined about sixty Nigerian RCers for the Parents Leading Parents Workshop [see article on page 19]. As usual with RC workshops, it was another opportunity to have countless sessions and loads of discharge. By the time I left for home I was light in spirit and unburdened at heart. I learned how to take care of children. I learned the difference between disciplining young people and guiding them with love.

Fela's work helped create an ambience of calmness and relaxation, play and fun. I practically became a nine-year-old.

The following approaches to dealing with children formed the crux of Marya's teachings: giving that special loving look, not a wicked or intimidating look • making them your friends, not scaring them away • talking, discussing, and finding agreement on what works because they, too, can reason • understanding what's important to them and their emotions—give them accolades • more love and attention, not neglect • patience breeds connection—connection is key • knowing that the child is good and not bad • believing in the child, seeing his good side and speaking highly of him even in his absence • story-telling helps with bonding • advocating for the child at school as her parent—show her you have her back • not just loving them, but showing them you love them—show it! • learn the art of listening • play, play, play! • do not jump to conclusions • do not misjudge them or judge them wrongly • believe in them!

My highlight was meeting my wonderful RC family again.

*Marshall Ifeanyi*  
Abuja, Nigeria

*The following three articles are about the Female Allies to Large Women Workshop led by Teresa Enrico in September 2019. To see articles about the Large Women's Workshop, held at the same time and led by Marion Ouphouet, go to pages 39 to 43 of the January 2020 Present Time or <[www.rc.org/publication/present\\_time/pt198/pt198\\_039\\_ns](http://www.rc.org/publication/present_time/pt198/pt198_039_ns)>, <[www.rc.org/publication/present\\_time/pt198/pt198\\_041\\_jk](http://www.rc.org/publication/present_time/pt198/pt198_041_jk)>, and <[www.rc.org/publication/present\\_time/pt198/pt198\\_043\\_am](http://www.rc.org/publication/present_time/pt198/pt198_043_am)>.*

## ❧ Finding My Voice as a Female Ally to Large Women ❧

I organized the North American Female Allies to Large Women Workshop led by Teresa Enrico in September 2019. At one point the allies had a class with the large women, led by Marion Ouphouet.

I put together an organizing team for the allies, and we counseled on our bodies, sexism, and our feelings about largeness. It was important that we were a team, that I did not organize in complete isolation. I got a better view of what I need to discharge to be an ally to large women. I better understand how compromised we thin females are in a male-dominated society. I would like to be more decisive in using my voice to do what is right without second-guessing and hesitation.

Teresa warmly led us in stand-up comic style—on our relationship with food, sexual exploitation, and the exploitation of our female bodies. She made us laugh a lot so that we could have our attention out and think better about ourselves and large women, and not be hard on ourselves.

### **INDIAN FEMALES, HAIR COLOR, AND BEING THIN**

I spend my family life with both upper-middle-class Indians (my biological family) and working-class African Americans (my spouse's biological family). The Black females I know seem to be more accepting of their natural bodies than the Indian females. Perhaps the Indian females have

not done the work that some Black women have done on being "property." (Indian women have been the property of men and subjects of the British colonizers.)

I was the one who welcomed my mother into what I called the "grey-haired ladies club" when she stopped dying her hair (I was the other one in the "club"). A man I know said I should dye my hair and that he expected his wife to do the same if she wanted to stay with him. This is about male entitlement over female bodies. I was able to challenge him but felt obligated to do so with humor. I know hair color is not the same thing as large size, but I mention it to show where I struggle to challenge men directly. He did not talk to me with the disgust, viciousness, and blame that comes with fat oppression, for sure.

My female family members in India have been thin, I presume to attract male partners into marriage and have children ensure male protection and security under patriarchy. I notice that after childbearing many of them become larger, perhaps because their status is now solidified as the bearer and caretaker of a male's offspring. The harshness targeting our bodies might be more severe in wealthier classes and in more advanced capitalist societies. My wealthier female family members who have been raised in the United States or vacation to North America and Europe have generally remained thinner, even after marriage and

childbirth. And those in the United States who have gained and kept on extra weight after childbirth seem to be more preoccupied with becoming thinner.

We have all been oppressed in relation to our bodies. I am a Jain person. My religion focuses on the path of the soul and not the body through its multitudes of rebirths. My early material [distress] is about my family finding it difficult to acknowledge that I existed, even as a soul. Therefore, I find it difficult to notice and remember bodies in general, even though I work in a profession that involves touching bodies all day. I feel stuck in my struggle to feel that I exist.

### **TALKING ABOUT FAT OPPRESSION**

I have difficulty conveying the systematic nature of fat oppression because I still have much to discharge but also because most thin people do not understand that fat oppression exists. I have been trying to talk about it with people, large and thin. I mentioned organizing the workshop to a male director at my workplace because he asked why I missed his course. He indicated that the topic of fat oppression and bringing allies into the work was interesting.

I am a physical therapist. One of my patients is large and has knee pain. She makes a disparaging statement about her body size in every session. I've suggested that becoming stronger will likely



address her symptoms. I point out the negative societal messages about large bodies and say it would be helpful for us all to start with being pleased about our bodies. I don't think what I'm saying is making a difference to her, from her reactions, but I'm trying something a little different each time while never agreeing that her body size is something to "battle."

A young adult friend posted his weight loss on Facebook, and I commented that he was handsome at every size. Another large patient said he was getting "fat" during the U.S. Thanksgiving holiday, and I commented with a smile that we will all get fat together. Those comments might not have been the most "correct," but I found that it was getting easier to use my voice as an ally.

I know that part of my work is to get "bigger" in the world with my power. I don't know if that will mean anything different for what my body will look like, but I do know it will mean using my mind and voice more. When I was a girl, I remember trying to fit people's image of me by trying to remain cute and little (powerless and non-threatening). I remember being scared of losing their positive regard when they realized I was older than they thought, that I would have to work harder to remain in their favor.

I get to stop hoping for favor for being small and symbolic. Instead, I get to be a terrified, visible female in sisterhood with large females.

*Sonal Sheth*

Alexandria, Virginia, USA

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



TEXTILES, IN EAST TIMOR • LYNDALL KATZ

## Experiencing Fat Oppression "from Both Sides"

I attended the North American Female Allies to Large Women Workshop led by Teresa Enrico in September 2019. I attended with a lot of excitement because, as Joni Mitchell [Canadian singer and songwriter] wrote, "I've looked at life from both sides now." I was a chubby child, then a fat child, then an obsessed-with-thinness teen. I'm now an adult who is still obsessed with bodily dimensions (which I think is fairly typical for my age).

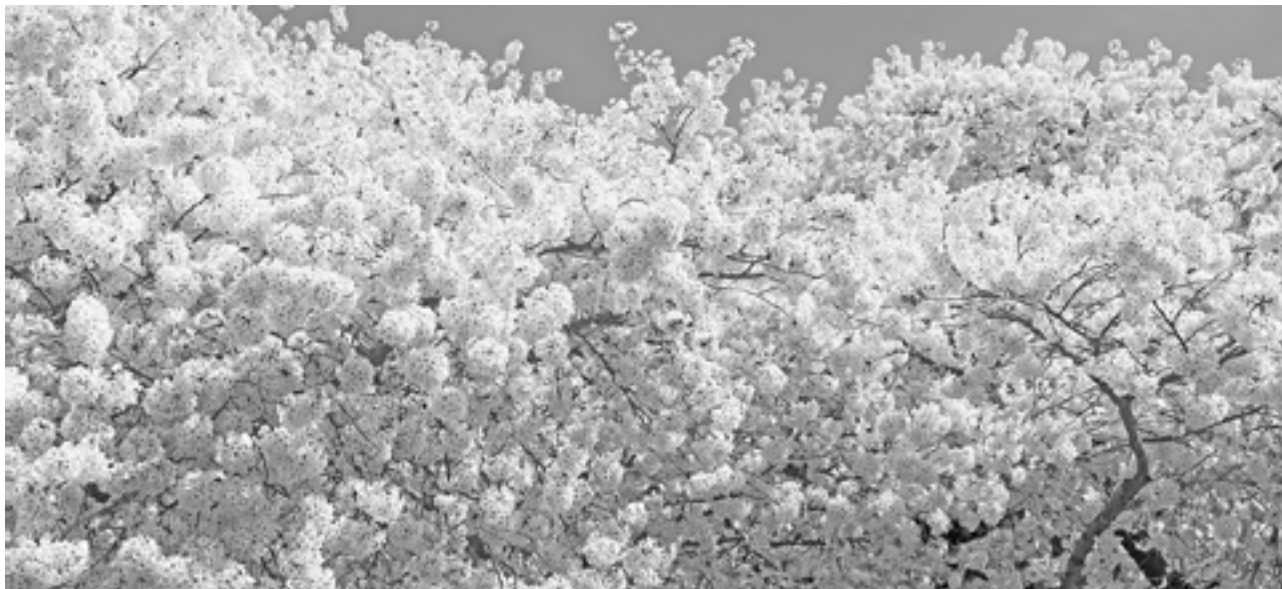
I've realized that it is hard for me to be an ally to large women, partly because I was once targeted and then took in so much of the oppressor material [distress]. At the workshop I cried hard on what it was like to go shopping and need clothes for large girls. The workshop brought up issues such as "Where do I belong? Ally? Large? Formerly large?"

I am working on a complicated relationship with a large person—someone who was thin and at times behaved oppressively during my fat years. The workshop gave a boost to the work I have been doing on this relationship. I am much better able to avoid getting trapped in old patterns. I need to continue working on this very thorny issue. I need to be an ally to my young self who experienced fat oppression, and then to those who are currently experiencing it.

*Anonymous*  
USA

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





ANTHONY ROBLES

## Being a Female Ally to Large Women

In September 2019 I attended the Female Allies to Large Women Workshop led by Teresa Enrico.

Teresa explained how vicious large women's oppression is, how it affects us, and how we have "thrown large women under the bus" [abandoned large women and treated them badly].

The following points were made:

- "Attractiveness" makes us compete with other women to attract men. We "sell out" [benefit at their expense] other women. For example, we don't interrupt the constant fat oppression they face, we judge them, and we give them "helpful" advice.

- We women typically carry feelings that there is something bad and wrong about us. For example, my mother was disappointed that I was a girl—I have always felt that I am wrong in every cell. The large women asked allies to "learn to recognize the many flavors of self-hatred."

- It is useful to tell the story of your body's history. How has sexism and fat oppression affected your body from birth onward?

- We are doing this work to reclaim our minds. It is not about losing weight. It is about health and well-being.

- We need to discharge all assumptions about "pretty," "ugly," "thin," and "fat."

- We need to appreciate ourselves for the way we are and appreciate large women for the way they are. There is nothing wrong with any of us. We are also good, and we like each other.

On Sunday the allies met with the Large Women's Workshop, led by Marion Ouphouet. This brought me face to face with how vicious and invisible fat oppression is. I am seeing more of the ways that internalized sexism limited my life and hurt me and women that I love and want to be closer to. I have made a commitment to work regularly on my preoccupation with weight, as well as on other patterns of internalized sexism, and on being an ally to large women—for myself, for large women, and for all women.

*Joy Kroeger-Mappes*

Frostburg, Maryland, USA

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

## We Are a Sisterhood

Females from Israel, Ireland, Scotland, Wales, and England (along with a small group of male allies) attended the Contemporary Women's Issues Workshop in England in November 2019 led by Diane Balser (International Liberation Reference Person for Women).

We were reminded that since the 1980s the global economic situation has had the effect of reducing women's issues to individual "problems." As a result, we can easily lose track of being a sisterhood in which we are collectively fighting to end women's oppression.

We are being told that solutions to our problems lie in individual "choices." We can choose products that will "empower" us. We can "choose" to wear what we like, alter our bodies as we like, identify as we like, and engage in behaviour that will make us feel better about ourselves (the promise of a consumer society). However, sexism and male domination are still rife—but seldom talked about. The exploitation of women (and men) continues in its viciousness with the systematic and increasingly "normal" mistreatment of women by men and of both women and men by the institutions of the oppressive society. (Men are caught up in this. For example, the sex industries use men's sexual distresses to "market" the continued sexual exploitation of women.)

Diane encouraged us to work on what it had been like to be a girl and on what it had been like to be exploited as a female from the very beginning (including growing in the womb of a woman who was being oppressed and exploited by sexism). She invited us to notice that together we are a collective contradiction to the idea that we are alone in our struggles. In each demonstration Diane reminded the client that she had a "gang" and an "army" of women with her, that she was not struggling on her own [alone].

She mentioned that women have been having a hard time continuing to lead women's support groups. This has been true of me, so I decided to come home and turn my weekly class, which is all female, into a women's support group. We've had our first meeting. Each woman took time to discharge with the direction, "It's great to be female." We will also have at least one session each week focusing on sexism. This group will be my local "gang" as I try to keep my attention on ending sexism in both my life and in the wider world.

Love in sisterhood,

*Barbara Harwood*

London, England

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



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## Proud of Being Jewish

I have been discharging for the last few days about Bernie Sanders and his prominent public role while seeking the Democratic nomination for president of the United States. He is an unassimilated Jew, and it seems to me that his policies and perspectives are in part the result of his Jewish values and his having a parent who was an immigrant to the United States. Millions of viewers recently watched the Democratic debate as Bernie stated publicly that he is proud to be Jewish. This was a huge contradiction [to distress] for me, and I felt many feelings. The next evening, I led an RC class. A huge amount of fear came up about leading. I took time in front of the mixed group and worked openly about genocide. Those feelings are usually much more buried. It was good to have them so accessible and to seize the opportunity to discharge them.

My teenage son has seen an African American serve two terms as U.S. president, a female win the popular vote for president, and now Bernie Sanders and Mike Bloomberg, both Jews, run for the Democratic nomination. It's making a big difference for him as a Jewish boy, as it did for many African American young people when Barack Obama ran and won, and as it did for many girls when Hillary Clinton ran for president.

This is happening at the same time that anti-Semitism is increasing. My son has been grappling with his fears about being visible as a Jew while simultaneously loving Judaism and Jewish values. As a family we have had many opportunities to talk openly about anti-Semitism. We've talked about how to recognize the sometimes-subtle tropes, and the importance of reaching for community and connection both with our Jewish community and with our allies in the wider community.

With love, and pride in being Jewish,

*"Miriam"*

USA

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



YUKO HIBINO



## White Protestant Women

White Protestant women have been set up as the standard by which all women are judged in this oppressive society. This standard is fueled by racism and anti-Semitism as well as many other oppressions. White Protestant women have also been instrumental in much of the work to end sexism, racism, anti-Semitism, and other oppressions. We are good hearted and hard working in the face of all the misinformation we have been given about other people in the world. We are eager to discharge the distresses we carry in order to be wholly part of the world.

The following is a report from a workshop in 2019 in the eastern part of the United States:

Diane Balsler (International Liberation Reference Person for Women) has pointed out that the dominant Protestant culture has used sexual exploitation and male domination to preserve its existence. Many of us Protestant women have been physically and emotionally dominated in our families, leading us to become silent and complicit with racism, sexism, and classism. Owning-class white Protestant women, often considered privileged, have been held up as the standard by which all women are judged, yet that has come at great cost since that standard is held in place by sexual exploitation and violence toward those women.

When thinking about ourselves, it is also important to remember that we were born to Protestant mothers; they taught us how to be female.

We were in training to be good wives and mothers by their modeling.

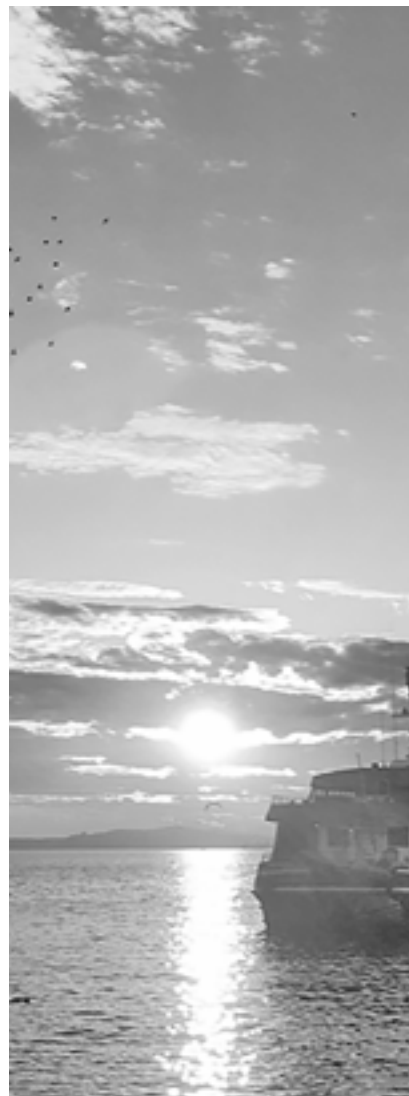
The message was “Be neat, be clean, be polite, be pretty.” This was to train us into conformity and obedience. The training to be passive, silent, well behaved, with the appearance of niceness just serves to erase the real person. For myself, there is a constant fight to move out of passivity and silence. Even in my role as a state senator, I had to push myself to assert my thinking in all situations.

We were given the false notion that this was happiness and what we should want. Instead our counselors need to ask us for our real minds, buried under this veneer of “happiness.”

In April of 2019, sixty white Protestant women gathered for a workshop on how sexism had affected our lives as white Protestants and how our oppressor patterns, particularly from the dominant Protestant religion, show up in the counseling Community. For many of us, this was the first time we had put awareness on being from the dominant culture.

Prior to the workshop, I talked with a number of women who were not white or Protestant to get their perspective on our strengths and our hurts. This was very helpful.

In the beginning of the workshop we worked on facing our goodness and what we treasured about our upbringing. Protestant culture often equates goodness with work, especially work for others. So, we worked on our inherent goodness using the basic RC theory that all people are good, intelligent, cooperative, and zestful and discharged on the fact that work, while a good thing in itself, is not necessary to assure our goodness.



YUKO HIBINO

Given the individualism inherent in Protestantism, there has been the pull to create our own particular sects that are considered better than others. As a result, there are many individual Protestant sects all thinking they have found a better way. The confusion from being broken up into isolated groups and not knowing we are part of a larger group has been a major piece of our distress. Noticing that we belong with everyone else is an important contradiction to the isolation that was used to control us as young people.

*continued . . .*



LONDON, ENGLAND • BESS HERBERT

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We were born knowing how to treat people. Our inherent humanness was scared out of us. One ally remarked that we had been controlled and disciplined as babies. Harshness was a constant form of control. It came in the form of physical punishment, “shunning,” sending us away from others, and humiliation. One woman remembered being told to have a “pleasant facial expression” even when asleep. The requirement to not show anything was huge. This resulted in us often living with the pretense of happiness and security. Given the harshness that was prevalent in our training, tenderness with ourselves and others is key.

Given the pretense that “all is well” and our false training that says we are superior, Protestants have a tendency when we can’t figure out a solution to turn and walk away. Taking the direction to “stay, stay, stay” has proved invaluable.

Self-sufficiency is prized in Protestant families. We don’t understand that not being self-sufficient is better. Connection and leaning on others are our route out. We need to be connected to others in order to survive and to strive for something meaningful. Being engaged in meaningful efforts requires struggle, and struggle requires connection to a gang. It is a good and human thing. It makes life sweeter.

It has been important to understand that Protestant/Christian theology frames everything in terms of an apocalyptic battle of good and evil (thanks to Barbara Boring for this insight). Given this, we often have the misconception that if we talk about being bad or having had anything bad happen to us, we will be bad forever without any forgiveness or chance of redemption. This makes it hard for us to see any

middle ground. We have found that thinking about how “significant” we are is a better contradiction than how “good” we are.

A common Protestant distress is thinking that our way is the only way. We were often trained to think that we have the answers and should tell others the right way to go. The missionary history in Protestantism suggests that we should help the “poor unfortunates.” Not acknowledging the arrogance and hubris in that position has led us to dominate others in a very distressed way.

Some helpful directions have been the following:

“Maybe I’m not the best person available.”

“Maybe I don’t know.” (Try not aspiring for perfection.)

Be humble and wait to see what others are thinking.

Slow down and feel the panic of not jumping in.

Look at all the hurt and don’t do anything.

First discharge, then act.

RCers have often noticed the effects of the pretense that has surrounded many of us Protestants. Being raised with pretense made it difficult to look at reality; and when we did, it looked scary. This has left many of us feeling that we can’t handle reality or truth. We end up feeling “fragile” or vulnerable and unable to show our fears. This inability gets coupled with individualism and leaves us isolated and unable to show our feelings or ask for help.

One good place to begin discharging is to experiment with being visible in public about some-



thing. We often fall into being silent, hesitating to get involved. Since we are from the dominant culture, we have the privilege of staying silent or not taking chances, for example, not doing anything about climate change.

Barbara Love (International Liberation Reference Person for African Heritage People) gave me some helpful insights.

She reminded me that it is important for white people to discharge our fear that leads us to retreat rather than fight. She reminded me that we have been studiously and diligently trained not to notice. That means not noticing that we are part of the dominant culture that often ignores that others exist, so we don't notice how our actions affect them.

A key reflection she shared was that when we as white people are confronted with anything that is not familiar, we tend to discount its validity. Our training as part of the dominant culture here in the United States leads us also to think of ourselves as "helpers" and better than those we are helping.

It is always important for any constituency not to accept the damage done to it but rather to discharge the damage and take its place alongside all other humans. Its also important to remember that white Protestant women have fought for the rights of all women.

I look forward to hearing from others of you about your Protestant lives.

Thank you to all who have shared their insights with me and given me support.

*Beth Edmonds*  
Freeport, Maine, USA

## Winning Allies

For any group to progress in its liberation from oppression it is necessary that it (1) formulate a correct, workable program of liberation; (2) unite its members around that program; and (3) win allies for the group's liberation among individuals and organizations that are outside the group itself.

Acquiring allies is usually the last and the least understood part of a liberation struggle. RC discussions of liberation theory in the past have often tried to emphasize this *winning* of allies. At other times we have stressed the *exchange* of mutual support between *two or more* liberation groups who agree to support *each other's* programs.

These are not the only viewpoints from which alliances can arise. As the notion of "one for all and all for one" continues to slowly permeate our attitudes, we have tended to put forward certain *initiatives to be taken by ourselves* as allies to other groups. Such initiatives represent an important break with the "what's in it for me?" posture toward which the oppressive society has influenced us. To organize those of us *who are outside a particular group* to take initiative and become supportive allies *for members of that group* can be very effective. It is a sharp contradiction to the general selfishness and isolation that has been modelled for us and imposed upon us in the past by the oppressive societies.

*Harvey Jackins*

From page 185 of "Being an Ally"  
in *The Kind, Friendly Universe*



SCHIERMONNIKOOG, THE NETHERLANDS • ROB VENDERBOS

## The Community RC Website

There is a website for the Re-evaluation Counseling (RC) Community at <[www.rc.org](http://www.rc.org)>. At this site you will have easy access to a large amount of information about RC, including the following:

- RC theory (basic theory, including an introduction to RC, a glossary, *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 Begin RC*, including what to do in a session and how to lead support groups), counseling techniques and commitments, and a description of RC classes and the Community
- *The Guidelines for the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities*, 2017 edition, RC Goals, and forms
- Translations of articles into many languages, and language liberation information
- Articles from recent journals, including *Present Time*, and online publications
- Resources for workshop organizers
- Articles about teaching RC and outlines for teaching fundamentals classes, in Spanish
- "Today's Thought"—a short daily thought from a Re-evaluation Counseling perspective
- Recent Draft Liberation Policy Statements and Climate Change Draft Programs
- Care of the Environment materials and information
- Resources for Human Liberation

## New Website for People New to RC

A new RC website for people new to RC can be found at <[www.reevaluationcounseling.org](http://www.reevaluationcounseling.org)>. It contains introductory information about RC that is easy to access.



SKY YARBROUGH

## How to Contact Us Online

- The International RC Community: [ircc@rc.org](mailto:ircc@rc.org)
- United to End Racism: [uer@rc.org](mailto:uer@rc.org)
- Rational Island Publishers: [litsales@rc.org](mailto:litsales@rc.org), for orders and billing questions (or order on our website at <[www.rationalisland.com](http://www.rationalisland.com)>)
- Re-evaluation Counseling Community Resources (Intensives and office matters only): [rcoffice@rc.org](mailto:rcoffice@rc.org)
- Automatic response e-mail about RC: [info@rc.org](mailto:info@rc.org)
- For sending photos: [photos@rc.org](mailto:photos@rc.org)

We now have websites for four ongoing projects that are taking the work of RC into the broader society. They have information geared to people who are not yet a part of RC.

**United to End Racism** (UER) works with other groups involved in eliminating racism and shares with them the theory and practice of RC. You can find valuable resources and a description of UER's projects at <[www.unitedtoendracism.org](http://www.unitedtoendracism.org)>. (UER's e-mail address is [uer@rc.org](mailto:uer@rc.org).)

**No Limits for Women (No Limits)** is an international organization of women (and men who are allies to women) dedicated to eliminating sexism and male domination throughout the world. Its website, <[www.nolimitsforwomen.net](http://www.nolimitsforwomen.net)>, features the No Limits Draft Liberation Policy Statement for Women and a video of a No Limits workshop, *Women and Men in Partnership to End Sexism*.

**Sustaining All Life** (SAL) has been attending the United Nations Climate Change Conferences of the Parties (COPs) and presenting workshops, public forums, caucuses, support groups, fundamentals classes, and listening projects as part of bringing RC tools to climate change activists. Reports on its activities and more information about it are at <[www.sustainingalllife.org](http://www.sustainingalllife.org)>. (SAL's e-mail address is [sal@rc.org](mailto:sal@rc.org).)

**Jews and Allies United to End Anti-Semitism** is a group of people, of all ages and from many countries, working together as Jews and non-Jews to end anti-Semitism. Key parts of the project are to model that there are allies committed to ending Anti-Semitism, to stop the use of anti-Semitism to divide progressive movements, and to join with others to make sure that anti-Semitism is included in the work on all oppression issues. Reports on the project's activities along with information from the pamphlet *Anti-Semitism: Why Is It Everyone's Concern?* are at <[www.JewsandAllies.org](http://www.JewsandAllies.org)>. (The e-mail address is [Info@JewsAndAllies.org](mailto:Info@JewsAndAllies.org).)

## Electronic Mailing Lists

The RC Community maintains a large number of electronic mailing lists for particular categories of RCers. They are for active members of the RC Community, and most of them are for leaders only. You can see a list of these lists at <<https://list.rc.org>>.

Here are the steps to subscribe to a list:

1. If you are a fluent reader of English, make sure that you have a subscription to *Present Time*. (For fluent readers of English, subscribing to *Present Time* is part of being an active member of the RC Community.) For the Community Members list, you must have a recommendation from an Area or Regional Reference Person.

2. Set up an account—if you don't already have one—at the server site <<https://list.rc.org>>. When you sign up for an account, you will receive an e-mail to verify your e-mail address. (If you don't see it for some time, be sure to look in your junk folder. If you can't find it anywhere, please contact the list admin at <[hansen@rc.org](mailto:hansen@rc.org)>.) Once you verify your e-mail address, your account is created.

3. Go to the list website at <<https://list.rc.org>> and log in to your account. Then click on the list you would like to subscribe to and enter your e-mail address. You will get an e-mail from the list moderator asking for additional information, such as your full name, phone number, and mailing address. Send your answers back to the moderator, with a copy to [ircc@rc.org](mailto:ircc@rc.org). (It may take some days for the moderator to get back to you. Please be patient.)

When you have successfully subscribed, you will receive a confirmation e-mail. Keep this e-mail. You will need to use your account to make changes to your electronic mailing list subscriptions.

If you need help, there is a "help" list that subscribers can use to help each other. Please subscribe to that list. If you have questions, please check there first for an answer. If you find nothing useful to your issue, please post a question.

**RC Community Members:** <[community-members@list.rc.org](mailto:community-members@list.rc.org)>. Contact any Area, Regional, or Liberation Reference Person.

**RC Community Members Involved in Eliminating Racism:** <[uer@list.rc.org](mailto:uer@list.rc.org)>. Contact any Area, Regional, or Liberation Reference Person. (This list is for trading information on the theory and practice of using RC in the fight to eliminate racism, both inside and outside of the RC Community.)

**Regional Reference Persons:** <[rrp@list.rc.org](mailto:rrp@list.rc.org)>. Contact the International Reference Person at <[ircc@rc.org](mailto:ircc@rc.org)>.

**Area Reference Persons:** <[arp@list.rc.org](mailto:arp@list.rc.org)>. Contact the International Reference Person at <[ircc@rc.org](mailto:ircc@rc.org)>.

**International Liberation and Commonality Reference Persons:** <[ilrp@list.rc.org](mailto:ilrp@list.rc.org)>. Contact the International Reference Person at <[ircc@rc.org](mailto:ircc@rc.org)>.

**RC Teachers:** <[teachers@list.rc.org](mailto:teachers@list.rc.org)>. Contact the International Reference Person at <[ircc@rc.org](mailto:ircc@rc.org)>.

**Editors** of RC or non-RC publications: <[editors@list.rc.org](mailto:editors@list.rc.org)>. Contact the International Reference Person at <[ircc@rc.org](mailto:ircc@rc.org)>.

**Translators of RC Literature:** <[translators@list.rc.org](mailto:translators@list.rc.org)>. Contact Truus Jansen, Rational Island Publishers Translation Coordinator, at <[ircc@rc.org](mailto:ircc@rc.org)>.

**Leaders of African Heritage People:** <[black@list.rc.org](mailto:black@list.rc.org)>. Contact Barbara Love, International Liberation Reference Person for African Heritage People, at <[bjlove.rc@gmail.com](mailto:bjlove.rc@gmail.com)>.

**Leaders of Artists:** <[artists@list.rc.org](mailto:artists@list.rc.org)>. Contact Emily Feinstein, International Liberation Reference Person for Visual Artists, at <[emsusanf@gmail.com](mailto:emsusanf@gmail.com)>.

**Leaders of Atheists:** <[atheists@list.rc.org](mailto:atheists@list.rc.org)>. Contact Allan Hansen at <[hansen@rc.org](mailto:hansen@rc.org)>.

**Leaders in the Care of the Environment:** <[environment@list.rc.org](mailto:environment@list.rc.org)>. Contact Jack Manno at <[jpmanno@esf.edu](mailto:jpmanno@esf.edu)>.

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## RC ON THE INTERNET

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Leaders of **Catholics**: <catholic@list.rc.org>. Contact Joanne Bray, International Liberation Reference Person for Catholics, at <jmbray@aol.com>.

Leaders of **College and University Faculty**: <colleagues@list.rc.org>. Contact Ellie Brown, International Liberation Reference Person for College and University Faculty, at <ebrown@wcupa.edu>.

Leaders on **Disability, Chronic Illness, and Health**: <health-disability@list.rc.org>. Contact Marsha Saxton, International Liberation Reference Person for People with Disabilities, at <marsax@wid.org>.

Leaders of **East and Southeast Asian- and Pacific Islander-Heritage People**: <e-se-pac-asians@list.rc.org>. Contact Francie Chew, International Liberation Reference Person for Chinese-Heritage People, at <franciechew@gmail.com>.

Leaders of **Educational Change**: <education@list.rc.org>. Contact Marilyn Robb, International Commonality Reference Person for Educational Change, at <joyfulplace@yahoo.com>.

Leaders of **Elders**: <elders@list.rc.org>. Contact Pam Geyer, International Liberation Reference Person for Elders, at <pgeyer@medcetera.com>.

Leaders of **Family Work**: <family-work@list.rc.org>. Contact Chuck Esser, International Commonality Reference Person for Family Work, at <ckesser1@gmail.com>.

RC Community Members Interested in **Fundraising for RC**: <fundraising@list.rc.org>. Contact Mike Markovits, President, Re-evaluation Foundation, at <mjmarkovits@gmail.com>.

RC Community Members Interested in **Health Care Workers**: <health-care-workers@list.rc.org>. Contact Anne Greenwald at <agreenwald814@gmail.com>.

Leaders of **Irish-Heritage People**: <irish@list.rc.org>. Contact Sheila Fairon, Regional Reference Person for Northern Ireland, at <fairon@fastlist.fm>.

Leaders of **Jews**: <jewish@list.rc.org>. Contact Cherie Brown, International Liberation Reference Person for Jews, at <ncciinc@aol.com>.

Leaders of **Latinos/as and Chicanos/as**: <latinos-as@list.rc.org>. Contact Lorenzo Garcia, International Liberation Reference Person for Chicanos/as, at <garcialore51@gmail.com>.

Leaders of **Lawyers**: <lawyers@list.rc.org>. Contact Marsha Hunter, International Liberation Reference Person for Lawyers, at <m-hunter@comcast.net>.

Leaders of **Men**: <men@list.rc.org>. Contact the International Reference Person at <ircc@rc.org>.

Leaders of **"Mental Health" Liberation**: <mhl@list.rc.org>. Contact Glenn Johnson, at <glenn@glennwjohnson.com>.

Leaders of **Middle-Class People**: <middle-class@list.rc.org>. Contact Seán Ruth, International Liberation Reference Person for Middle-Class People, at <seangruth@gmail.com>.

**Moderators of the RC e-mail lists**: <moderators@list.rc.org>. Contact Allan Hansen at <hansen@rc.org>.

Leaders of **Native Americans**: <natives@list.rc.org>. Contact Marcie Rendon, International Liberation Reference Person for Native Americans, at <MRendon70362@gmail.com>.

Leaders of **Owning-Class People**: <owning-class@list.rc.org>. Contact Ali Bourne at <alibourne@hotmail.com>.

Leaders of **Parents**: <parents@list.rc.org>. Contact Marya Axner, International Liberation Reference Person for Parents, at <maryaaxner@gmail.com>.

Leaders of **Protestants**: <protestants@list.rc.org>. Contact Barbara Boring at <blboring@rc.org>.

Leaders of **Raised-Poor People**: <raised-poor@list.rc.org>. Contact Gwen Brown, International Liberation Reference Person for Raised-Poor People, at <gbbrown@udel.edu>.

Leaders of **South, Central, and West Asian-Heritage People**: <scw-asians@list.rc.org>. Contact Azadeh Khalili, International Liberation Reference Person for South, Central, and West Asian-Heritage People, at <azikhalili@gmail.com>.

Leaders of **Union Activists:** <union-activists@list.rc.org>. Contact Joanie Parker, International Liberation Reference Person for Union Activists, at <Joanieparker7@gmail.com>.

**USA Political Issues:** <usa-issues@list.rc.org>. Contact Julian Weissglass, International Commonality Reference Person for Wide World Change, at <julian@weissglass.net>.

Leaders of **Wide World Change:** <wwc@list.rc.org>. Contact Julian Weissglass, International Commonality Reference Person for Wide World Change, at <julian@weissglass.net>.

Leaders of **Women:** <women@list.rc.org>. Contact Diane Balsler, International Liberation Reference Person for Women, at <dibalsler@comcast.net>.

Leaders of **Working-Class People:** <working-class@list.rc.org>. Contact Dan Nickerson, International Liberation Reference Person for Working-Class People, at <dnickerson122@comcast.net>.

Leaders of **Young Adults:** <young-adults@list.rc.org>. Contact Emily Bloch, International Liberation Reference Person for Young Adults, at <bloch.emily@gmail.com>.

Leaders of **Young People:** <young@list.rc.org>. Contact Elvin Landaeus Csizmadia, International Liberation Reference Person for Young People, at <elvin@landaeus.com>.



MOUNT BAKER, WASHINGTON, USA • TIM JACKINS



## INFORMATION COORDINATORS

### FOR RCers IN PARTICULAR TRADES OR OCCUPATIONS OR SHARING PARTICULAR INTERESTS OR BACKGROUNDS

Many large categories of RCers have an International Liberation Reference Person (ILRP) or an International Commonality Reference Person (ICRP). These ILRPs and ICRPs are listed in *Present Time*. Below is a listing of “Information Coordinators” of other particular groups of Co-Counselors. The “Information Coordinator” is an RCer who has agreed to keep an up-to-date list of RCers in her or his category, occasionally circulate an informal newsletter (compiled and distributed via e-mail—one copy to *Present Time* always, please), and help plan any special workshops, policy statements, or classes. The informal newsletter is circulated only to the people who make a written contribution to it.

If you belong in one of these categories that has an “Information Coordinator” already, please write to her or to him, giving your full name, address, e-mail address, and phone number and sharing yourself and your ideas.

If you would like to be an “Information Coordinator,” please write to me and tell me why (and include your full name, address, e-mail address, and phone number). Feel free to suggest new categories. If you have someone else to suggest, I would like to hear that also.

*Tim Jackins*

### TRADES OR OCCUPATIONS

**BIRTH WORKERS (MIDWIVES, DOCTORS, NURSES, DOULAS, LACTATION CONSULTANTS, SOCIAL WORKERS, & OTHERS WHO WORK WITH FAMILIES DURING THE MONTHS BEFORE & AFTER BIRTH AS WELL AS DURING THE BIRTHS):**  
CATHERINE FISCHER  
ANN ARBOR, MI USA  
Tel. +1-734-395-5244 e-mail: catherinedfischer@gmail.com

#### **CLERGYPERSONS:**

BRIAN SMEATON  
LETTERKENNY, COUNTY DONEGAL, IRELAND  
Tel. +353-74-91 37917 e-mail: smeatonbrian@gmail.com

#### **CONSTRUCTION WORKERS:**

ELIZABETH SKIDMORE  
ROXBURY, MA USA  
Tel. +1-617-780-6792 e-mail: eskidmore2@aol.com

#### **EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATORS:**

DAN CORLEY  
PROVIDENCE, RI USA  
Tel. +1-401-467-9709 e-mail: dcorley@communityprep.org

#### **ELECTED OFFICIALS, CURRENT AND FORMER:**

RUTH ATKIN  
PACIFIC TIME ZONE, USA  
Tel. +1-510-653-6003, +1-510-915-0167 e-mail: ratkin1@aol.com

#### **FARMERS:**

KATE POTTER  
FULLERTON, CA USA  
Tel. +1-309-338-7876 e-mail: potter\_kate@hotmail.com

#### **FUNDRAISERS:**

ROEWEN WISHART  
SILVERWATER, NSW AUSTRALIA  
Tel. +61 449 659 769 e-mail: roewen.wishart@gmail.com

#### **MANAGERS, ADMINISTRATORS, AND EXECUTIVES:**

MIKE MARKOVITS  
STAMFORD, CT USA Tel. +1-203-536-5413  
e-mail: mjmrkvt@aol.com, mjmarkovits@gmail.com

#### **OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS:**

JAN FROEHLICH  
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YORKTOWN, VA USA  
Tel. +1-757-867-7909 e-mail: polymers1@aol.com

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Charles Owona  
Gulu, Uganda  
+256-782742361  
alfredoryem@gmail.com

Amharic:

Mesfin Taye Woldegiorgis  
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia  
+251-91 099 2565  
mtayewg@gmail.com

Arabic:

Iman Awadh  
London, England  
+44 7951-500-609  
iawadh@gmail.com

Basque:

Juan Gabriel Urriategi  
Antzuola, Gipuzkoa,  
Basque Country  
(between France & Spain)  
+34-943-766020  
j.g.urrio@gmail.com

Chinese:

Chen Pingjun  
Beijing, P.R. China  
+86-10-84648277  
chenpj@hotmail.com

Danish:

Susanne Langer  
København NV, Denmark  
+45-24647311  
susanne@susannelanger.dk

Dutch:

Marijke Wilmans  
Groningen, The Netherlands  
+31-50-312-2338  
marijkewilmans@hetnet.nl

Farsi:

Vida Mozafarieh  
Tehran, Iran  
+98-21-22604145  
vida5978@yahoo.com

Filipino:

Melanie Catalan Jimenez  
+971-562598809,  
+971-508724726  
melanie010700@gmail.com

Finnish:

Kaisli Syrjänen  
Finland  
+358-400-711206  
kaisli@hotmail.com

French:

Régis Courtin  
Villiers St. Frederic, France  
+33-155198386  
regis.courtin@obspm.fr

Fries:

Adalgard Willemsma  
Bitgum, Fryslan,  
The Netherlands  
+31-58-2163474  
adalgard.willemsma@  
gmail.com

Galician:

Maria Isabel Flores Seijas  
Moaña, Pontevedra, Spain  
+34-986-313996  
ifdm61@gmail.com

German:

Matthias Wentzlaff-Eggebert  
Mainz, Germany  
+49 6131 86456,  
+49 160 9017 1477  
m.wentzlaffeggebert@  
gmail.com

Greek:

Vivi Katou  
Athens, Greece  
+30-210-6454-326  
vivikatou@yahoo.gr

Hausa:

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

Hebrew:

Tami Shamir  
Shefayim, Israel  
+972-9-9584447  
tamisb@netvision.net.il

Hungarian:

Molnár Gabriella  
1537 Budapest PF 453/354,  
Hungary

Igbo:

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

Italian:

Nuccia Zanesi Foulkes  
Bristol, England  
+44-117-9466712  
nzanesi@gmail.com

Japanese:

Emma Parker  
Itoigawa-shi,  
Niigata-ken, Japan  
+81-90-6543-7591  
threadfish.river@gmail.com

Kiswahili:

Wanjiku Kironyo  
Nairobi, Kenya  
+254-724 787 115 (mobile),  
+254-72-24-66-971  
rc@sedsmmc.org

Lithuanian:

Taraseviciute Zana  
Vilnius, Lithuania  
+370-45-39-76-69-70  
zatara24@hotmail.com

Norwegian:

Anne Helgedagsrud  
Oslo, Norway  
+47 909 62 061  
helgedagsrud@gmail.com

Polish:

Yvonne Odrowaz-Pieniazek  
Jonkowo, Poland  
+48 502 594 833,  
+48 89 512 9356  
yvoodr@gmail.com

Romanian:

Ileana Vajda  
Timisoara, Romania  
+40-56-130604

Russian:

Skvortsova Anna  
St. Petersburg,  
Russian Federation  
+7-812-2737698  
anna.skvortsova@icloud.com

Spanish:

*Interim*  
Pamela Shepard Garcia  
Santa Fe Springs, California,  
USA  
+1-562-308-8588  
pluisa@mac.com

Swedish:

Søren Holm  
Vaxholm, Sweden  
+46 708-94 24 06  
soren@sorenholm.se

Tamil:

Mahendiran Periyasamy  
Herndon, Virginia, USA  
+1-502-386-1673  
mahendiranp@gmail.com

Yoruba:

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

Rational Island Publishers

Translation Coordinator:

Truus Jansen  
c/o Re-evaluation Counseling  
Community Resources,  
719 2nd Ave. North,  
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The price is \$25 per year for certified RC teachers (\$27.50 for Washington, USA, residents) and \$35 per year for all others (\$38.50 for Washington, USA, residents).*

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by Tim Jackins, Diane Balsler, Lorenzo Garcia, Barbara Love,  
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*Transcripts of all CDs and DVDs are available as a comprehension aid, at no cost,  
for people for whom English is not their first language.*

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The descriptions of these DVDs can be found at <[www.rc.org/page/rip\\_dvds](http://www.rc.org/page/rip_dvds)> on the RC website.

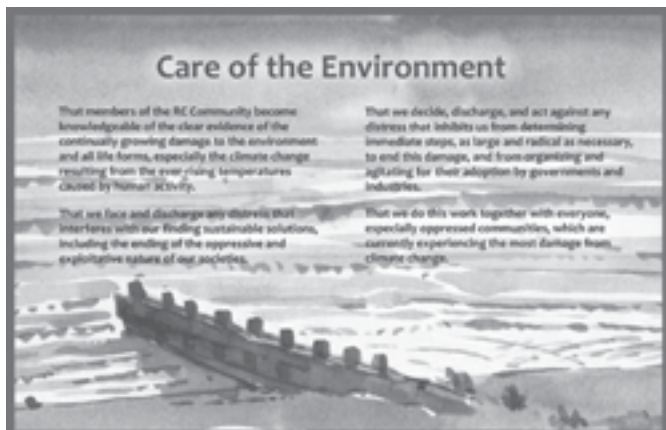
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If you are looking for information about Re-evaluation Counseling in a particular geographical location, we suggest that you first look in the section "Reference Persons for Organized Areas" to see if there is an Area Reference Person for that location. If there isn't, check to see if there is an RC teacher, by looking under the section "Authorized Teachers of Re-evaluation Counseling in Developing Communities." If there is no Area Reference Person and no teacher, check the following section, "Re-evaluation Counseling Contacts," to learn whether there is someone (who is not an RC teacher) who has expressed an interest in meeting others who might join with him or her in getting Co-Counseling started. If there are none of the above, you can contact Re-evaluation Counseling Community Resources at 719 Second Avenue North, Seattle, Washington 98109, USA, Tel. +1-206-284-0311, e-mail: <irc@rc.org>, for information on how to get RC started.

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e-mail: annephillynne@gmail.com

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CYNTHIA LAWSON  
WEST CROYDON, SA  
Tel. +61-423-775-527  
e-mail: cynthia.lawson@adam.com.au

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e-mail: louisa@netspace.net.au

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Tel. +34 943 766567  
e-mail: i-mata-hoz@outlook.com

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MARY KLAUSEN  
NORTH VANCOUVER, BC  
Tel. +1-604-255-9884  
e-mail: mary.klausen@gmail.com

##### Vancouver

ELAINE SHEARER  
VANCOUVER, BC  
Tel. +1-604-653-1115  
e-mail: elaine.shearer@me.com

##### Okanagan/Shuswap

MARTHA WICKETT  
SALMON ARM, BC  
Tel. +1-250-463-5315  
e-mail: mfw@shaw.ca

### MANITOBA

#### Winnipeg

DARLENE DANIELS  
WINNIPEG, MB  
Tel. +1-204-783-7723  
e-mail: ddaniels76@hotmail.com

### ONTARIO

#### Toronto

PHILIP REES  
TORONTO, ON  
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e-mail: toronto.rc.community@gmail.com

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e-mail: rcmalihong@163.com

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WILLY TUKUYI LUKANGA  
LUBUMBASHI  
Tel. +243 972373193  
e-mail: lukangawilli2016@gmail.com

### DENMARK

#### København

TRINE MARIBO CARSTENSEN  
KØBENHAVN N  
Tel. +45-35-35-79-86  
e-mail: trinem@msn.com

### ENGLAND

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RALPH DOMINIC PETTINGILL  
NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE  
Tel. +44-79 0515 8658  
e-mail: ralphpettingill@gmail.com

#### NORTH WEST

##### Manchester & Neighbours

SUE COOPER  
HIGH PEAK, DERBYSHIRE  
Tel. +44 16 6374 6621  
e-mail: suecoopernewmills@hotmail.com

##### Merseyside

LINDA BOYNE  
LIVERPOOL, MERSEYSIDE  
Tel. +44 151 722 2937  
e-mail: linda\_boyne@hotmail.com

### YORKSHIRE & THE HUMBER

#### North Yorkshire

(Acting ARP)  
ADAM MYERS  
YORK  
Tel. +44-1904 636055  
e-mail: adammyers31@hotmail.com

##### Leeds

TERRY SIMPSON  
LEEDS, YORKSHIRE  
Tel. +44-115-922-4389  
e-mail: tezbeulah@phoncoop.coop

### EAST MIDLANDS

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ANICA GAVRILOVIC  
NOTTINGHAM  
Tel. +44-115-922-4389  
e-mail: anica.gavrilovic@ntlworld.com

##### Leicester

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LEICESTER  
Tel. +44-11-6259-3563  
e-mail: ceemartin1@aol.com

### LONDON

#### Islington to Barnet

##### (London)

OLIVIA VINCENTI  
LONDON  
Tel. +44 20 8883 9230  
e-mail: olivia.vincenti@btinternet.com

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##### (London)

TRICIA CLARKE  
LONDON  
Tel. +44 78 0390 9058  
e-mail: tricia.clarke@btinternet.com

#### Northwest London

ELIZABETH MARTINDALE  
LONDON  
Tel. +44-20-8960-5393  
e-mail: ms.elizabeth.martindale@gmail.com

#### West London

BARBARA HARWOOD  
LONDON  
Tel. +44 78 9038 6854  
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GALE BURNS  
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Tel. +44-208-291-4108  
e-mail: josgale@jgdburns.org.uk

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ROMILLY GREGORY  
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Tel. +44-18 6551 0037  
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SOUTHVILLE, BRISTOL  
Tel. +44-11-79393517  
e-mail: wjforsythe@hotmail.com

#### Wessex

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POOLE, DORSET  
Tel. +44-12 0260 1395  
e-mail: pamelajefferies@googlemail.com

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MBABANE  
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+268-2347-2029 (h)  
e-mail: mngani7@gmail.com

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WOLDEGIORGIS  
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e-mail: mtayewg@gmail.com

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ELINA MALKAMAKI  
HELSINKI  
Tel. +358-407-549-491  
e-mail: hannaelinamalkamaki@gmail.com

### GHANA

#### Accra

BAMANA-YANGOU  
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ACCRA  
Tel. +233-244-381-060  
e-mail: urbainbamana@yahoo.com

#### Laterbiokorshie-Accra

YVONNE NAA DEDEI  
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SAPPORO-CITY  
HOKKAIDO  
Tel. +81-70-5012-2453  
e-mail: green810kyon@yahoo.co.jp

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Hokkaido West Side  
KAZUKO MATSUHASHI  
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YAMAGATA-PREF  
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e-mail: hiro\_peacefull@yahoo.co.jp

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TOKYO  
Tel. +81-80-5441-7584  
e-mail: ameame634@yahoo.co.jp

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e-mail: noha11968@gmail.com

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BASHKORTOSTAN  
Tel. +7-987-4850880  
e-mail: ga135@yandex.ru

St. Petersburg I  
SKOVRONSKAYA LIDIA  
ST. PETERSBURG  
RUSSIA  
Tel. +7-812-351-5781  
e-mail: li-skovronskaya@yandex.ru

St. Petersburg III  
SKVORTSOVA ANNA  
ST. PETERSBURG  
Tel. +7-812-2737698  
e-mail: anna.skvortsova@icloud.com

Cherepovets  
ALEXANDER VIKULOV  
CHEREPOVETS  
Tel. +7-8202-24-80-86

### RWANDA

Kigali  
JEAN CLAUDE (JUNIOR)  
SHEMA  
KIGALI  
Tel. +250 781072868  
e-mail: juniorsHEMA@yahoo.com

### SWEDEN

Göteborg Väst  
(Acting ARP)  
HELEN JANSSON  
GÖTEBORG  
Tel. +46-739-314366  
e-mail: helenjansson@hotmail.se

Göteborg Centrum  
CHRISTINA (TINA)  
TENGBERG  
GÖTEBORG  
Tel. +46-737148640  
e-mail: christina.tengberg@gmail.com

Skåne  
FREDRIK EKLÖF  
MALMO  
Tel. +46-708859171  
e-mail: parsamtal@fredrikeklorf.se

Stockholm Nord (North)  
BRITT ARBELIUS  
SOLNA  
Tel. +46 72-933 82 03  
e-mail: barbelius@gmail.com

Stockholm Sydöst (South-west)  
SUJATA MAINI  
STOCKHOLM  
Tel. +46-734-413-151  
e-mail: sujata.maini@gmail.com

Parsamtal Stockholm  
Sydöstra (Southeast)  
JOSEFIN HASSELBERG  
SKARPNÄCK  
Tel. +46 -70 725 91 70  
e-mail: superdolphin@hotmail.com

### SWITZERLAND

AARGAU  
Switzerland & Fribourg i. Greisgau  
GWEN POLLACK  
ZOFINGEN / AG  
Tel. +41-79-771-8078  
e-mail: gwen\_pollack@yahoo.de

### TAIWAN

HUALIEN  
Hualien Taiwan  
TSUI-LING WANG  
HUALIEN CITY, HUALIEN  
Tel. +886 912 132 751  
e-mail: hanaling@gmail.com

### TRINIDAD & TOBAGO

(WEST INDIES)  
Trinidad & Tobago  
CHANTAL ESDELLE  
PORT OF SPAIN  
Tel. +1-868-620-4616  
e-mail: chantal.esdelle@gmail.com

### UGANDA

Kampala  
MR. AFOLLO SSEMWOGER-  
ERE VVUBYA  
KAMPALA  
Tel. +256-753-421-092  
e-mail: vubix@yahoo.com



Gulu  
(Acting ARP)  
ATUNU NAUME MARRIAM  
ODONGKARA  
GULU  
Tel. +256-773-290940  
e-mail: naumeoak7@gmail.com

### UNITED KINGDOM

See Cornwall, England,  
Scotland, and Wales

### UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

#### ALASKA

Anchorage  
PATTI SAUNDERS  
ANCHORAGE, AK  
Tel. +1-907-278-2802  
e-mail: saunders.patti@gmail.com

#### ARIZONA

Phoenix  
JUNE-YVONNE MARTINEZ  
COLERIDGE  
PHOENIX, AZ  
Tel. +1-602-861-8008  
e-mail: jycoleridge@gmail.com

#### ARKANSAS

Fayetteville  
DOROTHY MARCY  
FAYETTEVILLE, AR  
Tel. +1-479-601-1321  
e-mail: dmarcy1@gmail.com

#### CALIFORNIA

Mendocino-Redwood Coast  
WADE GRAY  
FORT BRAGG, CA  
Tel. +1-707-357-4369  
e-mail: wahday@mcn.org

Sonoma County  
EDDIE HASAN  
GUERNEVILLE, CA  
Tel. +1-707-978-0270  
e-mail: eddiehasan09@gmail.com

Marin County  
JANET HUGHES  
FOREST KNOLLS, CA  
Tel. +1-415-488-9113  
e-mail: janethughrc@gmail.com

West & Northeast Berkeley  
GAIL MANDELLA  
BERKELEY, CA  
Tel. +1-510-843-0139  
e-mail: gmandella@comcast.net  
For more information contact:  
Paula Buel  
Tel. +1-510-847-7652  
e-mail: paulabuel@gmail.com

East Bay North  
SUE YOSHIWARA  
ALBANY, CA  
Tel. +1-510-684-8789  
e-mail: sueoda617@gmail.com

East Oakland  
MICHAELA MORSE  
OAKLAND, CA  
Tel. +1-917-518-4983  
e-mail: micaelamorsemindspring.com

Oakland  
MARIA FRANCO  
OAKLAND, CA  
Tel. +1-510-384-8919  
e-mail: rccorreo@earthlink.net

Greater Oakland  
MORGEN ELIZABETH-  
CHILD  
OAKLAND, CA  
Tel. +1-510-967-0565  
e-mail: moonwolfmama@aol.com

Alameda County (except Berkeley & Albany)  
RUTH HARTMAN  
CASTRO VALLEY, CA  
Tel. +1-510-543-6902  
e-mail: ruth@wordcrtf.com  
For more information contact:  
Iris Goldman  
Tel. +1-510-384-4617  
e-mail: irisjoang@gmail.com

Sacramento Valley & Foothills  
GAYLE CRIBB  
DIXON, CA  
Tel. +1-707-678-2601  
e-mail: gcribb@cal.net

San Francisco 1  
BRIAN FOX  
SAN FRANCISCO, CA  
Tel. +1-415-637-6266  
e-mail: bfoxae@gmail.com

San Francisco 2  
AMPARO VIGIL  
SAN FRANCISCO, CA  
Tel. +1-415-637-1536  
e-mail: avigil101@gmail.com

Mid-Peninsula  
JUDY SEREBRIN  
REDWOOD CITY, CA  
Tel. +1-415-215-2066  
e-mail: serebrin@sbcglobal.net

Peninsula South  
SHARON VEACH  
MOUNTAIN VIEW, CA  
Tel. +1-650-968-4354  
e-mail: srveach.rc@gmail.com

San Jose  
LEYLA MODIRZADEH  
SAN JOSE, CA  
Tel. +1-718-768-3412  
e-mail: leylamod1@gmail.com

Santa Cruz  
MICHAEL LEVY  
SANTA CRUZ, CA  
Tel. +1-831-427-9916  
e-mail: levysantacruz@gmail.com  
For more information contact:  
Roland Saher  
Tel. +1-831-295-6106  
e-mail: rolandsaher@gmail.com

Orange County/Long Beach  
ALLAN HANSEN  
CYPRESS, CA  
Tel. +1-714-875-8870  
e-mail: hansen@rc.org

Inland Valleys  
AARON JOHNSON  
PHELAN, CA  
Tel. +1-760-885-5191  
e-mail: travore@gmail.com  
For more information contact:  
Keith Osajima  
Tel. +1-909-705-9070  
e-mail: keithosajima@gmail.com

## REFERENCE PERSONS FOR ORGANIZED AREAS

### Central & West Los

Angeles  
MYRNA FRIEDMAN  
LOS ANGELES, CA  
Tel. +1-323-938-9783  
e-mail: mfried2510@ca.rr.com

### Eastside (Los Angeles)

STEPHANIE ABRAHAM  
SAN GABRIEL VALLEY, CA  
Tel. +1-626-818-3127  
e-mail: stephaniergirl@  
gmail.com

### San Fernando Valley

LUCY SOLOMON  
WEST HILLS, CA  
Tel. +1-818-340-8539  
e-mail: lucysolo@  
rocketmail.com

### San Diego

INGE TAYLOR  
SAN DIEGO, CA  
Tel. +1-619-972-7624  
e-mail: profmdwfe@  
gmail.com

### COLORADO

Boulder  
ANNA SCHOETTLE  
BOULDER, CO  
Tel. +1-303-444-5348  
e-mail: annabeing9@  
gmail.com

### Denver

CHRISTIE MILLER GOSCH  
DENVER, CO  
Tel. +1-303-320-0348  
e-mail: christiemg@  
yahoo.com

### CONNECTICUT

New Haven  
HANNAH LARKIN-WELLS  
GUILFORD, CT  
Tel. +1-203-804-4764  
e-mail: larkinwellshannah@  
gmail.com

### Lower Eastern

ROBERTA PARO  
NORWICH, CT  
Tel. +1-860-857-0976  
e-mail: raparo@snet.net

### Quinebaug Valley

GERRY PECHIE  
EASTFORD, CT  
Tel. +1-860-974-1043  
e-mail: leedspechie@  
charter.net

### Hartford

MARCIA MCGEE  
GLASTONBURY, CT  
Tel. +1-860-633-7537  
e-mail: m.mcgee1@cox.net

### DELAWARE

Concord  
MIKE REICHERT  
WILMINGTON, DE  
Tel. +1-610-667-9503  
e-mail: michreich@  
comcast.net

### Wilmington I

ELLIE BROWN  
WILMINGTON, DE  
Tel. +1-302-983-2902 (cell)  
e-mail: ebrown@wcupa.edu

### Wilmington II

LINDA WHITEHEAD  
WILMINGTON, DE  
Tel. +1-302-652-2704  
e-mail: lindaw302@  
verizon.net

### DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, WASHINGTON

See Washington, D.C.

### GEORGIA

#### Atlanta

CORNELIA CHO  
MARIETTA, GA  
Tel. +1-770-933-9523  
e-mail: opt2hope@yahoo.com  
For more information contact:  
Sam Landes  
Tel. +1-678-777-5863  
e-mail: samland2@  
earthlink.net

### ILLINOIS

#### Chicago & Suburbs

NJOKI KAMAU  
CHICAGO, IL  
Tel. +1-773-508-5708  
e-mail: ngk@  
northwestern.edu

### MAINE

Greater Portland  
DELILAH POUPORE  
BIDDEFORD, ME  
Tel. +1-207-251-5695  
e-mail: dpoupore@artisant.org

### MARYLAND

Silver Spring-Bethesda  
SALLY OESTERLING  
SILVER SPRING, MD  
Tel. +1-301-434-3237  
e-mail: sallyoes@verizon.net

### MASSACHUSETTS

Amherst  
LYDIA VERNON-JONES  
AMHERST, MA  
Tel. +1-413-256-8885  
e-mail: lvernonjones@  
gmail.com

### New Area in Western Mas-

sachusetts  
EUNICE TORRES  
BELCHERTOWN, MA  
Tel. +1-413-256-1186  
e-mail: eunicejw@  
gmail.com

### Northampton-East

JONATHAN KOHRMAN  
WHATELY, MA  
Tel. +1-413-665-9689  
e-mail: jonathankohrman@  
yahoo.com

### Northampton-West

MICHAEL JACOBSON-  
HARDY  
FLORENCE, MA  
Tel. +1-413-584-5898  
e-mail: mjacobsonhardy@  
gmail.com

### Franklin County/Greenfield

GLENN JOHNSON  
GREENFIELD, MA  
Tel. +1-413-773-7712  
e-mail: glenn@  
glennjohnson.com

### Worcester

SUSAN SEIBEL  
OXFORD, MA  
Tel. +1-508-987-8933  
e-mail: seibelsusan1@  
gmail.com

### Jamaica Plain/Boston

BETSY ABRAMS  
JAMAICA PLAIN, MA  
Tel. +1-617-515-4364  
e-mail: betsyabrams@  
hotmail.com

### Blue Hill (Boston)

JESSICA LIBORIO  
JAMAICA PLAIN, MA  
Tel. +1-617-331-7519  
e-mail: jessliborio@gmail.com

### Dorchester-Roxbury

JENENE COOK  
DORCHESTER, MA  
Tel. +1-617-686-4230  
e-mail: jenenecook@  
gmail.com

### Franklin Park

SHANI FLETCHER  
DORCHESTER, MA  
Tel. +1-617-251-6052  
e-mail: shanifletcher@  
gmail.com

### Cambridgeport

SARAH SPADEMAN  
CAMBRIDGE, MA  
Tel. +1-617-447-7784  
e-mail: animugs@gmail.com

### North Cambridge

JOEL NOGIC  
CAMBRIDGE, MA  
Tel. +1-617-547-6463  
e-mail: jnogic@comcast.net

### Central Somerville

CHRISTOPHER AUSTILL  
SOMERVILLE, MA  
Tel. +1-617-625-8081  
e-mail: caustill@pobox.com  
For more information contact:  
Marya Axner  
Tel. +1-617-776-7411  
e-mail: maryaaxner@  
gmail.com

### Somerville

JOELLE HOCHMAN  
SOMERVILLE, MA  
Tel. +1-617-872-2789  
e-mail: jhochman@pobox.com

### Mystic River

GLADYS MAGED  
SOMERVILLE, MA  
Tel. +1-617-628-3986  
e-mail: gladysmaged@  
gmail.com

### North Boston

RANDI FREUNDLICH  
SOMERVILLE, MA  
Tel. +1-617-628-4208  
e-mail: randifreundlich@  
gmail.com

### Muddy River

ANNE GREENWALD  
BROOKLINE, MA  
Tel. +1-617-277-6068  
e-mail: agreenwald814@  
gmail.com

### Newton & Environs

BARBARA DECK  
NEWTON, MA  
Tel. +1-617-312-6515  
e-mail: badeck1@gmail.com

### MINNESOTA

Between Two Rivers  
DOROTHEA HROSSOWYC  
NORTHFIELD, MN  
Tel. +1-507-645-6962  
e-mail: hrossowyc@gmail.com

### Hay River to St. Paul

JUDY TILSEN  
ST. PAUL, MN  
Tel. +1-612-874-1170  
e-mail: judymtilsen@  
gmail.com

### Minneapolis Gitchi Zibi &

Southwest  
SHARON HILBERER  
MINNEAPOLIS, MN  
Tel. +1-612-874-1170  
e-mail: sharonerer@gmail.com

### MISSOURI

Saint Louis  
RUSSELL VANECEK  
ST. LOUIS, MO  
Tel. +1-314-249-5089  
e-mail: redvan71@  
gmail.com

### MONTANA

Missoula  
JOE KIPPHUT  
MISSOULA, MT  
Tel. +1-406-370-1259  
e-mail: joej2008@gmail.com

### NEW HAMPSHIRE

Monadnock  
DEIRDRE HAYNIE  
ASHBY, MA  
Tel. +1-978-386-7371  
e-mail: deirdrehashby@  
gmail.com

### NEW JERSEY

Flemington/Princeton  
PATRICIA HENNESSY  
RINGOES, NJ  
Tel. +1-908-963-7327  
e-mail: path42@  
embarqmail.com

### Jersey City/Union City &

Surrounding Areas  
EUGENIO ESPINOSA  
JERSEY CITY, NJ  
Tel. +1-201-709-5490  
e-mail: ejes12850@yahoo.com

### NEW MEXICO

Albuquerque I  
(Acting ARP)  
LORENZO GARCIA  
ALBUQUERQUE, NM  
Tel. +1-505-831-4757  
e-mail: garcialore51@  
gmail.com

### Santa Fe

SPARKY (ROSEMARIE)  
GRIEGO  
SANTA FE, NM  
Tel. +1-505-577-5325  
e-mail: sgriego@  
rocketmail.com

### NEW YORK

Albany  
DOROTHY TRISTMAN  
ALBANY, NY  
Tel. +1-518-462-6005  
e-mail: dorothy.tristman@  
gmail.com

### Syracuse

JACK MANNO  
SYRACUSE, NY  
Tel. +1-315-391-5959  
e-mail: jpmanno@esf.edu

### Rochester

JIM BERGER  
ROCHESTER, NY  
Tel. +1-585-743-5584  
e-mail: mijregreb@gmail.com

### Ithaca

MARGO HITTLEMAN  
GROTON, NY  
Tel. +1-607-533-7501  
e-mail: mjh17@cornell.edu

### Brooklyn Bridge, NYC

NELSON SIMON  
BROOKLYN, NY  
Tel. +1-718-554-0853  
e-mail: nsimon218@  
gmail.com

### Crown Heights-Lefferts

Gardens  
TOKUMBO BODUNDE  
BROOKLYN, NY  
Tel. +1-347-833-7955  
e-mail: toksieb@gmail.com

### People in Park Slope

KATHLEEN MULLIGAN  
ORTLIZ  
BROOKLYN, NY  
Tel. +1-718-514-4851  
e-mail: kmulliganortlitz@  
gmail.com

### Brooklyn Ocean Parkside

TAMARA DAMON  
BROOKLYN, NY  
Tel. +1-718-349-1836  
e-mail: tkdamon@me.com

### Brooklyn West

ADLEY GARTENSTEIN  
BROOKLYN, NY  
Tel. +1-347-464-9040  
e-mail: adleyrc@gmail.com

### Brooklyn Sunset

MARITZA ARRASTIA  
BROOKLYN, NY  
Tel. +1-347-682-7219  
e-mail: maritza@  
thewritingroom.org

### Brooklyn Queens Connect

IRENE HONGPING SHEN  
BROOKLYN, NY  
Tel. +1-917-251-6949  
e-mail: rchips@gmail.com

### South Central Brooklyn &

Long Island  
KATHY MARTINO  
BROOKLYN, NY  
Tel. +1-718-627-6071  
e-mail: kathymartino522@  
gmail.com

### New York City North of

GWB Plus Westchester  
SARA SCHWABACHER  
NEW YORK, NY  
Tel. +1-917-831-0502  
e-mail: saraschwab@aol.com

### West Harlem/Washington

Heights  
BERTA RAMOS-RAMIREZ  
NEW YORK, NY  
Tel. +1-917-325-8484  
e-mail: berta.ramosramirez@  
gmail.com

### Central & East Harlem/

Central & East Bronx  
NEREIDA MORALES  
BRONX, NY  
Tel. +1-917-208-3552  
e-mail: nerimora@aol.com

### Western Queens

GREGG WAGNER  
SUNNYSIDE, NY  
Tel. +1-718-786-8982  
e-mail: greggwag@  
earthlink.net

### Queens Central

ROSE FICHTENHOLTZ  
JACKSON HEIGHTS, NY  
Tel. +1-917-523-9567  
e-mail: rtficht@gmail.com

### Hell's Kitchen & West of

Central Park  
ELA THIER  
NEW YORK, NY  
Tel. +1-212-665-7295  
e-mail: ela.thier@gmail.com

### Manhattan South of 110th

Street  
ED FRIEDMAN  
NEW YORK, NY  
Tel. +1-212-673-9067  
e-mail: edisacommie@  
gmail.com

### NORTH CAROLINA

Asheville  
JOAN MACKENZIE  
ASHEVILLE, NC  
Tel. +1-828-606-8470  
e-mail: joanmackrc@  
gmail.com  
For more information contact:  
Diana Lieb  
e-mail: djlieb@gmail.com

### Chapel Hill

RACHEL WINTERS  
CHAPEL HILL, NC  
Tel. +1-919-960-5117  
e-mail: rwintersnc@gmail.com

### OHIO

Athens  
(Acting ARP)  
JOHN SCHMIEDING  
ATHENS, OH  
Tel. +1-740-517-1978  
e-mail: john\_45701@  
yahoo.com

### OREGON

Portland North  
JUDI SOLOWAY  
PORTLAND, OR  
e-mail: jchazanow@  
yahoo.com  
For more information contact:  
Eldon Potter  
Tel. +1-503-867-5305  
e-mail: eldon@  
bryanpotterdesign.com

### Portland South

JEANETTE ARMENTANO  
PORTLAND, OR  
Tel. +1-503-577-3328  
e-mail: jarmentano@  
icloud.com  
For more information contact:  
Mary Daniels  
Tel. +1-503-839-3304  
e-mail: groundbear@  
gmail.com

## REFERENCE PERSONS FOR ORGANIZED AREAS

North Eugene & Outlying Areas  
CAMERON HUBBE  
EUGENE, OR  
Tel. +1-541-913-7271  
e-mail: human@nu-world.com



South Eugene/Springfield  
LOIS YOSHISHIGE  
EUGENE, OR  
Tel. +1-541-343-7795  
e-mail: lkyoshishige@comcast.net

### PENNSYLVANIA

Chester County  
ELINOR THOMFORDE  
KENNETT SQUARE, PA  
Tel. +1-610-388-2064  
e-mail: ebthomforde@aol.com

Spruce  
(Acting ARP)  
MARCY MORGAN  
PHILADELPHIA, PA  
Tel. +1-215-724-1571  
e-mail: marcymorgan48@gmail.com



Philadelphia Northwest  
(Germantown, Mount Airy, Main Line, & Montgomery County)  
BILLY YALOWITZ  
PHILADELPHIA, PA  
Tel. +1-215-432-6366  
e-mail: byalowitz@gmail.com

Wissahickon  
(Germantown, Mount Airy, Main Line)  
HAO-LI TAI LOH  
MERION STATION, PA  
Tel. +1-610-667-4561  
e-mail: tai\_loh@msn.com

Schuylkill I  
PAMELA HAINES  
PHILADELPHIA, PA  
Tel. +1-215-349-9428  
e-mail: pamelahaines1@gmail.com

Broad Street  
ERIC BRAXTON  
PHILADELPHIA, PA  
Tel. +1-267-278-2772  
e-mail: ebrax12@gmail.com



### RHODE ISLAND

Rhode Island  
BETSY BEACH  
PROVIDENCE, RI  
Tel. +1-401-467-9709  
e-mail: betsybeach@verizon.net



### TEXAS

Dallas Sherman  
KAREN CARRIER  
MABANK, TX  
Tel. +1-469-261-8580  
e-mail: kncarrier@sbcglobal.net

### North, Central, & East

Austin  
SELWYN POLIT  
AUSTIN, TX  
Tel. +1-512-696-0410  
e-mail: selwynpolit@gmail.com

South Austin  
BEVERLY BAJEMA  
AUSTIN, TX  
Tel. +1-512-809-0730  
e-mail: bev@bajema.me

West Houston  
BOB ROMERO  
HOUSTON, TX  
Tel. +1-713-995-8392  
e-mail: bobromero@gmail.com



East Houston  
JENNIFER KELLOUGH  
HOLMES  
MISSOURI CITY, TX  
Tel. +1-281-437-0622  
e-mail: jennifer\_m27@hotmail.com

### VIRGINIA

Northern Virginia  
DREAMA FRISK  
ARLINGTON, VA  
Tel. +1-703-524-1459  
e-mail: dreamawf@gmail.com

Charlottesville  
KAREN BYRD  
AFTON, VA  
Tel. +1-434-361-1359  
e-mail: kbyrdva@gmail.com



### WASHINGTON

Bellingham  
ALBERT FIELDS  
BELLINGHAM, WA  
Tel. +1-360-734-9056  
e-mail: albertfields@mac.com

North Seattle/Northwest King County  
SANDRA MCDONALD  
EDMONDS, WA  
Tel. +1-425-772-2417  
e-mail: mcdonaldmgregor@hotmail.com

Meridian (Seattle)  
DEBBIE BELL  
SEATTLE, WA  
Tel. +1-206-498-7403  
e-mail: deborahbell@comcast.net



Madison (Seattle)  
STEVE THOMPSON  
SEATTLE, WA  
Tel. +1-206-799-7288  
e-mail: stevedt@comcast.net

Duwamish (West Seattle)  
YUKO HIBINO  
SEATTLE, WA  
Tel. +1-206-947-6313  
e-mail: hibiyuko@gmail.com  
For more information contact:  
Lisa Kauffman  
Tel. +1-206-501-6542  
e-mail: lisaprws@gmail.com

Rainier (Seattle)  
KAREN LASOTA  
SEATTLE, WA  
Tel. +1-206-818-6801  
e-mail: lasotak@hotmail.com



Olympia  
JAN YOSHIWARA  
OLYMPIA, WA  
Tel. +1-360-951-5852  
e-mail: jyoshiwara@gmail.com

### WASHINGTON, D.C. (DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA)

Washington, D.C. 1  
JEVERA TEMSKY  
WASHINGTON, DC  
e-mail: jrtemsky@gmail.com

Washington, D.C. 2  
EMILY WILSON  
WASHINGTON, DC  
Tel. +1-202-320-9085  
e-mail: emilywilson@gmail.com

### WISCONSIN

Madison  
HOLLY JORGENSON  
MADISON, WI  
Tel. +1-608-233-5699  
e-mail: hollydjorgenson@gmail.com



Milwaukee  
MARTHA BARRY  
MILWAUKEE, WI  
Tel. +1-414-350-4761  
e-mail: barrymle@aol.com

### WALES

De Cymru/Cardiff  
PAT GREGORY  
CARDIFF  
Tel. +44-2920 226990  
e-mail: patj.gregory@gmail.com





# INTERNATIONAL REFERENCE PERSONS AND THE RE-EVALUATION FOUNDATION

## INTERNATIONAL REFERENCE PERSONS, INTERNATIONAL LIBERATION REFERENCE PERSONS, INTERNATIONAL COMMONALITY REFERENCE PERSONS, AND THE RE-EVALUATION FOUNDATION

### International Reference Persons

#### International Reference

**Person:**  
TIM JACKINS  
C/O RE-EVALUATION  
COUNSELING COMMUNITY RESOURCES  
719 SECOND AVE. NORTH  
SEATTLE, WA 98109  
USA  
Tel. +1-206-284-0311  
e-mail: ircc@rc.org



#### Alternate International Reference Person:

DIANE SHISK  
C/O RE-EVALUATION  
COUNSELING COMMUNITY RESOURCES  
719 SECOND AVE. NORTH  
SEATTLE, WA 98109  
USA  
Tel. +1-206-284-0311  
e-mail: ircc@rc.org

### International Liberation Reference Persons

#### For African-Heritage People:

BARBARA LOVE  
AMHERST, MA  
USA  
Tel. & Fax +1-413-253-3814  
e-mail: bjlove.rc@gmail.com

#### For Allies to Young People:

JENNY SAZAMA  
JAMAICA PLAIN, MA  
USA  
Tel. +1-617-308-5384  
e-mail: jenny.yob@gmail.com

#### For Catholics:

JOANNE BRAY  
STAMFORD, CT  
USA  
Tel. +1-203-273-3058  
e-mail: jmbray@aol.com



#### For Chicanos/as:

LORENZO GARCIA  
ALBUQUERQUE, NM  
USA  
Tel. +1-505-831-4757,  
+1-505-228-3063 (cell)  
e-mail: garcialore51@gmail.com

#### For Chinese-Heritage People:

FRANCIE CHEW  
SOMERVILLE, MA  
USA  
Tel. +1-617-628-4998 (home),  
+1-617-293-4058 (cell)  
e-mail: franciechew@gmail.com

#### For College & University Faculty:

ELLIE BROWN  
WILMINGTON, DE  
USA  
Tel. +1-302-983-2902  
e-mail: ebrown@wcupa.edu



#### For Elders:

PAM GEYER  
BELLAIRE, TX  
USA  
Tel. +1-713-666-7300  
e-mail: pgeyer@medcetera.com



#### For Japanese-Heritage People:

JAN YOSHIWARA  
OLYMPIA, WA  
USA  
Tel. +1-360-951-5852  
e-mail: jyoshiwara@gmail.com

#### For Jews:

CHERIE BROWN  
SILVER SPRING, MD  
USA  
Tel. +1-240-638-2813  
e-mail: ncbiinc@aol.com

#### For Lawyers:

MARSHA HUNTER  
CAMBRIDGE, MA  
USA  
Tel. +1-617-803-3449  
e-mail: m-hunter@comcast.net



#### For Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Queer, & Transgender People:

"JEANNE D'ARC"  
SEATTLE, WA  
USA  
e-mail: ircc@rc.org

#### Asst. Liberation Reference Person for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Queer, & Transgender People:

"DAVID NIJINSKY"  
USA  
e-mail: dnijinsky@gmail.com

#### For "Mental Health" Workers:

JEAN HAMILTON  
PALO ALTO, CA  
USA  
Tel. +1-650-493-6668,  
+1-650-387-3837  
e-mail: rjjean1@gmail.com

#### For Middle-Class People:

SEÁN RUTH  
ARDSBEG, GORTAHORK  
LETTERKENNY  
COUNTY DONEGAL  
IRELAND  
Tel. +353-87-2350362  
e-mail: seangruth@gmail.com

#### For Musicians:

HEATHER HAY  
VANCOUVER, BC  
CANADA  
Tel. +1-604-876-7148,  
+1-604-340-6027 (cell)  
e-mail: hhay3@gmail.com



#### For Native Americans:

MARCIE RENDON  
MINNEAPOLIS, MN  
USA  
Tel. +1-612-237-8942  
e-mail: MRendon70362@gmail.com

#### For Owing-Class People:

JO SAUNDERS  
WINCHESTER  
HANTS  
ENGLAND  
Tel. +44 1962 877465  
e-mail: jo.saunders@btinternet.com

#### For Pacific Islander & Pilipino/a-Heritage People:

TERESA ENRICO  
SEATTLE, WA  
USA  
Tel. +1-503-735-5419  
e-mail: teresaenrico@gmail.com

#### For Parents:

MARYA AXNER  
SOMERVILLE, MA  
USA  
Tel. +1-617-776-7411  
e-mail: maryaaxner@gmail.com



#### For People with Disabilities:

MARSHA SAXTON  
EL CERRITO, CA  
USA  
Tel. +1-510-234-2656  
e-mail: marsax@wid.org

#### For Raised-Poor People:

GWEN BROWN  
WILMINGTON, DE  
USA  
Tel. +1-302-656-2630  
e-mail: gbbrown@udel.edu

#### For South, Central, & West Asian-Heritage People:

AZADEH KHALILI  
BROOKLYN, NY  
USA  
Tel. +1-917-645-2538  
e-mail: azikhalili@gmail.com

#### For Union Activists:

JOANIE PARKER  
JAMAICA PLAIN, MA  
USA  
Tel. +1-617-522-4086  
e-mail: Joanieparker7@gmail.com

#### For Visual Artists:

EMILY FEINSTEIN  
BROOKLYN, NY  
USA  
Tel. +1-718-625-6696  
e-mail: emsusanf@gmail.com

#### For Women:

DIANE BALSER  
JAMAICA PLAIN, MA  
USA  
Tel. +1-617-390-5660  
e-mail: dibals@comcast.net

#### For Working-Class People:

DAN NICKERSON  
FREEPORT, ME  
USA  
Tel. +1-207-865-3869  
e-mail: dnickerson122@comcast.net



#### For Young Adults (ages 21-30):

EMILY BLOCH  
BROOKLINE, MA  
USA  
Tel. +1-617-763-8085 (cell)  
e-mail: bloch.emily@gmail.com



#### For Young People (21 and under):

ELVIN LANDAEUS  
CSIZMADIA  
HOOR (near Malmö)  
SWEDEN  
Tel. +46-737473444  
e-mail: elvin@landaeus.com

### International Commonality Reference Persons

#### For the Care of the Environment:

(Acting ICRP)  
DIANE SHISK  
SEATTLE, WA  
USA  
Tel. +1-206-284-0311  
e-mail: ircc@rc.org

#### For Educational Change (Classroom Teachers):

MARILYN ROBB  
ST AUGUSTINE  
TRINIDAD & TOBAGO  
Tel. +1-868-735-6377  
e-mail: joyfulplace@yahoo.com

#### For Family Work:

CHUCK ESSER  
PHILADELPHIA, PA  
USA  
Tel. +1-215-349-9428  
e-mail: ckesser1@gmail.com

#### For Languages & Interpreting:

PATXI XABIER ODRIOZOLA  
EZEITZA  
ERRIBERA GOTIA, ARABA  
BASQUE COUNTRY  
Tel. +34-630-828554  
e-mail: nuxilabi@gmail.com

#### For Wide World Change:

JULIAN WEISSGLASS  
SANTA BARBARA, CA  
USA  
Tel. +1-805-637-8895  
e-mail: julian@weissglass.net



### The Re-evaluation Foundation

#### President:

MIKE MARKOVITS  
STAMFORD, CT  
USA  
Tel. +1-203-536-5413  
e-mail: mjmrvts@aol.com,  
mjmrvts@gmail.com

#### Send contributions to:

THE RE-EVALUATION  
FOUNDATION  
P.O. BOX 9292  
QUEEN ANNE STATION  
SEATTLE, WA 98109  
USA



SOOJA KELSEY

# AUTHORIZED TEACHERS OF RE-EVALUATION COUNSELING IN DEVELOPING COMMUNITIES

## ALGERIA

BADIS FATEH KHIREDDINE  
TIPAZA  
Tel. +213 0662675379  
e-mail: khiredinebadis@gmail.com

## ARGENTINA

SILVINA SPAGNUOLO  
CASTELAR, BS AS  
Tel. +54-4692-2733  
e-mail: silvispag@hotmail.com

## AUSTRALIA

### NEW SOUTH WALES

NICOLE COONEY  
CARDIFF, NSW  
Tel. +61 408 938 740  
e-mail: nicintaz@hotmail.com

HELEN LAMONT  
EAST GOSFORD, NSW  
Tel. +61 403 454 004  
e-mail: helenlamont7@gmail.com

JANE LESLEY  
MARRICKVILLE,  
SYDNEY, NSW  
Tel. +61 2 7901 9655  
email: jh2204@gmail.com

JO PERRY  
RANDWICK,  
SYDNEY, NSW  
Tel. +61 410 413 467  
e-mail: jp44213@gmail.com

JOANI LEWIS  
GRANVILLE, SYDNEY, NSW  
Tel. +61 423 696 303  
e-mail: 59honey@gmail.com

ANN PORCINO  
MOSMAN, SYDNEY, NSW  
Tel. +61 417 266 301  
e-mail: atporcino@gmail.com

SANDY WILDER  
MORUYA, NSW  
Tel. +61-407-402-021  
e-mail: southernandpiper@gmail.com

LAUREL WADDELL  
BEGA, NSW  
Tel. +61-3-62233716  
e-mail: waddellaurel@hotmail.com

## NORTHERN TERRITORY

KATHY BANNISTER  
MILLNER (DARWIN), NT  
Tel. +61-408-895-621  
e-mail: kathrynbannister1@gmail.com

BARBARA MOLANUS  
ALICE SPRINGS, NT  
Tel. +61-439 827 160  
e-mail: barbstar@gmail.com

## QUEENSLAND

MARIAN BOMAN  
BRISBANE, QLD  
Tel. +61-402 396 547  
e-mail: bomann2@gmail.com

MARGARET PESTORIUS  
CAIRNS, QLD  
Tel. +61-7-4052-1563  
e-mail: margaret@cairnspacbypeace.org

## TASMANIA

JODIE EPPER  
HOBART, TAS  
Tel. +61 03 6223 4745  
e-mail: jodie.epper@yahoo.com

RICHARD JAMES HALE  
SOUTH HOBART, TAS  
Tel. +61 3622-32690  
e-mail: richardjameshal@gmail.com

ANDREW DOUBE  
SOUTH HOBART, TAS  
Tel. +61 0429-015-371  
e-mail: andre.doube@gmail.com

PAMELA MEARS  
KINGSTON, TAS  
Tel. +61-427-348-766  
e-mail: pamelamears@gmail.com

## BASQUE COUNTRY

(Between France & Spain)

### BIZKAIA

FERMIN PORRAS  
BOCANEGRA  
GORLIZ, BIZKAIA  
Tel. +34-666-76-79-16  
e-mail: fermin.porras2@gmail.com

YOLANDA SAEZ GOMEZ  
SONDIKA, BIZKAIA  
Tel. +94-6549613  
e-mail: yolanda.saez@gmail.com

## BENIN, REPUBLIC OF

ERIC AMOUSSOU-GUENOU  
COTONOU  
Tel. +229-9420-8255,  
+229-9747 5843,  
+229-98765126  
e-mail: guenoueric2@yahoo.fr

ANGELO AMOUSSOU-GUENOU  
COTONOU  
Tel. +229-93577813,  
+229-6454 2284  
e-mail: angelofranz@yahoo.fr

ALAIN SAKITI  
COTONOU  
Tel. +229-9623-2162  
e-mail: freshsak@yahoo.fr

## BOLIVIA

PATRICIA IBARRA  
BAJO ACHUMANI-ZONA SUR  
LA PAZ  
Tel. +591-2-279-7970  
e-mail: pibarrasi@gmail.com

## CAMEROON

FELIX NKAM  
DOUALA  
Tel. +237 699 633 549  
e-mail: nkamfelix@yahoo.fr

## CANADA

### ALBERTA

AMBER FORNELLI  
CALGARY, AB  
Tel. +1-403-999-2899  
e-mail: aformelli@alumni.sfu.ca

LAURA MUNOZ  
ROCKYVIEW COUNTY, AB  
Tel. +1-403-807-2593  
e-mail: lauramunoz@yahoo.ca

### BRITISH COLUMBIA

KERRI WALL  
FERNIE, BC  
Tel. +1-250-423-6986  
e-mail: kerriwall@hotmail.com

BILL HORNE  
WELLS, BC  
Tel. +1-250-994-2332  
e-mail: bhorne@netbistro.com

CLAIRE KUJUNDZIC  
WELLS, BC  
Tel. +1-250-994-2332  
e-mail: claire@clairreart.ca

ELIZABETH SHEFRIN  
GABRIOLA ISLAND, BC  
Tel. +1-250-727-7476  
e-mail: simaelizabeth@gmail.com

SAMANTHA SANDERSON  
SALT SPRING ISLAND, BC  
Tel. +1-250-537-9296  
e-mail: swsanderson22@gmail.com

BETH CRUISE  
VICTORIA, BC  
Tel. +1-250-727-9163  
e-mail: rcbethcruise@gmail.com

### NEW BRUNSWICK

MARY ANN COLEMAN  
WATERFORD, NB  
Tel. +1-506-433-5232  
e-mail: macoleman.nb@gmail.com

### ONTARIO

JEAN HANSON  
OTTAWA, ON  
Tel. +1-613-321-2765  
e-mail: jeanh@magma.ca

LIZ HANSON  
OTTAWA, ON  
Tel. +1-917-656-7560  
e-mail: hansonlizzy@gmail.com

### QUÉBEC

MANUEL MEUNE  
MONTREAL, QC  
Tel. +1-514-522-3273  
e-mail: manuelmeune@hotmail.com

ANNIE POTTER  
NORTH HATLEY, QC  
Tel. +1-819-919-4658  
e-mail: anniepwrite@gmail.com

## CHILE

### REGION METROPOLITANA DE SANTIAGO

ELLEN TAIT  
LA REINA, SANTIAGO, RM  
Tel. +56-99-873-1199  
e-mail: ellentait@hotmail.com

EMMA MORALES LAFATA  
PUENTE ALTO, RM  
Tel. +56-2-265-3962  
e-mail: e.edithm@hotmail.com

ROSA PONCE DIAZ  
PUENTE ALTO, RM  
Tel. +56-999710234  
e-mail: rosaponce2004@hotmail.com

## CHINESE MAINLAND

See Hong Kong and Taiwan under separate listings

### HEILONGJIANG PROVINCE

HANG DONG  
DAQING, HEILONGJIANG  
Tel. +86-138 368 68886  
e-mail: 16551538@99.com  
e-mail: wurongrong85@hotmail.com

### ZHEJIANG PROVINCE

WU RONGRONG  
HANGZHOU, ZHEJIANG  
Tel. +86-18698558680  
e-mail: wurongrong85@hotmail.com

SHAN MIN  
HANGZHOU, ZHEJIANG  
Tel. +86-1377499439  
e-mail: 29245908@qq.com

CHEN ZHENZHEN  
HANGZHOU, ZHEJIANG  
Tel. +86-13588482806  
e-mail: 106181691@qq.com

HE YUEQIAN  
WENZHO, ZHEJIANG  
Tel. +86 4439-492347  
e-mail: 1136114648@qq.com

### FUJIAN PROVINCE

DOU JUN  
XIAMEN, FUJIAN  
Tel. +86-135 8186 2375  
e-mail: candy.dou@foxmail.com

### JIANGXI PROVINCE

CHEN MINGRUI  
JINGDESHEN  
JIAGXI PROVINCE  
Tel. +86-13517989423  
e-mail: 583918555@qq.com

WEN YOU  
JINGDEZHEN SHI,  
JIANGXI SHENG  
Tel. +86-13407989707  
e-mail: 13082203@qq.com

## GUANGDONG PROVINCE

LIYA DONG  
GUANGZHOU  
Tel. +86-13928853317  
e-mail: liya.banks@gmail.com

HA YINGMIN  
GUANGZHOU  
GUANGDONG  
Tel. +86-20-13660042174  
e-mail: ha3721@gmail.com

WANG AILI  
GUANGZHOU  
GUANGDONG  
Tel. +86-13527017427  
e-mail: ail\_w98@hotmail.com

LI GUODONG  
SHENZHEN  
Tel. +86-755-13652302896  
e-mail: 61076038@qq.com

### GUIZHOU PROVINCE

ZHOU HUAQIONG  
DUYUN, GUIZHOU  
Tel. +86-18685060717 (work)  
e-mail: emily\_zhq@sina.com

### SHANDONG PROVINCE

WANG JIMENG  
YANTAI, SHANDONG  
Tel. +86-15905352086  
e-mail: yishengrutong@icloud.com

### HENAN PROVINCE

CHUNTIE NIU  
ZHENGZHOU, HENAN  
Tel. +86-235 2669 5052  
e-mail: 244963596@99.com

## COLOMBIA

DISTRITO CAPITAL  
DALBA NATALIA LINARES  
VALDERRAMA  
BOGOTA, DC  
Tel. +57-316 232 5181  
e-mail: dalbanatalialinares@gmail.com

### SANTANDER

MARIA STELLA GOMEZ  
DE VELASCO  
BUCARAMANGA  
SANTANDER  
Tel. +57 6459900,  
+57-314 4442076  
e-mail: mastela7@hotmail.com

### CORNWALL

CLIVE MARTIN  
CALSTOCK  
Tel. +44-1822 833680  
e-mail: gurunmayi@virgin.net

## DENMARK

SJAE LLAND  
KARI CATHARINA SOFIA  
RASMUSSEN  
HILLEROD  
Tel. +45 61 654 70 71  
e-mail: kari.catharina@gmail.com

## EL SALVADOR

MARÍA LORENA CUÉLLAR  
BARANDIARÁN  
SAN SALVADOR  
Tel. +503-2260 6568 (h),  
+503-7761-0123 (cell)  
e-mail: marialorenacuellar@hotmail.com

## ENGLAND

### NORTH EAST

JEAN TURNER  
DARLINGTON  
Tel. +44 1833 660172  
e-mail: jeanturner22@hotmail.co.uk

### NORTH WEST

FIONA FRANK  
HALTON, LANCASTER  
Tel. +44-7778-737681  
e-mail: fionafrank@googlemail.com

TYRA TILL  
MACCLESFIELD  
CHESHIRE  
Tel. +44-1625 260260  
e-mail: tyra@tyratill.com

### YORKSHIRE & THE HUMBER

JULIE LONGDEN  
ALLTERTON  
Tel. +44-1274-481067  
e-mail: julielongden123@yahoo.com

ALISON NORRIS  
SHEFFIELD  
Tel. +44-114-2435732  
e-mail: anorrisrc@gmail.com

### EAST MIDLANDS

PAULINE HAMMOND BALL  
WELLINGBOROUGH  
Tel. +44 1933 403746  
e-mail: Pauline.ball@uwclub.net

### WEST MIDLANDS

JENNY MARTIN  
BIRMINGHAM  
Tel. +44-121-240-0998  
e-mail: families52@hotmail.com

MARK HINTON  
COVENTRY  
WEST MIDLANDS  
Tel. +44-24 76 714 417  
e-mail: mark.hinton@gmail.com

NETTA CARTWRIGHT  
STAFFORD  
STAFFSHIRE  
Tel. +44-1785-613585

JUDE HAWES  
NEWCASTLE UNDER LYME  
Tel. +44-793-246-4478  
e-mail: jude.hawes@snsab.org.uk

MARGUERITE PALMER  
NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME  
Tel. +44-01782 630751  
e-mail: margueritepalmer@aol.com

**EAST OF ENGLAND**

KARL LAM  
CAMBRIDGE  
Tel. +44-1638-604101  
e-mail: karl@parsonage1.plus.com

NICKY XANDORA  
BLOXHAM, OXON  
Tel. +44 1295 722639  
e-mail: nickyxandora@gmail.com

STELLA DARKE  
SOUTH NEWINGTON  
BANBURY  
Tel. +44 1295 720096  
e-mail: darkestella@gmail.com

ALIMA ADAMS  
BURWELL  
Tel. +44-1223-210561  
e-mail: alimaadams@hotmail.com

**LONDON**

ANTHONY LEETE  
LONDON  
Tel. +44-207-613-0535  
e-mail: anthony.leete@live.co.uk

ALEX SAUNDERS  
LONDON  
Tel. +44-208-470-9756  
e-mail: alex.saunders22@gmail.com

TERRY DAY  
WALTHAMSTOW  
LONDON  
Tel. +44-20-8520-5337  
e-mail: terryday1@talktalk.net

CATHERINE GOLDSTEIN  
LONDON  
Tel. +44-208-809-3010  
e-mail: catherine.goldstein@hotmail.com

MARY THOMPSON  
LONDON  
Tel. +44-208-340-7552  
e-mail: marythompson68@gmail.com

ANNA MOORHOUSE  
LONDON  
Tel. +44-171-20 8771-1160  
e-mail: anna.moorhouse123@btinternet.com

ANNA VAN HEESWIJK  
LONDON  
Tel. +44-7732-075-835  
e-mail: annavanheeswijk@hotmail.com

PAMELA CARNEGIE  
LONDON  
Tel. +44-7944411441  
e-mail: pamelacarnegie@googlemail.com

ALI BOURNE  
LONDON  
Tel. +44 20 7733 7253  
e-mail: alibourne@hotmail.com

BESS HERBERT  
LONDON  
Tel. +44-208-6712820  
e-mail: bess\_herbert@yahoo.com

DORANN VAN HEESWIJK  
LONDON  
Tel. +44-207-622-6493  
e-mail: vhdorann@gmail.com

SAM SILVERLOCK  
LONDON  
Tel. +44 79133-50510  
e-mail: samsilverlock@hotmail.co.uk

FIONA GILVRAY ADAMSON  
LONDON  
Tel. +44 208 677 8260  
e-mail: fio.adamson@btinternet.com

**SOUTH EAST**

RACHEL BECK  
HOVE  
Tel. +44-1273-945856  
e-mail: rachelbeckyes@yahoo.co.uk

LEAH THORN  
FOLKESTONE, KENT  
Tel. +44-1303 488 711  
e-mail: leathorn@hotmail.com

ARIKE  
FOLKESTONE, KENT  
Tel. +44-20-8488-6786  
e-mail: mrarike@yahoo.com

JO SAUNDERS  
WINCHESTER, HANTS  
Tel. +44-1962-877465  
e-mail: jo.saunders@btinternet.com

AGATHA COFFEY  
ST. LEONARDS-ON-SEA  
E. SUSSEX  
Tel. +44-1424-428-641  
e-mail: agathacoffey@yahoo.com

JAN WOODLING  
NEWHAVEN, E. SUSSEX  
Tel. +44-7747-784613  
e-mail: janwoodling@aol.com

**SOUTH WEST**

SHANNON COGGINS  
SHEPTON MALLET  
SOMERSET  
Tel. +44-1749-860767  
e-mail: shannoncoggins23@gmail.com

RUTH GOODFELLOW  
STROUD  
GLOUCESTERSHIRE  
Tel. +44-7794054623  
e-mail: rgoodf@hotmail.com

AL HEAD  
TAVISTOCK, DEVON  
Tel. +44-1822-616083  
e-mail: seaalbatross@btinternet.com

HEATHER NICHOLSON  
TOTNES, DEVON  
Tel. +44-1803 863717  
e-mail: m.heather.nicholson@gmail.com

RICHARD MITCHELL  
TOTNES, DEVON  
Tel. +44 1803 863717  
e-mail: nichmittch@supanet.com

HELEN BOURNE  
NEWTON ABBOT, DEVON  
Tel. +44 1803 812836  
e-mail: helen.bourne52@btinternet.com

NICOLA VINCENT  
BURNHAM-ON-SEA  
SOMERSET  
Tel. +44-1278-782274  
e-mail: nk.vincent@btinternet.com

**FINLAND**

**KARJALOHJA**  
PER VIKTOR HJALMARS-  
SON  
KARJALOHJA  
Tel. +358 400 284 012  
e-mail: viktor.hjalmarsson@gmail.com

VILMA MAATTANEN  
KARJALOHJA  
Tel. +358 40231758  
e-mail: vilmaelina@gmail.com

**KESKI-UUSIMAA**

KAISLI SYRJANEN  
Tel. +358 400 711206  
e-mail: kaisli@hotmail.com

**TURKU**

EEVA HAMALAINEN  
TURKU  
Tel. +358 40 557 9046  
e-mail: eeva.hnen@gmail.com

**FRANCE**

CLAIRE PARAVISINI-  
ERNOUF  
NICE  
Tel. +33-6 87 81 48 12  
e-mail: ernoufclaire@yahoo.fr

MARINA DEL CAMPO  
VENICE  
Tel. +33 6 99 08 83 34  
e-mail: marina.loubet@wanadoo.fr

BRIGITTE GUMBAL  
VALBONNE  
Tel. +33-4-93-12-93-49  
e-mail: bguimb@free.fr

CATHERINE ALBERTINI  
GRASSE  
Tel. +33 6 71 63 19 78  
e-mail: catherine.1@libertysurf.fr

CAROLINE MAISONNEUVE  
CREST  
Tel. +33 6 87 36 06 44  
e-mail: lelupindeschemins@yahoo.fr

VIRGINIE PHILIPPE  
STE ANNE SUR VILAINE  
Tel. +33 6 99 12 60 30  
e-mail: virginiephilippe@free.fr

CECILE FLOURY-  
BUCHALIN  
MONTS  
Tel. +33-4-72-87-07-81  
e-mail: flourybuchalin@gmail.com

CAROLINE WALLACE  
LARRE  
Tel. +33 7 89 51 60 45  
e-mail: cwarott@gmail.com

GAELE LEMEN  
SAINT-JACUT-LES-PINS  
Tel. +33-2-99 91 47 06  
e-mail: gaelle.le-men@orange.fr

JOS SJOLLEMA  
NONETTE-ORSONNETTE  
Tel. +33-4-73-89-04-95  
e-mail: j.sjollema@wanadoo.fr

FRÉDÉRIQUE  
BRAGUIER  
PAU  
Tel. +33 5 59-62-26-48  
e-mail: frederique.braguier@kiwi-fibre.fr

MATHILDE NEROT  
FRANCHEVILLE  
Tel. +33 4 72 16 92 20  
e-mail: mahane@wanadoo.fr

DELPHINE BARBEROT  
PURGEROT  
Tel. +33 3 84 91 77 71  
e-mail: delnew@gmail.com

DANA POWERS  
VILLIERS-ST. FRED.  
Tel. +33-1-34-89-81-25  
e-mail: danapowers26@hotmail.com

JOHN MULLEN  
MONTREUIL  
Tel. +33-1-48-97-84-52  
e-mail: john.mullen@wanadoo.fr

**GAMBIA, THE**

SAIBA SUSO  
SERREKUNDA  
Tel. +220 765 3642  
e-mail: shybetsuso@gmail.com

**GERMANY**

ANGELINA HAUG  
ESSLINGEN  
Tel. +49 0711-5764-8369  
e-mail: info@angelinahaug.de

JULIANE CIESLAK  
DIETRICH  
GOHRISCH  
Tel. +49-331-27328040  
e-mail: julianecieslak@gmx.de

CLAUDIA BERGER  
NAUMBURG SAALE  
e-mail: der@stressrat.de

CARSTEN FILOR  
BERLIN  
Tel. +49-30-61659091  
e-mail: c.filor@schoenberlin.de

SUSANNE (SUSI) BRIEL  
BERLIN  
Tel. +49-176-30419797  
e-mail: susi.briel@gmx.de

VERA KOPPEN  
BERLIN  
Tel. +49-30 231 85 895  
e-mail: verakoppen@gmail.com

JULIA SIEBERT  
KREFELD  
NORDRHEIN-WESTFALEN  
Tel. +49-2151-395946  
e-mail: julia.siebert@ymail.com

KARIN GEORGII  
STUTTGART  
Tel. +49-711-742562  
e-mail: karin.georgii@gmx.de

CORDULA HERCHET-  
HOFRICHTER  
NEULER  
Tel. +49-6221-860159  
e-mail: veit-hofrichter@gmx.de

EVE ABRAHAM  
KIRCHSEEON  
BEI MÜNCHEN  
Tel. +49-8091-518258  
e-mail: evejesko@yahoo.de

**GHANA**

REGINALD KPAKPO  
ACQUAYE  
ACCRA  
Tel. +233-244-818-805  
e-mail: reginald\_k84@yahoo.com

**GREECE**

LOUKIA PIKI  
ZAKYNTHOS  
Tel. +30-26950-24562  
e-mail: yogainzakynthos@gmail.com

PERIKLIS XONDROS  
XANTHI  
Tel. +30-25410 67250  
e-mail: periklisxondros@hotmail.com

KATERINA STAVROPOU-  
LOU-VLACHOU  
XANTHI  
Tel. +30-25410-77308

**GUINEA**

MAHAMADOU CELLOU  
DIALLO  
CONAKRY  
e-mail: celloud79@gmail.com

**HAITI**

CARMEN RODRIGUEZ  
SANCHEZ  
Tel. +569-8469-3924  
e-mail: carmenrodriguezsanchez@gmail.com

**HONDURAS**

ALICIA  
e-mail: alyfunes30@gmail.com

**HUNGARY**

VAJDA VIOLETA  
BUDAPEST  
Tel. +36 30 953 0822  
e-mail: vajdavioleta@yahoo.com

SUZSANNA LAKATOS NE  
DANO  
NYIRBATOR  
Tel. +36 30 392 2855  
e-mail: lakatosnedano.2015@gmail.com

**INDIA**

**ANDHRA PRADESH**  
VANDANA DEGAONKAR  
HYDERABAD  
Tel. +91-40-27562681  
e-mail: Degaonkarendana@gmail.com

J.B.V. LAKSHMI  
HYDERABAD  
Tel. +91-40-27017040  
e-mail: jvsuabrahmanyam@yahoo.co.in

**KARNATAKA**

JAGANNATH SHASHIKALA  
BANGALORE  
Tel. +91-9902584557  
e-mail: sjshashikala@gmail.com

**TAMIL NADU**

SR. BENEDICTA  
THENI, TAMIL NADU  
Tel. +91-4546-253907,  
+91 944 360 7921  
e-mail: pushpamfdo@gmail.com

**WEST BENGAL**

KAJAL SEN  
KOLKATA  
Tel. +33 246 06646  
e-mail: sen76kajal@gmail.com

SUMITA ROY  
KOLKATA  
Tel. +33-245-58043  
e-mail: sumita444@gmail.com

**IRAN**

VIDA MOZAFARIEH  
TEHRAN  
Tel. +98-21-22604145  
e-mail: vida5978@yahoo.com

**IRELAND**

MAURICE HEARNE  
LUCAN, CO. DUBLIN  
Tel. +353-87-6784764

**IRELAND, NORTHERN**

SHEILA FAIRON  
PORTRUSH, CO. ANTRIM  
Tel. +44-28-70-823193  
e-mail: fairon@fastmail.fm

LINDA O'DONOVAN  
BANGOR, CO. DOWN  
Tel. +44-28-9147-8655  
e-mail: linda.odonovan@btinternet.com

**ISRAEL**

MICHAL NOY MALKA  
MOSHAV HAYOGEV  
Tel. +972-775501523  
e-mail: noy.rc.il@gmail.com

ORNA SHUMAN  
BEIT SHEARIM  
Tel. +972-4-9531528  
e-mail: ornashuman1@gmail.com

TAMI SHAMIR  
SHEFAYIM  
Tel. +972-9-9584447  
e-mail: tamisb@netvision.net.il

**ITALY**

JUNE MACKAY  
CAREZZANO  
ALESSANDRIA  
Tel. +390-131-839-381

GIANNA BELTRAME  
VICENZA  
Tel. +39 349 724 2247  
e-mail: giabeltrame@gmail.com

**IVORY COAST**

ZOUNON KOFFI URBAIN  
CYRILLE  
COCODY  
Tel. +225 46 05 96 18  
e-mail: zounoncyrille@gmail.com

# TEACHERS IN DEVELOPING COMMUNITIES

## JAPAN

### HONSHU

MIYUKI TERADAIRA  
MATSUMOTO-SHI  
NAGANO PREF  
Tel. +81-90-7019-6082  
e-mail: miyuki.tag1115@  
gmail.com

MICHIKO (JO) IWAKI  
OObU-CITY, AICHI-KEN  
Tel. +81-70-5032-3359  
e-mail: ilovejo3700@  
yahoo.co.jp

### OKINAWA

TOMOMI SUZUKI  
OKINAWA-CITY  
OKINAWA  
Tel. +81-70-5480-0189  
e-mail: tomomyipo@  
yahoo.co.jp

### SHIKOKU

KAORI YOSHIOKA  
TAKAMATSU-SHI  
KAGAWA-KEN  
Tel. +81-80-3164-2288  
e-mail: sorano\_iroiro@  
yahoo.co.jp

AKARI TAKECHI  
NARUTO CITY  
TOKUSHIMA  
Tel. +81-080-3928-4900  
e-mail: akanotake@  
yahoo.co.jp

## KOREA

SANGWOO KWON  
SEOUL  
Tel. +82-10-7306-4746  
e-mail: sangwkwon@  
yahoo.com

## MALAYSIA

CHENG IMM TAN  
PENANG  
Tel. +60-164214092  
e-mail: cit2288@gmail.com

## MEXICO

### OAXACA

JUDITH BAUTISTA PEREZ  
SAN FRANCISCO  
LACHIGOLO  
Tel. +52-951-165-6869  
e-mail: judithb57@  
yahoo.com.mx

### QUERETARO

CONCEPCIÓN MÁRTINEZ  
GASCA  
QUERETARO, QUERETARO  
Tel. +52-49-74 09 89

### AGUASCALIENTES

CUCA MÁRTINEZ GASCA  
AGUASCALIENTES  
e-mail: refugiomartinez  
gasca@gmail.com

## MOROCCO

ANAS RAGHIB  
MARRAKECH  
Tel. +212-634512514  
e-mail: an.raghib@gmail.com

SARRA ELGUERRARI  
MARRAKECH  
Tel. +212 624671253  
e-mail: mouna.book@  
hotmail.fr

NOURJHANE MAHAMANI  
MARRAKECH  
Tel. +212 707033435  
e-mail: jihanemahmani@  
gmail.com

ABDERRAHIM AMALOUZ  
MARRAKECH  
Tel. +212 604-127919  
e-mail: amalouz.abdo@  
gmail.com

ESSALHA OUAFA  
Tel. +212 0662676200

## NETHERLANDS

### FRYSLÂN

INGRID DOLLEE  
LEEUWARDEN, FR  
Tel. +31-58-8446918  
e-mail: i.dollee@gmail.com

HENNIE JONGSMA  
LEEUWARDEN, FR  
Tel. +31-58-2137991  
e-mail: jongsma1@chello.nl

WYTSKE VISSER  
LJOUWERT, FR  
Tel. +31-58-2672084,  
+31 (0)6 38455620  
e-mail: wytskevissier.coe@  
gmail.com

ANNIE HOEKSTRA  
LJOUWERT, FR  
Tel. +31-58-2800853  
e-mail: annie.hoekstra@  
planet.nl

JAN VENDERBOS  
WERGEA, FR  
Tel. +31-58-2673543  
e-mail: j.venderbos7@  
upcmail.nl

ADALGARD WILLEMSMA  
BITGUM, FR  
Tel. +31-58-2163474  
e-mail: adalgard.willemsma@  
gmail.com

HANNIE SCHURMAN  
WIRDUM, FR  
Tel. +31-58-2552659  
e-mail: hannie.schuurman@  
gmail.com

### GELDERLAND

NIRUPA SHANTIPREKASH  
ARNHEM  
Tel. +31 268486183  
e-mail: nirupa@antenna.nl

ALBIEN HENDRIKS  
ARNHEM  
Tel. +31-26-4434168  
e-mail: albienhendriks@  
gmail.com

MARLENE MELFOR  
ARNHEM  
Tel. +31-26-3819221  
e-mail: m.melfor@chello.nl

BRIGITTE THEEUWEN  
NIJMEGEN  
Tel. +31-24-323-7663  
e-mail: b.theeuwen@  
antenna.nl

NICOLE KIENHUIS  
NIJMEGEN  
Tel. +31-24-3239769  
e-mail: nkienhuis@  
hotmail.com

JULIA KOSTELIJK  
NIJMEGEN  
Tel. +31-24-3568317  
e-mail: jmkostelijck@  
upcmail.nl

KEES JANSEN  
NIJMEGEN  
Tel. +31-24-3505405  
e-mail: bjoeteices@upcmail.nl

MONNIE PAASHUIS  
DOETINCHEM, GE  
Tel. +31 314 344453  
e-mail: monniepaashuis@  
gmail.com

### OVERIJSSSEL

ANNEKE GROOT  
DEVENTER, OV  
Tel. +31 314 769170  
e-mail: anneke@amao.nl

TANJA KIENHUIS  
OLDENZAAL, OV  
Tel. +31 541 511990  
e-mail: tkienhuis@yahoo.com

### UTRECHT

NICOLET GROOT  
HUIS TER HEIDE (UT), UT  
Tel. +31-30-2210977  
e-mail: burostrafwerk@  
gmail.com

ROSEMARIE MELENHORST-  
MULDERS  
EEMNES, UT  
Tel. +31-35-5387098  
e-mail: rosemarie.  
melenhorst@planet.nl

### ZUID-HOLLAND

JULIA TELTING  
VOORBURG  
Tel. +31-487-522304  
e-mail: juliatelting@  
hotmail.com

ROEL BOSCH  
ROTTERDAM, ZH  
Tel. +31 6 521 999 83  
e-mail: roelbosch@  
ms-panta-rhei.nl

## NEW ZEALAND

HEMAIMA CARKEEK  
WIREMU  
OTAKI  
Tel. +64-6-364-6512,  
+64-21-100 4120  
e-mail: hcwiremu@gmail.com

CARMEN CARKEEK  
OTAKI  
Tel. +64 6 364 0166  
e-mail: carkeema@gmail.com

ALISON KENNEDY  
NELSON  
Tel. +64-3-548-8467  
e-mail: ali.kennedy@xtra.co.nz

AMI KENNEDY  
NELSON  
Tel. +64-3-386-1025  
e-mail: amikgrowingfood@  
gmail.com

FRANCA MORANI  
TAKAKA  
GOLDEN BAY  
Tel. +64-3-525-6202  
e-mail: francamorani@  
hotmail.it

GIULIANA MORANI  
TAKAKA  
GOLDEN BAY  
Tel. +64-3-525-3389  
e-mail: giulimorani@  
hotmail.com

DIANE SHANNON  
CHRISTCHURCH  
Tel. +64 3 332 2360  
e-mail: diane.shannon@  
cdhb.health.nz

NIKKI BERRY  
CHRISTCHURCH  
CANTERBURY  
Tel. +64-3-981-8729  
e-mail: nikki@sing.co.nz

UMI ASAKA  
NORTH DUNEDIN  
Tel. +64 0211 093218  
e-mail: a.rose.dream.0929@  
gmail.com

LANCE CABLK  
DEVONPORT, AUCKLAND  
Tel. +64-9-446-6546  
e-mail: lcablk01010@  
gmail.com

## NICARAGUA

GUSNARA DEL CARMEN  
BUSTOS HURTADO  
SAN MARCOS  
Tel. +505-88640035

## NIGERIA

### FEDERAL CAPITAL TERRITORY

AKUDOLU IFEYINWA  
ABUJA, FCT  
Tel. +234-806-2095171

MUSA ZAINAB  
MAITAMA DISTRICT  
ABUJA, FCT  
Tel. +234 8065449386  
e-mail: yaanaatmusa@  
gmail.com

### KADUNA

HANNATU BORORO MUSA  
KADUNA  
Tel. +234-62-210976  
e-mail: hannybororo@  
gmail.com

JOHN KAZACHIANG  
GARBA  
KADUNA  
Tel. +234-81642-05595 (work)  
e-mail: johnkazachiang@  
gmail.com

HAUWA B. MUSA  
KADUNA SOUTH  
Tel. +234 070 304 71355  
e-mail: hauwabmusa\_385@  
yahoo.com

### LAGOS

TEMITOPE FAKUNLE  
ATEGUNLE, LAGOS  
Tel. +234-8051214135  
e-mail: tope\_last@yahoo.com

### ONDO

ADEKUNLE AKINOLA  
AKUNGBA AKOKO, ONDO  
Tel. +234-803-656-5310  
e-mail: adekunleakinola99@  
gmail.com

BANKOLE AKINSELURE  
AKURE  
Tel. +234 0070342152-33  
e-mail: bankoleakinseleure@  
gmail.com

## NORWAY

ANNE HELGEDAGSRUD  
OSLO  
Tel. +47 909 62 061  
e-mail: helgedagsrud@  
gmail.com

SIMON JAMES-EIDE  
OSLO  
Tel. +47 906 333 50  
e-mail: sj-eide@hotmail.com

BRITA HELLEBORG  
PORSGRUNN  
TELEMAR  
Tel. +47-35-51-31-50  
e-mail: hhellebo@online.no

STEIN HELLEBORG  
PORSGRUNN  
TELEMAR  
Tel. +47-91153073  
e-mail: steinh\_5@hotmail.com

## PERU

NANCY CALLANAUPA  
MESCCO  
SANTA ANA, CUSCO  
Tel. +51-084-777294  
e-mail: nancyandes9@  
hotmail.com

ROSIO DE JESUS RAMOS  
FERNANDEZ  
CUSCO  
Tel. +51 984351440  
e-mail: rosiodejesus14@  
gmail.com

## PHILIPPINES

NIK LEUNG  
SAN FRANCISCO, CA, USA  
*Class taught over the Internet for  
the Philippines*  
Tel. +1-703-346-8351  
e-mail: nikleung@gmail.com

## POLAND

JACEK STRZEMIECZNY  
WARSZAWA  
Tel. +48 601 21 80 32  
e-mail: jacek.strzemieczny@  
ceo.org.pl

YVONNE ODROWAZ-  
PIENIAZEK  
JONKOWO  
Tel. +48-502-594-833,  
+48-89-512-9356  
e-mail: yvoodr@gmail.com

ZOFIA OLEJNIK-HASLUK  
LODZ  
Tel. +48-519088375  
e-mail: mahas@go2.pl

## PUERTO RICO

MARIA JUDITH COLON  
SAN JUAN, PR  
Tel. +1-646-319-9403  
e-mail: majuco4150@msn.com

LEYKAMARIE ALMA-  
BONILLA  
SAN JUAN, PR  
Tel. +1-787-758-7747  
e-mail: leykalma@yahoo.com

YARA ALMA-BONILLA  
SAN JUAN, PR  
Tel. +1-787-431-5795  
e-mail: yaraisady@yahoo.com

NELIDA ORTIZ ROLON  
BAYAMON, PR  
Tel. +1-787-222-8929  
e-mail: nelly51648@  
gmail.com

## ROMANIA

MIHAELA BERINDEANU  
TIMISOARA  
Tel. +40-56-167589  
e-mail: mikiberindeanu@  
yahoo.com

LAZAR IULIA  
MAGDALENA  
ARAD  
Tel. +40-357-402283  
e-mail: iuliaml@yahoo.com

## SCOTLAND

MARGARET GAULT  
FRASERBURGH  
ABERDEENSHIRE  
Tel. +44-1346-53-2487  
e-mail: margaret.gault@  
virgin.net

MICHAEL SPRING  
EDINBURGH  
Tel. +44 131 337 4990  
e-mail: mikespring@  
hotmail.com

FIONNTAN (JOHN)  
HURLEY  
MUSSELBURGH  
Tel. +44-7931-355-348  
e-mail: jf1hurley@aol.com

BARBARA K. SCHMIDT  
DUNOON, ARGYLL  
Tel. +44 1369-704-707  
e-mail: barbaraskmidt@  
btinternet.com

## SOUTH AFRICA, REPUBLIC OF

GAUTENG  
ROSLYN CASSIDY  
JOHANNESBURG  
Tel. +27 11 615 3572  
e-mail: rcassidy423@  
gmail.com

### WESTERN CAPE

HEIN KLEINBOOI  
BRACKENFELL  
Tel. +27-21-4479438  
e-mail: hein.kleinbooi@  
gmail.com

MARGARET GREEN  
CAPE TOWN,  
WESTERN CAPE  
Tel. +27-21-761-3027  
e-mail: mgreen@mweb.co.za

ZAAHIDA HARTLEY  
CAPE TOWN,  
WESTERN CAPE  
Tel. +27 083-383-0193  
e-mail: Zaaahida.Hartley@  
westerncape.gov.za

## SOUTH SUDAN

VICTOR BATALI SILAS  
YEI  
Tel. +211-955203537  
e-mail: victorsillas06@  
yahoo.com

ADE MARY MBARAZA  
JUBA  
Tel. +256 7 886 888 10  
e-mail: amaryasa17@  
gmail.com



**SPAIN**

OSCAR ARGUMOSA SAINZ  
PENAGOS, SANTANDER  
CANTABRIA  
Tel. +34-942-554338,  
+34-660798485  
e-mail: oscarargumosa@  
gmail.com

**SWEDEN**

KRISTIAN LUND  
FALUN  
Tel. +46-247 10483  
e-mail: kristian@norsbro.se

ANNIKA FEHLING  
VISBY  
Tel. +46-708467203  
e-mail: annika@  
annikafehling.com

**TAIWAN**

HUALIEN  
YIH-SHEUE LIN  
SHOUFENG, HUALIEN  
Tel. +886-934288728  
e-mail: ysl@gms.ndhu.edu.tw

**TANZANIA**

MARY MWITA  
ARUSHA  
Tel. +255 754520109  
e-mail: marymwita2011@  
gmail.com

ELIASENYA ISSANGYA  
ARUMERU  
Tel. +255 784982720

ELLY MASAM  
ARUMERU  
Tel. +255 784729648  
e-mail: emasam2@yahoo.com

MBONEA MFANANGA  
ARUSHA  
Tel. +255 753884001  
e-mail: mboneamfinanga184@  
gmail.com

**THAILAND**

PERMSUK AMP-  
ORNCHARAT  
BANGKOK  
Tel. +66-87-688-9692  
e-mail: permsuk.a@gmail.com

TED MAYER  
BANGPAKOK  
RATBURANA  
Tel. +66-86-599-4802  
e-mail: morethanmeets@  
gmail.com

**TOGO**

AMEDAVI EDOH  
LOME  
Tel. +228 9253 5816  
e-mail: edohbarnabe@  
gmail.com

EDMOND EKUE HETTAH  
LOME  
Tel. +228 9236 6243  
e-mail: ekuegan2004@  
gmail.com

KOKOUVI ABOBOYAYA  
KAME  
Tel. +228-9198-2465  
e-mail: cooleo2009@gmail.com

JENNIFER GBEKOU  
Tel. +228 93 62 05 16/  
99 99 77 17  
e-mail: jennifergbekou96@  
gmail.com

**UNITED KINGDOM**

See Cornwall, England,  
Scotland, and Wales

**UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

(Within States by Zip Code)

**ALASKA**

BRIDGET HITCHCOCK  
SITKA, AK  
Tel. +1-907-747-3102  
e-mail: bridgethitchcock@  
hotmail.com

**ARIZONA**

CATHERINE LAND  
EVILSIZOR  
TUCSON, AZ  
Tel. +1-520-261-1628  
e-mail: azcland@gmail.com

BRENDA CASEY  
TUCSON, AZ  
Tel. +1-520-981-7356  
e-mail: brencasey@yahoo.com

LOUISE GOOD  
TUCSON, AZ  
Tel. +1-808-381-2939  
e-mail: hanellingood@  
aim.com

CAROL ROSE  
TUCSON, AZ  
Tel. +1-312-933-8986  
e-mail: carolarose77@  
gmail.com

GENE GALAZAN  
PRESCOTT, AZ  
Tel. +1-928-443-9100  
e-mail: insiderartist@  
gmail.com

**ARKANSAS**

CHARLOTTE DOWNEY  
EUREKA SPRINGS, AR  
Tel. +1-479-253-6721  
e-mail: cdowney@ipa.net

PATTY MINOR  
FAYETTEVILLE, AR  
Tel. +1-479-935-0267  
e-mail: minorbiz@gmail.com

**CALIFORNIA**

BARBARA BORING  
SAN JUAN CAPISTRANO,  
CA  
Tel. +1-206-465-2430  
e-mail: bboring@aol.com

JULIAN WEISSGLASS  
SANTA BARBARA, CA  
Tel. +1-805-637-8895  
e-mail: julian@weissglass.net

DAVORA TETENS  
SEBASTOPOL, CA  
Tel. +1-917-518-7456  
e-mail: davoratetens@  
gmail.com

EMILY SIEGEL  
EUREKA, CA  
Tel. +1-707-845-2401  
e-mail: emily5@sonic.net

**COLORADO**

JULIE FOX-RUBIN  
BASALT, CO  
Tel. +1-970-319-1744  
e-mail: julie@foxrubin.com

**CONNECTICUT**

JOANNE BRAY  
STAMFORD, CT  
Tel. +1-203-273-3058  
e-mail: jmbray@aol.com

MIKE MARKOVITS  
STAMFORD, CT  
Tel. +1-203-536-5413  
e-mail: mjmrkvt@aol.com,  
mkmkmarkovits@gmail.com

TREY VAN NORSTRAND  
STAMFORD, CT  
Tel. +1-203-325-0940  
e-mail: chiahog@yahoo.com

**FLORIDA**

HENRY HALL  
TALLAHASSEE, FL  
Tel. +1-850-656-2207  
e-mail: henryhall6@gmail.com

LISA TRIPP  
TALLAHASSEE, FL  
e-mail: Lisatripp1@gmail.com

DENNIS LEFILS  
TALLAHASSEE, FL  
Tel. +1-850-421-1930  
e-mail: dennis.lefils@fldoe.org

DEBO POWERS  
TALLAHASSEE, FL  
Tel. +1-406-407-0787  
e-mail: debopowers@  
gmail.com

ALYSSA ZUCKER  
GAINESVILLE, FL  
Tel. +1-352-505-9119  
e-mail: alyssa.zucker@  
gmail.com

ELENA MURATORI  
KEY LARGO, FL  
Tel. +1-305-453-1835  
e-mail: seamaid55@  
yahoo.com

CHARLOTTE DOWNEY  
GULFPORT, FL  
Tel. +1-479-253-6721  
e-mail: cdowney@ipa.net

GLENDA FINDLAY  
GULFPORT, FL  
Tel. +1-917-767-5515  
e-mail: glendafindlay@  
gmail.com

MYRNA CHARRY  
PORT CHARLOTTE, FL  
Tel. +1-212-365-4695  
e-mail: myrnaicharry@  
gmail.com

LAUREN SPIRO  
VENICE, FL  
Tel. +1-703-862-6512  
e-mail: laurenspiro1@  
gmail.com

**HAWAII**

XIAN LAI  
HONOLULU, HI  
Tel. +1-808-391-9426  
e-mail: xian.lai@gmail.com

**IDAHO**

KATHY SCABBYROBE  
LAPWAL, ID  
Tel. +1-208-791-8711  
e-mail: kscabbyrobe@  
yahoo.com

PAM PIPER-RUTH  
BOISE, ID  
Tel. +1-208-344-5951  
e-mail: piperruth@msn.com

PETTRA POLLACK  
BOISE, ID  
Tel. +1-208-362-5587  
e-mail: pettra.pollack@  
gmail.com

**ILLINOIS**

ALYSIA TATE  
CHICAGO, IL  
Tel. +1-773-680-9767  
e-mail: alytate@gmail.com

KATE INSOLIA  
URBANA, IL  
Tel. +1-773-216-8650  
e-mail: kjinsolia@gmail.com

EDNA VIRUELL FUENTES  
URBANA, IL  
Tel. +1-313-550-8022  
e-mail: eviruell@gmail.com

**INDIANA**

PATRICIA TURNER  
FORT WAYNE, IN  
Tel. +1-260-744-7511  
e-mail: medina\_46803@  
yahoo.com

**IOWA**

JANET COOK  
AMES, IA 50010  
Tel. +1-515-388-3824  
e-mail: jancooks@gmail.com

MAGGIE LA WARE  
AMES, IA  
Tel. +1-518-268-1732  
e-mail: mlaware@iastate.edu

**LOUISIANA**

AMA ROGAN  
NEW ORLEANS, LA  
Tel. +1-504-650-1295  
e-mail: arogan@tulane.edu

JULIE LAUSÉ  
NEW ORLEANS, LA  
Tel. +1-504-202-2011  
e-mail: julie.lause@gmail.com

TANYA M. JONES  
NEW ORLEANS, LA  
Tel. +1-917-686-3022  
e-mail: tmjones.822@  
gmail.com

ELAINE CLÉMENT  
SAINT MARTINVILLE, LA  
Tel. +1-337-257-1592  
e-mail: cadienne@gmail.com

**MAINE**

CYNTHIA PHINNEY  
LIVERMORE FALLS, ME  
Tel. +1-207-491-9928  
e-mail: cynth@gwi.net

ANNA SHAPLEY-QUINN  
MONROE, ME  
Tel. +1-207-525-3323  
e-mail: anna.shapleyquinn@  
gmail.com

BONNIE TOMASH  
SKOWHEGAN, ME  
Tel. +1-207-474-0903  
e-mail: btomash@msad54.org

**MARYLAND**

HELENE KASS  
COLUMBIA, MD  
Tel. +1-410-992-9505  
e-mail: helenekass@gmail.com

MARY VIGGIANI  
OWINGS MILLS, MD  
Tel. +1-410-356-4069  
e-mail: mgvig@hotmail.com

PETER DWYER  
BALTIMORE, MD  
Tel. +1-410-464-1827  
e-mail: p.c.dwyer44@  
gmail.com

JOY KROEGER-MAPPES  
FROSTBURG, MD  
Tel. +1-301-689-3745  
e-mail: jkroeger@  
frostburg.edu

**MASSACHUSETTS**

BETSY FEICK  
FLORENCE, MA  
Tel. +1-413-583-1090  
e-mail: bf@betsyfeick.com

SUSANNE (SUE) WALKER  
NORTH ADAMS, MA  
Tel. +1-413-663-7396  
e-mail: greenwalker@  
verizon.net

IARA CURY  
WILLIAMSTOWN, MA  
Tel. +1-714-914-8714  
e-mail: iarapcurry@  
gmail.com

DUEY KOL  
LYNN, MA  
Tel. +1-617-669-3404  
e-mail: dueykol@gmail.com

ROBERT (BOB) WALD  
TEWKSBURY, MA  
Tel. +1-978-590-8172  
e-mail: rwald@alum.bu.edu

SABRA DOW  
NEWBURYPORT, MA  
Tel. +1-978-465-2766  
e-mail: sabradow@yahoo.com

CAROL CATALANO  
SOUTH HAMILTON, MA  
Tel. +1-978-468-4963  
e-mail: ccat@catalanoinc.com

JENNIFER WEXLER  
CANTON, MA  
Tel. +1-617-910-7848  
e-mail: jenwexshayndle@  
gmail.com

CARLOS ROJAS ALVAREZ  
BOSTON, MA  
Tel. +1-857-919-8468  
e-mail: crcror.rojas7@  
gmail.com

DIANE BALSER  
JAMAICA PLAIN, MA  
Tel. +1-617-390-5660  
e-mail: dibals@comcast.net

BECKY SHUSTER  
HYDE PARK, MA  
Tel. +1-617-276-3165  
e-mail: beckyshuster@  
comcast.net

KELLY BATES  
BOSTON, MA  
Tel. +1-617-233-5395  
e-mail: kbatesc@gmail.com

SARAH ALMER  
CAMBRIDGE, MA  
Tel. +1-617-913-3475  
e-mail: sarahalmer@  
gmail.com

JOAN KARP  
CAMBRIDGE, MA  
Tel. +1-617-864-2857  
e-mail: j-karp@comcast.net

PHIL LYNES  
NEEDHAM HTS., MA  
Tel. +1-508-364-1862  
e-mail: PTLynes@gmail.com

AMY RICHARDSON  
LARKIN  
EAST FALMOUTH, MA  
Tel. +1-508-563-6934  
e-mail: amylarkin@gmail.com

MICHELLE GERHARD  
JASNY  
VINEYARD HAVEN, MA  
Tel. +1-508-693-7823  
e-mail: mvvyet@aol.com

**MICHIGAN**

CATHERINE FISCHER  
ANN ARBOR, MI  
Tel. +1-734-395-5244  
e-mail: catherinedfischer@  
gmail.com

M'LIS BARTLETT  
DEXTER, MI  
Tel. +1-734-474-2723  
e-mail: mlis@umich.edu

PAM OATIS  
DUNDEE, MI  
Tel. +1-734-279-1800  
e-mail: pam.oatis@gmail.com

JOHN KIELY  
DUNDEE, MI  
Tel. +1-734-279-1800  
e-mail: jkiely@vmc.org

CINDY TOBIAS  
DETROIT, MI  
Tel. +1-313-842-1245  
e-mail: wocwst120@  
gmail.com

CHRISTINA KELLY  
EAST LANSING, MI  
Tel. +1-517-574-5543  
e-mail: ckelly@umich.edu

**MINNESOTA**

CLAUDIA MURPHY  
MOORHEAD, MN  
Tel. +1-518-466-6904  
e-mail: cmm214@aol.com

**MONTANA**

DEBO POWERS  
POLEBRIDGE, MT  
Tel. +1-406-407-0787  
e-mail: debopowers@  
gmail.com

**NEW HAMPSHIRE**

WENDY BYRN  
SULLIVAN, NH  
Tel. +1-603-847-9621  
e-mail: dervish@  
myfairpoint.net

**NEW JERSEY**

CARL HEATH  
MAPLEWOOD, NJ  
Tel. +1-973-327-2740  
e-mail: ceheath@verizon.net

MOIRA WILKINSON  
MONTCLAIR, NJ  
Tel. +1-646-265-2069  
e-mail: moiranwilkinson@  
gmail.com

ODELIA SHARGIAN  
TENAFLY, NJ  
Tel. +1-201-560-7872  
e-mail: oshargian@gmail.com



# TEACHERS IN DEVELOPING COMMUNITIES

RICKIE KASHDAN  
LONG BRANCH, NJ  
Tel. +1-732-222-1685  
e-mail: kashdan@comcast.net

CAROLYN SMITH  
GILLETTE, NJ  
Tel. +1-908-578-2235  
e-mail: vterinnj@gmail.com

MATTHEW FRIERSON  
RIVERTON, NJ  
Tel. +1-856-520-1318  
e-mail: mfry85@gmail.com

DIANA COOPER CRONE  
PENNSAUKEN, NJ  
Tel. +1-609-665-5647  
e-mail: dc.writeme@gmail.com

LUIS GARCIA  
MAYS LANDING, NJ  
Tel. +1-202-329-6389  
e-mail: luisg@gwmail.gwu.edu

JUDY GAMBLE  
SOMERSET, NJ  
Tel. +1-732-873-5231  
e-mail: judygamble@comcast.net

## NEW MEXICO

BETH ENSON  
ARROYO SECO, NM  
e-mail: wildmushroomsoup@gmail.com

## NEW YORK

HEATHER BUNCH  
KINGSTON, NY  
Tel. +1-845-532-9373  
e-mail: bunchoflularoe@gmail.com

DYAMI NASON-REGAN  
HIGH FALLS, NY  
Tel. +1-845-594-4518  
e-mail: 4dyami@gmail.com

ELLIE KRAMER  
WEST HURLEY, NY  
Tel. +1-845-750-2922  
e-mail: elliek2@hvc.rr.com

ALYSON (ALY) HALPERT  
MILLERTON, NY  
Tel. +1-734-239-3641  
e-mail: akhalpert@gmail.com

JOHN BUCKLEY  
BUFFALO, NY  
Tel. +1-716-886-0544  
e-mail: love2healnow@gmail.com

ELISABETH ROSSOW  
BUFFALO, NY  
Tel. +1-716-903-5375  
e-mail: rossowelisabeth@gmail.com

MARK KILMARTIN  
CORNING, NY  
Tel. +1-607-962-5582  
e-mail: mkilmartin@earthlink.net

## NORTH CAROLINA

ANNE MACKIE  
THOMASVILLE, NC  
Tel. +1-336-313-5125  
e-mail: awmackie@gmail.com

GEORGE DIMOCK  
GREENSBORO, NC  
Tel. +1-336-210-8122  
e-mail: g\_dimock@uncg.edu

SUSAN LINDSAY  
GREENSBORO, NC  
Tel. +1-336-272-4690  
e-mail: sclindsay22@gmail.com

LESLIE KAUSCH  
GREENSBORO, NC  
Tel. +1-336-852-4063  
e-mail: mariaruatto@gmail.com

MARIA RUATTO  
DURHAM, NC  
Tel. +1-828-989-7055  
e-mail: mariaruatto@gmail.com

DALE EVARTS  
DURHAM, NC  
Tel. +1-919-402-6275  
e-mail: dale.evarts@gmail.com

ANNE CLAIRE  
BROUGHTON  
DURHAM, NC  
Tel. +1-919-286-9391  
e-mail: acbroughton37@yahoo.com

ANNA GRANT  
DURHAM, NC  
Tel. +1-484-326-4399  
e-mail: annathegrant@gmail.com

BEVERLY A. BRANAMAN  
APEX, NC  
Tel. +1-919-773-8330  
e-mail: bbrnc@nc.rr.com

JOHN THOMAS  
CARY, NC  
Tel. +1-919-460-8909  
e-mail: frog.pond@mindspring.com

ANGELIA JAMES  
CHARLOTTE, NC  
Tel. +1-704-905-2185  
e-mail: adstradford2@yahoo.com

JEANNETTE HICKMAN  
CHARLOTTE, NC  
Tel. +1-704-726-0300  
e-mail: revjeannette@hotmail.com

## OHIO

HEATHER DEAN  
COLUMBUS, OH  
Tel. +1-614-572-6344  
e-mail: copalaa2003@yahoo.com

JOE SPARKS  
PERRYSBURG, OH  
Tel. +1-419-345-0885  
e-mail: joe.sparks@toast.net

SONDRA D. MCCURRY  
EUCLID, OH  
Tel. +1-216-407-7823  
e-mail: smccurry@ameritech.net

JOAN DANES  
BROOK PARK, OH  
Tel. +1-216-961-9444  
e-mail: kjdanes@nowonline.net

SARALYNNE THORESEN  
CINCINNATI, OH  
Tel. +1-513-542-6085  
e-mail: olive@e-burwinkel.net

BOMANI MOYENDA  
YELLOW SPRINGS, OH  
Tel. +1-937-450-3483

## OKLAHOMA

SUSAN MULLINS  
GUTHRIE, OK  
Tel. +1-405-821-9613  
e-mail: susan.mullins1906@gmail.com

## OREGON

RUTH MCNEILL  
CORVALLIS, OR  
Tel. +1-541-738-6950  
e-mail: ruthmcn49@yahoo.com

KENNETH DEVENEY  
ASHLAND, OR  
Tel. +1-541-488-5506  
e-mail: kenndev@yahoo.com

## PENNSYLVANIA

DEWAINE BEARD  
PITTSBURGH, PA  
Tel. +1-412-719-9904  
e-mail: dewaineb@gmail.com

ANN WILKEN  
JULIAN, PA  
Tel. +1-814-321-4144  
e-mail: abwilken@verizon.net

KELLY JOHNSON  
PORT MATILDA, PA  
Tel. +1-814-280-3127  
e-mail: kellyajohnson@gmail.com

CLAIRE FOREMAN  
MANSFIELD, PA  
Tel. +1-570-662-3218  
e-mail: claireforeman@gmail.com

KIM BANISTER  
BOILING SPRINGS, PA  
Tel. +1-717-574-5458  
e-mail: kim@banister-heishman.com

CHUCK BARONE  
CARLISLE, PA  
Tel. +1-717-776-4950  
e-mail: csbarone@pa.net

KATHY TUNNEY  
PHILADELPHIA, PA  
Tel. +1-215-637-3072  
e-mail: ktreds2@aol.com

PATIENCE RAGE  
PHILADELPHIA, PA  
Tel. +1-215-817-5667  
e-mail: paciencerage@gmail.com

GINNY BOOTH  
KEMPTON, PA  
Tel. +1-610-756-4431  
e-mail: gbooth@ptd.net

## SOUTH CAROLINA

JODY USHER  
ANDERSON, SC  
Tel. +1-404-668-0466  
e-mail: jusher@emory.edu

MARION FARINA  
MCCORMICK, SC  
Tel. +1-201-207-0590  
e-mail: farina39@verizon.net

## TENNESSEE

KALAI MUGILAN  
BRENTWOOD, TN  
Tel. +1-205-243-7747  
e-mail: Kalai\_Mugilan@yahoo.com

CLARE BRATTEN  
NASHVILLE, TN  
Tel. +1-615-383-5675  
e-mail: clarebratten@gmail.com

ANNE THOMAS-ABBOTT  
KNOXVILLE, TN  
Tel. +1-865-719-4911  
e-mail: anne.of.knoxville@gmail.com

BETSY HOBKIRK  
KNOXVILLE, TN  
Tel. +1-865-382-6207  
e-mail: betsyhobkirk@gmail.com

## TEXAS

LINDA XIMENES  
SAN ANTONIO, TX  
Tel. +1-210-492-9401  
e-mail: lindax1944@icloud.com

## VERMONT

BILL KEEGAN  
POST MILLS, VT  
Tel. +1-802-333-9372  
e-mail: bill.b.keegan@gmail.com

A. LAUREL GREEN  
CHESTER, VT  
Tel. +1-802-275-4646  
e-mail: laurel@planet@gmail.com

STEVE CROFTER  
CHESTER, VT  
Tel. +1-802-275-4646  
e-mail: steve.crofter@gmail.com

ANNE KOPLINKA-LOEHR  
BRATTLEBORO, VT  
Tel. +1-802-258-7612  
e-mail: anne.koplinka@gmail.com

GUY WOOD  
PUTNEY, VT  
Tel. +1-802-579-4844  
e-mail: guynvt@gmail.com

GAIL HAINES  
PUTNEY, VT  
Tel. +1-802-258-0369  
e-mail: gail.haines.48@gmail.com

KEN FIELD  
PUTNEY, VT  
Tel. +1-802-387-5288  
e-mail: kenfield@gmail.com

GARTH ALLEN  
BURLINGTON, VT  
Tel. +1-802-310-4962  
e-mail: garthcallen@hotmail.com

SUSAN MUNKRES  
BURLINGTON, VT  
Tel. +1-802-540-0736  
e-mail: susan.munkres@gmail.com

LISA BEDINGER  
SOUTH BURLINGTON, VT  
Tel. +1-802-865-0211  
e-mail: lisa.bedinger@comcast.net

KATHY MANN  
DANVILLE, VT  
Tel. +1-802-684-3698  
e-mail: kmnmccen@myfairpoint.net

MARILYN MCENERY  
DANVILLE, VT  
Tel. +1-802-684-3698  
e-mail: kmnmccen@myfairpoint.net

PAMELA PARKER  
E. SAINT JOHNSBURY, VT  
Tel. +1-802-748-5124  
e-mail: plparkervt@gmail.com

BARBARA DELZIO  
GLOVER, VT  
Tel. +1-802-525-3460  
e-mail: barbdelzio@gmail.com

## VIRGINIA

JEFFREY HINKLEY  
YORKTOWN, VA  
Tel. +1-757-867-7909  
e-mail: polymers1@aol.com

LAURA NEWELL-FURNISS  
LYNCHBURG, VA  
Tel. +1-434-665-7657  
e-mail: Lauranewell.furniss@gmail.com

## WASHINGTON

PETER SCHOONMAKER  
ISSAQUAH, WA  
Tel. +1-425-392-9236  
e-mail: pschoonmaker@comcast.net

LINDA BAKAN  
RENTON, WA  
Tel. +1-425-271-1097  
e-mail: lbakan@comcast.net

BETSY CARROLL  
SEDRO WOOLLEY, WA  
Tel. +1-360-299-0818  
e-mail: cbetsyjo@gmail.com

GARY BRANDT  
BELLINGHAM, WA  
Tel. +1-360-734-0383  
e-mail: gary@macy-brandt.com

HEIDI MORFORD  
CLINTON, WA  
Tel. +1-360-321-5206  
e-mail: heidim@whidbey.com

CAROLINE WILDFLOWER  
PORT TOWNSEND, WA  
Tel. +1-360-379-5376  
e-mail: ckwildflower@gmail.com

JUDITH-KATE FRIEDMAN  
PORT TOWNSEND, WA  
Tel. +1-360-643-1961  
e-mail: judelings@gmail.com

JUDITH KAY  
TACOMA, WA  
Tel. +1-253-759-5844  
e-mail: judithkay@harboret.com

BARBARA MENNE  
TACOMA, WA  
Tel. +1-253-444-1395  
e-mail: menneb@harboret.com

MIKE GRAHAM  
TACOMA, WA  
Tel. +1-253-759-4544  
e-mail: grafoss@icloud.com

## WALES

PIP WALLER  
LLANGOLLEN  
DENBIGHSHIRE  
Tel. +44 1978 861750  
e-mail: pipsie108@gmail.com

MARIANNE JONES  
MENAI BRIDGE  
ANGLESEY  
Tel. +44-1248-712962  
e-mail: swynmor@googlemail.com

PATRICIA HUGHES  
NEWTOWN, POWYS  
Tel. +44-1686-625980  
e-mail: patricia.hughes2010@hotmail.co.uk

STEPHEN HUGHES  
NEWTOWN, POWYS  
Tel. +44-1686-625980  
e-mail: steblits2010@hotmail.co.uk

KERAN SIMMONDS  
LLANIDLOES, POWYS  
Tel. +44-1686-411016  
e-mail: keran@hotmail.com

## ZAMBIA

PRECIOUS MONDE MWIYA  
LUSAKA  
Tel. +260-977-144977

BARBRA MALUMO  
LUSAKA  
Tel. +260 979478358  
e-mail: bmalumo@gmail.com

## ZIMBABWE

RUDO TRACY PHIRI  
HARARE  
Tel. +263 772 855452  
e-mail: rudop9@gmail.com

PETRONELLA MUZA  
CHICAGO, KWEKWE  
MIDLANDS  
Tel. +263-552-4283,  
+263-772-755-802



**RE-EVALUATION COUNSELING CONTACTS** *These are persons outside the organized Areas who have expressed an interest in meeting others who might join them in getting Co-Counseling started.*

**AUSTRALIA**

**NEW SOUTH WALES**

NICOLA OSSHER  
TWEEDS HEAD WEST, NSW  
Tel. +61 432 724 661  
e-mail: nicolaossher@gmail.com



**NORTHERN TERRITORY**

HENRY HARPER  
RAPID CREEK, NT  
Tel. +61-8-8948-2220  
e-mail: browndanharper@bigpond.com

**WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

PAM RUMBLE  
DENMARK, WA  
Tel. +61-8-9848-2015

**BAHRAIN, KINGDOM OF**

RAMAKRISHNA IYER  
MANAMA  
Tel. +973-1729-1583 (h),  
+973-1725-5209 (w),  
+973-3947-0153 (mobile)  
e-mail: uramiyer@hotmail.com

**BELGIUM**

KRIS VAN DAELE  
ANTWERPEN  
(BORGERHOUT)  
Tel. +32-496-10 73 91  
e-mail: krisvandaele1971@gmail.com



**CANADA**

**MANITOBA**  
CATHY-JANE GREEN  
BRANDON, MB  
Tel. +1-204-727-8343  
e-mail: cathyjane@yahoo.com

**COSTA RICA**

**GUANACASTE**  
KEITH LEHRER  
PLAYA SAMARA  
GUANACASTE  
Tel. +506-301-3867  
e-mail: keithkiddo@yahoo.com

**DENMARK**

**SJAE LLAND**  
LEIF SINIUS NIELSEN  
RØDVIK STEVNS  
Tel. +45-4158-3335  
e-mail: leif.sinius@leneogleif.dk

LINE SVENDSEN  
VORDINGBORD  
Tel. +45-3810-7280  
e-mail: dumildehimmel@gmail.com

CAMILLA SANDFELD  
NIVA  
Tel. +45-30702034  
e-mail: sandfeld@webspeed.dk

KARL NESSE  
HILLERØD  
Tel. +45 61 65 7071  
e-mail: karl.ness@gmail.com

ARNE STENTOF  
KIRKE HYLLINGE  
Tel. +45-3672-6616  
e-mail: arnestentoft@gmail.com

HELENA HAVBYN  
NYKOBING SJAELLAND  
Tel. +45-2671-6626  
e-mail: helena@havbyn.dk

HELLE EYDE LAURSEN  
TAPPERNØJE  
Tel. +45-30 29 07 29  
e-mail: helle.eyede@skolekom.dk

**DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**

DEBORAH WILSON  
SANTO DOMINGO  
Tel. +1-829-606-8416  
e-mail: deborahlynnwilson@yahoo.com

**ENGLAND YORKSHIRE & THE HUMBER**

HELEN LOWE  
SHEFFIELD  
Tel. +44-114-2838702  
e-mail: helenlowe935@btinternet.com

**EAST OF ENGLAND**

JEREMY THORNTON  
NORWICH, NORFOLK  
Tel. +44-1603-484924  
e-mail: rejemy63@hotmail.com

**GERMANY**

MARA WOLDT  
COPPENBRUGGE  
Tel. +49-5156-785252  
e-mail: post@mara-woldt.de

**GUATEMALA**

COLBY SINGLETON  
QUEZALTENANGO  
Tel. +502-3205-2583  
e-mail: singleton.colby@gmail.com

**ICELAND**

DOROTHEA LORENZ-  
DOTTIR  
REYKJAVIK  
Tel. +354-5510334  
e-mail: lorenzdottir@gmail.com

**INDIA**

**TAMILNADU**  
K. SOUNDAR RAJAN  
Tel. +91-4542-225202  
e-mail: soundar\_pmk@yahoo.co.in



**UTTARAKHAND**

SAVITRI NARAYANAN  
DEHRADUN  
UTTARAKHAND  
Tel. +91-9897053073  
e-mail: savitrinn@gmail.com

**WEST BENGAL**

DIPAK BASU  
TAKI, WEST BENGAL  
Tel. +91-3217-247584

**IRELAND, NORTHERN**

PASCAL MCCULLA  
BELFAST  
Tel. +44-28-90813444  
e-mail: pascalmculla@googlemail.com

**LATVIA**

KRISTINE MAK  
SALDUS RAJ,  
SALDUS RAJ.  
Tel. +371-26471-919  
e-mail: kristine.maka@gmail.com

**MADAGASCAR**

MME RAZANASETA  
JOSEPHINE  
ANTANANARIVO  
e-mail: razanasetata@yahoo.fr

**MALAYSIA**

YEAP EIT KUENG  
PETALING JAYA  
Tel. +60-16-332-0857  
e-mail: ekyeap@gmail.com

**MAURITIUS**

(INDIAN OCEAN)  
GISÈLE LUXIMAN-VARDIN  
VACOAS  
Tel. +230-696-4074  
e-mail: rengarani@yahoo.co.uk

**MONGOLIA**

CH. SOSORMAA  
CHINGELTEI DISTRICT  
ULAANBAATAR  
Tel. +976-1-310991  
e-mail: mongolcav@magicnet.mn

**NEPAL**

BIJAYA SAINJU  
KATMANDU  
Tel. +977-1-277033  
e-mail: bijaya.sainju@gmail.com

**PHILIPPINES**

VINCENT LEUNG  
QUEZON CITY  
Tel. +63-920-954-3424  
e-mail: vpleung70@yahoo.com

MELANIE CATALAN  
JIMENEZ  
LAS PINAS CITY  
Tel. +971-562598809,  
+971-508724726  
e-mail: melanie010700@gmail.com

**RUSSIAN FEDERATION**

**UDMURTIA**  
GUZEL GILMANOVA  
LDZEVSK, UDMURTIA  
Tel. +3412-52-12-18

**SAUDI ARABIA, KINGDOM OF**

GERALDINE GORMAN  
DHARHAN  
e-mail: ggorman@hotmail.com

**SPAIN**

**GALICIA**  
MARIA ISABEL FLORES  
SEIJAS  
MOANA, PONTEVEDRA  
Tel. +34-986-313996  
e-mail: ifdm61@gmail.com

DAVID MIDDLETON  
MOANA, PONTEVEDRA  
Tel. +34-986-313996

**SWEDEN**

CAROLYN JOHANSON  
JÖNKÖPING  
Tel. +46-36-176590

**THAILAND**

GEOFFREY H. WHEELER  
UDON THANI  
Tel. +66 81 2611715  
e-mail: geoffrey@cvbt-web.org

BENGT METTINGER  
CHIANG MAI,  
CHIANG MAI  
Tel. +66-86-188-1280  
e-mail: bamswed@hotmail.com

**TURKEY**

BILGE SELUK  
USKUDAR - ISTANBUL  
Tel. +90-216-343 94 42  
e-mail: blgsel@hotmail.com

**UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

**ALASKA**

SARAH TRAINOR  
FAIRBANKS, AK  
Tel. +1-907-978-2237  
e-mail: sarah.fleisher@gmail.com

LEONA SANTIAGO  
JUNEAU, AK  
Tel. +1-907-364-2682  
e-mail: lsantiago@cfc.org

GEORGE PARTLOW  
DOUGLAS, AK  
Tel. +1-907-364-3309,  
+1-928-581-8146  
e-mail: pricerbumanto@hotmail.com

MERLE NANCY HAWKINS  
KETCHIKAN, AK  
Tel. +1-907-225-2538

**ARKANSAS**

ALMA BURT  
DUMAS, AR  
Tel. +1-870-382-6585  
e-mail: almburt@gmail.com

**CALIFORNIA**

MYCHAEL DE LA TORRE  
SIMI VALLEY, CA  
Tel. +1-805-526-5502

SUSAN HEDGPETH  
PLEASANT HILL, CA  
Tel. +1-925-363-5779  
e-mail: hedgpeth@berkeley.edu

**COLORADO**

BOB LENK  
FORT COLLINS, CO  
Tel. +1-970-430-5365  
e-mail: boblenk@frii.com

ANNA ROYER  
SALIDA, CO  
Tel. +1-970-903-4174

**FLORIDA**

IRA HOROWITZ  
MIAMI, FL  
Tel. +1-305-757-8838  
e-mail: ira04@comcast.net

HOWARD ROBBOY  
DELRAY BEACH, FL  
Tel. +1-609-456-3874  
e-mail: robboy98@yahoo.com

MELBA BAEZ-OFFICER  
POINCIANA, FL  
Tel. +1-941-258-5419  
e-mail: baezmo@hotmail.com

**ILLINOIS**

FRED LAMB  
URBANA, IL  
Tel. +1-217-840-3909  
e-mail: flkamb@gmail.com

**INDIANA**

NANCY MARIE  
ROBERTSON  
INDIANAPOLIS, IN  
Tel. +1-317-417-2592  
e-mail: Herstorian.Grrl@gmail.com

**IOWA**

CLAIRE WOFFORD  
IOWA CITY, IA  
Tel. +1-641-233-7633  
e-mail: M.claire.wofford@gmail.com

IRVING TREADWAY  
WEST BRANCH, IA  
Tel. +1-319-643-7623

**KENTUCKY**

CAROL LAMM  
BEREA, KY  
Tel. +1-859-986-9256  
e-mail: carol@klingbeils.us

**MAINE**

BOBBIE GOLDMAN  
MOUNT DESERT, ME  
Tel. +1-978-604-4953  
e-mail: bobbie082@gmail.com

**MICHIGAN**

MARY MYERS  
HUNTINGTON WOODS, MI  
Tel. +1-248-545-9080  
e-mail: marymy@aol.com

**MONTANA**

Laurie Talcott  
LIVINGSTON, MT  
Tel. +1-831-234-4237  
e-mail: laurietalco@sbcglobal.net

SHARON SILVAS WAGNER  
EAST GLACIER PARK, MT  
Tel. +1-406-459-2182  
e-mail: silvas.sharon@gmail.com

**NEVADA**

POLLY PEACOCK  
RENO, NV  
Tel. +1-775-329-0128

**NEW HAMPSHIRE**

LOTUS LIEN  
MANCHESTER, NH  
Tel. +1-603-275-9988  
e-mail: lienl@hotmail.com

CHRISTINE GARR-MAY  
LUKE  
LACONIA, NH  
Tel. +1-401-742-5361  
e-mail: christinegluke@gmail.com

**NEW YORK**

PHUNG PHAM  
PLATTSBURGH, NY  
Tel. +1-617-383-4080  
e-mail: phungis@gmail.com

**NORTH CAROLINA**

ELIZABETH MACDONALD  
ORIENTAL, NC  
Tel. +1-252-249-3520  
e-mail: eliz65@gmail.com

COLLEEN HARGREAVES  
HICKORY, NC  
Tel. +1-828-294-6939  
e-mail: colleen\_hargreaves1@hotmail.com

SADIE KNEIDEL  
BURNSVILLE, NC  
Tel. +1-336-392-0122  
e-mail: sadie.kneidel@gmail.com

ELAINE LONG  
PISGAH FOREST, NC  
Tel. +1-828-862-8932  
e-mail: elaineblong@yahoo.com

**OHIO**

JOHN EDGERTON  
AKRON, OH  
Tel. +1-330-696-0734  
e-mail: jwe@uakron.edu

ANNIE GERIG  
WOOSTER, OH  
Tel. +1-330-262-1466  
e-mail: bstyer@ssnet.com

VELMA BARBER  
DAYTON, OH  
Tel. +1-937-258-8126  
e-mail: vlb137@aol.com

## RE-EVALUATION COUNSELING CONTACTS

### OREGON

KERRY JOYCE  
COOS BAY, OR  
Tel. +1-541-297-6938  
e-mail: kerry.joyce@gmail.com



KATHLEEN HARRINGTON  
BEND, OR  
Tel. +1-541-815-8522  
e-mail: kmharrington@  
hotmail.com



### PENNSYLVANIA

BETH GRAYBILL  
LANCASTER, PA  
Tel. +1-717-945-7575  
e-mail: bethegraybill@  
gmail.com

### TENNESSEE

REGINA MORTON  
MEMPHIS, TN  
Tel. +1-901-604-8006  
e-mail: corin2518@  
msn.com

REBECCA KILMER  
SPARTA, TN  
Tel. +1-501-372-6633  
e-mail: rebkilmer@  
gmail.com



### TEXAS

NORI-LYNN TRUSCOTT  
BULVERDE, TX  
Tel. +1-830-438-3193

### UTAH

STEFFANI RAFF  
PLEASANT GROVE, UT  
Tel. +1-801-796-6110  
e-mail: steffaniraff@  
gmail.com

CATHY HASKINS  
SALT LAKE CITY, UT  
Tel. +1-801-583-3515  
e-mail: cathy.haskins@  
gmail.com



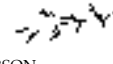
### VIRGINIA

POLLY HIESER  
CHECK, VA  
Tel. +1-540-651-3226

### WASHINGTON

KRISTA THIE  
WHITE SALMON, WA  
Tel. +1-509-493-2626  
e-mail: krista@gorge.net

HARVEY CAINE  
SPOKANE, WA  
Tel. +1-509-270-1234  
e-mail: spiritwalk@  
comcast.net



### WYOMING

CHRIS ANDERSON-  
SPRECHER  
LARAMIE, WY  
Tel. +1-307-745-8536  
e-mail: chrisas1@hotmail.com

LISA HILLMER  
LANDER, WY  
Tel. +1-307-332-5976  
e-mail: netofgems@  
rocketmail.com

### WALES

JANET EDWARDS  
OSWESTRY  
Tel. +44-1691-780829  
e-mail: j\_edwards\_eagle@  
yahoo.co.uk

### ZAMBIA

CHILIMBA HAMAVHWA  
LUSAKA  
Tel. +260-283-483,  
+260-1-283-977,  
+260-96-758-193 (cell)



# WORKSHOPS

- wheelchair accessible      ✕ not wheelchair accessible      ◇ no information supplied by organizer

This list of weekend workshops includes only some of the Regional and International RC workshops being held all over the world. We list all announcements we receive from workshop organizers, workshop leaders, and local RC newsletters, to the extent we have space and are sent sufficient information. Because we do not have enough staff to solicit this information, we ask that workshop organizers e-mail workshop information (dates, place, accessibility, leader, organizer and how to contact organizer, title of workshop, and who the workshop is for) to [irc@rc.org](mailto:irc@rc.org).

Attendance at any of these workshops requires the written approval of your Area or Regional Reference Person or the International Reference Person. For more information, contact the workshop organizer.

A REMINDER TO ALL WORKSHOP ORGANIZERS AND LEADERS: (1) attempt to find workshop sites that are wheelchair accessible (note: "partially accessible" means not accessible), and (2) send information about accessibility to *Present Time*, along with other workshop information.

**THE NEXT TWO TO FOUR MONTHS OF WORKSHOPS MAY BE CANCELLED, RESCHEDULED, OR HELD VIA ZOOM, DEPENDING ON CONDITIONS.**

DATE	PLACE & ACCESSIBILITY CODE	LEADER(S)	ORGANIZER	DESCRIPTION
April 3-5/20 CANCELLED	Seattle, Washington, USA	◇ Emily Bloch	Fiona Clark, <a href="mailto:fiona.clark55@gmail.com">fiona.clark55@gmail.com</a>	Young Adults, for West Coast USA & Canada
April 3-5/20 ZOOM	Northants, England	● "Jeanne D'Arc"	Anica Gavrilovic, <a href="mailto:anica.gavrilovic@ntworld.com">anica.gavrilovic@ntworld.com</a>	Allies to Gay Liberation
April 3-5/20 ZOOM	Warwick, New York, USA	◇ Marcie Rendon	Jack Manno, <a href="mailto:jpmanno@esf.edu">jpmanno@esf.edu</a>	Climate Change/Climate Justice
April 3-6/20 ZOOM	near St Louis, Missouri, USA	● Diane Balsler	Joan Ostrove. Tel. +1-651-334-5286, <a href="mailto:ostrove@macalester.edu">ostrove@macalester.edu</a>	Contemporary Women's Issues, for Central/Southern USA & Manitoba, Canada
April 17-19/20 ZOOM	Colorado, USA	◇ Cherie Brown & Sparky Griego	Jews: Julie Fox-Rubin, <a href="mailto:julie@foxrubin.com">julie@foxrubin.com</a> . Allies: Mike Kingsbury, <a href="mailto:swatj2019@gmail.com">swatj2019@gmail.com</a>	Jews & Allies Liberation, for Southwest, USA
April 17-19/20 ZOOM	Marin Headlands, California, USA	◇ Diane Balsler & Tim Jackins	Micaela Morse, <a href="mailto:micaelamorse@mindspring.com">micaelamorse@mindspring.com</a>	Women & Men Leaders, for West Coast North America
April 30- May 3/20 CANCELLED	Denmark	◇ Jo Saunders	Matilde Maribo Kohler, <a href="mailto:matildemk92@gmail.com">matildemk92@gmail.com</a>	Owning Class, for Europe, Israel, & South Africa
April 30- May 3/20 TO BE RE- SCHEDULED	East Coast USA	◇ Emily Bloch & Tim Jackins	Jamie Irwin. Tel. +1-302-507-4748, <a href="mailto:jamie.irwin@gmail.com">jamie.irwin@gmail.com</a>	Young Adult Leaders
May 1-3/20 ZOOM	Olympia, Washington, USA	◇ Cherie Brown & Dorann van Heeswijk	Jews: Judi Soloway, <a href="mailto:jchazanow@yahoo.com">jchazanow@yahoo.com</a> Allies: Tibor Bessko, <a href="mailto:besskota@gmail.com">besskota@gmail.com</a>	Jews & Allies, for Washington, Oregon, Montana, Idaho, USA & British Columbia, Canada
May 1-4/20 CANCELLED	Greensboro, North Carolina, USA	◇ Seán Ruth	Leslie Kausch. Tel. +1-336-509-3680, <a href="mailto:singonki@gmail.com">singonki@gmail.com</a>	Ending Classism for Middle-Class People, for Central & Eastern USA
May 15-17/20	near Boston, Massachusetts, USA	◇ "Jeanne D'Arc" & "Clara Lemlich"	"Audre L.," <a href="mailto:audreirc@gmail.com">audreirc@gmail.com</a>	LGBTQ Parents, for North America
May 15-17/20	Chicago, Illinois, USA	◇ Joanne Bray	Claudia Murphy, <a href="mailto:crmm214@aol.com">crmm214@aol.com</a>	Catholic Liberation, for Midwest USA
May 15-17/20	probably Portland, Oregon, USA	◇ Malaina Guzman	Jeanette Armentano, <a href="mailto:j.amentano@icloud.com">j.amentano@icloud.com</a>	Native Women
May 15-18/20	Location to be announced	◇ Cherie Brown	Judy Tilsen, <a href="mailto:judytilsen@gmail.com">judytilsen@gmail.com</a>	Jewish Liberation, for North Central USA
May 22-24/20	England	◇ Emily Feinstein	Tyra Till. Tel. +44 (0)1625 260260, +44 (0)7976 236 457, <a href="mailto:tyra@tyratill.com">tyra@tyratill.com</a>	Artist Liberation, for Northern Ireland, Cornwall, Wales, Scotland, & England
May 28-31/20 ZOOM	Europe	◇ Tim Jackins	Brigitte Theeuwen, <a href="mailto:b.theuwen@antenna.nl">b.theuwen@antenna.nl</a>	Leaders, for Europe
June 5-7/20	Stanwood, Washington, USA	◇ Diane Balsler	Diane Lobaugh, <a href="mailto:dlobaugh@frontier.com">dlobaugh@frontier.com</a>	Women, for King, Snohomish, Pierce Counties, Washington, USA & British Columbia, Canada
June 5-7/20 ZOOM	near Boston, Massachusetts, USA	◇ Diane Shisk & Dan Nickerson	Jeannine Giguere-Gagnon, <a href="mailto:jgigueregagnon@gmail.com">jgigueregagnon@gmail.com</a>	The Working Class & the Climate Emergency, for North America
June 12-14/20	Tonbridge, Kent, England	◇ Cherie Brown	Stella Mason. Tel. +44 208 392 0605, <a href="mailto:stellamason@blueyonder.co.uk">stellamason@blueyonder.co.uk</a>	Jewish Liberation, for Wales, Cornwall, & England (June 11-12/20, Leaders in Jewish Liberation)
June 12-14/20	Tonbridge, Kent, England	◇ Dorann van Heeswijk	Amanda Harrington. Tel. +44 7976 258685, <a href="mailto:amanda.harrington01@gmail.com">amanda.harrington01@gmail.com</a>	Allies to Jews, for Wales, Cornwall, & England
June 18-21/20	near Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA	◇ Ellie Brown & Barbara Love	Jan Froehlich. Tel. +1-207-807-3078, <a href="mailto:jfroelich1@me.com">jfroelich1@me.com</a>	Ending Racism & Colleague Liberation for College & University Faculty, for USA & Canada
June 19-21/20	near Knoxville, Tennessee, USA	◇ Marilyn Robb	Dale Everts. Tel. +1-919-402-6275, <a href="mailto:dale.evarts@gmail.com">dale.evarts@gmail.com</a>	Educational Change/Reclaiming Intelligence, for South USA
June 26-29/20	near St. Louis, Missouri, USA	◇ Marilyn Robb	Russell Vanecek. Tel. +1-314-249-5089, <a href="mailto:redvan71@gmail.com">redvan71@gmail.com</a>	Educational Change Leaders/Activists, for USA & Canada
July 3-5/20 CANCELLED	Nairobi, Kenya	◇ Diane Balsler assisted by Tokumbo Bodunde	Wanjiku Kironyo, <a href="mailto:wanjiku@sedsmmc.org">wanjiku@sedsmmc.org</a>	Women, for Kenya
July 9-12/20	Melbourne, Australia	◇ Marion Ouphouet	Joan Janaway, <a href="mailto:59honey@gmail.com">59honey@gmail.com</a>	Large Women, for Melbourne, Australia
July 9-12/20	Melbourne, Australia	◇ Teresa Enrico	Louisa Flander, <a href="mailto:louisa@netspace.net.au">louisa@netspace.net.au</a>	Female Allies to Large Women, for Melbourne, Australia
July 10-12/20 CANCELLED	Nairobi, Kenya	◇ Diane Balsler assisted by Tokumbo Bodunde	Wanjiku Kironyo, <a href="mailto:wanjiku@sedsmmc.org">wanjiku@sedsmmc.org</a>	Teachers & Leaders, for Kenya

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# WORKSHOPS

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DATE	PLACE & ACCESSIBILITY CODE	LEADER(S)	ORGANIZER	DESCRIPTION
July 14-16/20	Location to be announced	◇ Tim Jackins & Barbara Love		Wygelian Leaders, BLCD (Black Liberation & Community Development)
July 16-20/20	Location to be announced	◇ Barbara Love		International—BLCD
July 17-19/20	Newton, Massachusetts, USA	◇ Jennifer Wexler	Gladys Maged, gladysmaged@gmail.com	Ending White Racism, for Eastern Massachusetts & Rhode Island, USA
July 31-August 2/20	Boston, Massachusetts, USA	◇ Leader to be confirmed	Georgia Bowder-Newton. Tel. +1-781-491-3028, georgia.bowder.newton@gmail.com	Young People, for East Coast North America
July 31-August 4/20	Amherst, Massachusetts, USA	● Russ Vernon-Jones	Eileen Nemzer. Tel. +1-647-554-3618, nemzer@gmail.com	Educational Change in Our Current Era, for Northeastern USA & Eastern Canada
August 7-9/20	near Asheville, North Carolina, USA	◇ Rudy Nickens	Dale Everts. Tel. +1-919-402-6275, dale.everts@gmail.com	Men's Liberation, for Southern USA
August 14-16/20	Oregon, USA	◇ Marya Axner	Judi Soloway, jchazanow@yahoo.com	Parents, for Oregon, USA
August 21-23/20	Warwick, New York, USA	◇ Emily Feinstein & Monnie Paashuis	Kathryn Gardner. Tel. +1-207-890-7823, kathryngardner13@gmail.com	Women Artists' Leaders Liberation, for Mexico, the Caribbean, Canada, Europe, & USA
August 21-23/20	near Seattle, Washington, USA	◇ Marcie Rendon	Mary Ruth Gross, maryruthgross@gmail.com	Native American Perspectives on Living With the Earth, for West Coast North America
August 27-30/20	outside of St. Louis, Missouri, USA	◇ Gwen Brown & Tim Jackins	Kathy Martino. Tel. +1-718-627-6071, kathy Martino522@gmail.com	Raised Poor Leaders, for North America
September 10-13/20	East Coast USA	◇ Diane Balse & Ayana Morse assisted by Tokumbo Bodunde	Beth Edmonds, bethedmonds@gmail.com	Women & Our Reproductive Lives: For Women 16-50 (deciding whether or not to raise children, etc.), for North America
October 1-4/20	Denmark	◇ Tim Jackins	Susanne Langer. Tel. +45 24647311, susannelanger44@gmail.com	Taking RC Actively into the World & Climate Change, for Europe
October 2-4/20	Chicago, Illinois, USA	◇ Seán Ruth	JeeYeun Lee. Tel. +1-773-805-4303, jeeyeun.lee@gmail.com	Ending Class Oppression, for People of the Global Majority who are Raised or Currently Middle Class, North America
October 9-12/20	near Boston, Massachusetts, USA	◇ Dan Nickerson	Jeannine Giguere-Gagnon. Tel. +1-401-439-1673, jgigueregagnon@gmail.com	Direct Production Workers
October 22-25/20	Washington, DC, USA	◇ Barbara Love & Cherie Brown	Black Gentiles: Rachel Noble. Tel. +1-971-212-5768, rocnoble@msn.com Jews: Adley Gartenstein. Tel. +1-347-464-9040, adleyrc@gmail.com	Black Gentiles & Jews, International
October 28-November 1/20	Luntenen, the Netherlands	◇ Tim Jackins	Goof Buijs, bunic@ziggo.nl	Men Leaders, for Europe
November 6-8/20	New York, USA	◇ Azi Khalili & Dvora Slavin	Barbara Deck. Tel. +1-617-312-6515, badeck1@gmail.com	Allies to Muslims
November 6-8/20	Albuquerque, New Mexico, USA	◇ Steve Bromer	Justina Trott, drjt505@gmail.com	Physicians
November 6-8/20	Glasgow, Scotland	◇ Diane Shisk & others		Pre-COP26 RC workshop
November 9-13/20	Glasgow, Scotland	◇		COP26 (for SALUER)
November 13-15/20	Elmer, New Jersey, USA (near Philadelphia, Pennsylvania)	◇ Jo Saunders	Hanne Weedon, hhweedon67@gmail.com	Owning Class, for East Coast USA/Canada/the Caribbean
November 26-29/20	Cheshunt, Herts, England	● Dvora Slavin	Christine Sheppard. Tel. +44 (0) 1525 374378, christinesheppard@icloud.com	Eliminating White Racism, for Cornwall, England, Scotland, & Wales
November 27-30/20	Nairobi, Kenya	◇ Tim Jackins	Wanjiku Kironyo, rc@sedsmmc.org	Pre-World Conference for Africa
December 3-6/20	Pune, India	◇ Tim Jackins	Niti Dandekar, dandekarniti@gmail.com	Pre-World Conference for South Asia
December 4-6/20	Sydney, Australia	◇ Cherie Brown & Jo Perry	Lyndall Katz, lyndalk@gmail.com (for Jews)	Jews & Allies
December 4-6/20	Maryland, USA	◇ Ellie Putnam	Uta Allers, uta.allers@gmail.com	Elders, for Washington, DC, Maryland, & Virginia, USA
December 4-6/20	Northern California, USA	◇ Emily Feinstein	Beth Krebs. Tel. +1-718-415-0017, beth.krebs@gmail.com	Artist Liberation & Reclaiming Creativity, for Northern California, USA
December 4-6/20	Maine or New Hampshire, USA	◇ Jenny Szama	Jerry Yoder. Tel. +1-207-233-5191, jerryyoder@mac.com	Allies to Young People, for Quebec & New Brunswick, Canada & Maine, New Hampshire, & Vermont, USA
December 7-9/20	Southwest USA	◇ Emily Feinstein	Gene Galazan, insiderartist@gmail.com	Artist Liberation, for Southwest USA
January 7-10/21	To be announced	◇ "Jeanne D'Arc"	"Aya Ansar." Tel. +1-215-680-7871, aya.ansar.rc@gmail.com	LGBTQ Raised Female
January 15-18/21	Gresham, Oregon, USA	◇ Tim Jackins	Dvora Slavin, dvoraslavin@gmail.com	Pre-World Conference for Western North America
February 5-7/21	Central/Eastern USA	◇ Seán Ruth & Jo Saunders	Leslie Kausch. Tel. 1+336-509-3680, singonki@gmail.com	USer Identity, for Central & Eastern USA
February 12-15/21	Sydney, Australia	◇ Tim Jackins	Lyndall Katz, lyndalk@gmail.com	Pre-World Conference for Australia & New Zealand
February 12-14/21	Western USA	◇ Seán Ruth & Jo Saunders	Mary Ruth Gross. Tel. +1-510-333-3347, maryruthgross@gmail.com	USer Identity, for Western USA
February 18-21/21	Tokyo, Japan	◇ Tim Jackins	Wako Ono, wako569@yahoo.co.jp	Pre-World Conference for East Asia
March 18-21/21	East Coast USA	◇ Chuck Esser & Fela Barclift	Tamara Damon, tkdemon@me.com	Family Workers Conference



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*At the last minute, we learned from our printing company that their printing process required four more pages in this Present Time.*

*Therefore, we've included here the main content of two of the twenty-one handouts that volunteers with Sustaining All Life have been giving out at their events.*

*To see and download all the handouts, go to <[www.sustainingalllife.org/salcop25](http://www.sustainingalllife.org/salcop25)>.*



## Indigenous People and the Environment

Indigenous people lead the world as Defenders of Mother Earth and Water Protectors. We have always been on the front lines—stopping the damming of our rivers, standing up to the mining of our sacred lands, fighting pipelines. We are clear about what we are for: clean air, clean water, clean soil, respectful relationships with all of life, and a good future for the generations to come. By standing up against greed, over-consumption, and desecration of the land and water, we inspire people everywhere to step into thoughtful, prayerful, powerful action on behalf of the environment and sustainable energy.

Because our connection to the land and to our traditional knowledge is mostly intact, we have a great deal to share with the world about a gentler way of living on this earth. We know how to share. We know how to grow food in ways that do not deplete the soil. We know our forests and our medicine plants. We know how to live in a way that does not contribute to climate chaos. We are not easily confused about what really matters.

Our long histories of living respectfully in balance with the natural world have been guided by our “original instructions,” which reminded us to be generous, reciprocal, and respectful in all our relationships. We have honored the water, the land, and all of life. Many of us live on our original homelands, as our ancestors did for many, many generations. Our ties to the land and our languages and traditions have remained intact, protecting us from consumerism and greed. In human relationships, we have always known of the power of listening and sharing. Our traditions of sharing our stories in community have helped us to heal our hurts.

Over time, many of us have been pushed off our land. The places we've lived have been invaded and targeted for environmental destruction. The things we love—the mountains, rivers, plains, tundra, special plants in our forests; the ground under our feet—have been seen as “resources” by the oppressive society and exploited by the fossil fuel, energy, pharmaceutical, and mining industries. The fossil fuel industry has often



located its extracting and refining activities near to our homes. Our traditional areas for hunting, fishing, and gathering are endangered, and because of the extractive economy all water is threatened.

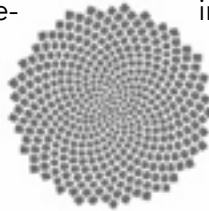
We have a long history of resilience and resistance. Policies of genocide have attacked our languages, our way of life, our traditional governments, our families, and our homelands. However, even in the worst cases, we are just a few generations away from our connection to the land. One of our great strengths is how we hold on to our sense of place and connection to the natural world, despite brutal oppression. We know how to heal the land and ourselves. We are powerfully taking back our languages, our traditions, and our homelands.

As Indigenous people, we need to heal from the effects of genocide—from the many ways it has hurt our communities, our hearts, and our

minds—so that we can move forward together in creative, effective ways.

We need our allies to heal from the damage to their hearts and minds enough to notice that we are still here, that for many generations we have been leaders in the care of the environment. This work is not new to us. We need our allies to heal so that they can join us and back us in thoughtful, respectful ways. We have so much to share about how to live gently on the earth.

Many of us have found the tools of respectful listening used in *Sustaining All Life* very helpful. They resonate deeply with our values and with our healing traditions. We have learned to use these tools and now teach them. They have helped our communities work together more effectively to protect the land and the water. They have also been helpful to our allies—they have helped them show up and work with us in a good way.





## Healing Our “Climate Grief”

Climate change has caused grievous damage to the Earth and all living beings. As we become more and more aware of this damage, and the inadequate human response to it, we are left with a range of feelings. We may feel discouraged by our national governments’ limited response in the face of the magnitude of climate change. We may feel powerless and exhausted because the vast majority of people appear uninformed or even unconcerned about the climate crisis. We may feel overwhelmed by bleak scientific reports—for example, about rapidly melting ice—and by news of catastrophic weather events. Many young people are losing hope for their future, wondering if it makes sense to start families and bring babies into a world on the brink of disaster. So many of us feel rage, despair, and deep grief.

### Noticing the feelings

Experts are noticing how the increasing visibility of climate change affects mental health. It is being called “climate grief”—depression, anxiety, and mourning over climate change. The American Psychological Association issued a 2017 report on emotional trauma from climate change. The report said that more people are feeling “a number of different emotions, including fear, anger, feelings of powerlessness, or exhaustion.” Joëlle Gergis, award winning Australian scientist, describes the “volcanic rage” that she experiences in the face of climate change. She says that “I catch myself

unexpectedly weeping . . . what surfaces is pure grief.” Gergis acknowledges that she needs to “thaw the emotionally frozen parts” of herself to effectively address climate change.

### Consequences of failure to heal the emotional damage

Unreleased, pent up feelings can damage humans in many ways. Unhealed grief, fear, and frustration tend to interrupt our initiative and dim our hope for the future. Unreleased painful feelings can drain our energy and interfere with our ability to bring our full intelligence to bear on the world around us. Emotional damage interferes with thinking well about what is to be done and acting appropriately and effectively—in this case, to end environmental degradation.

Many of us attempt to ignore such feelings—as unimportant and something to push aside, and we act as though they don’t matter. But doing this can leave us discouraged and despairing. Unless we heal the emotional damage, it can be hard to stay motivated. It can be hard to stay focused on mitigating the climate crisis.

Some people attempt to use their grief and rage to fuel their climate change work. This is akin to using jet fuel in a petrol car. There will be misfiring, a smoking engine, and eventually the engine will burn. Major repair will be needed to get it going again.

We need opportunities to openly grieve about the damage being done to the Earth. Doing this can release enormous energy and free our thinking. Healing climate grief can give us the energy and ambition we need to respond appropriately to the climate crisis.

### Healing the Climate Grief

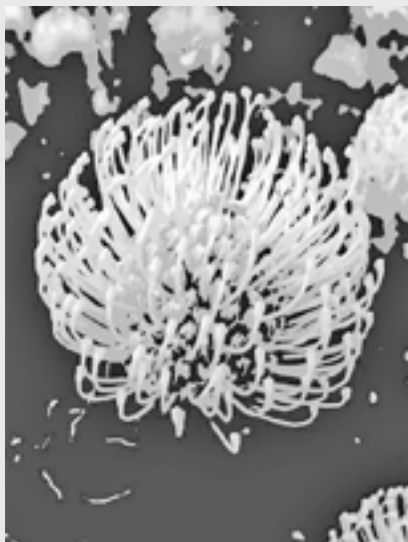
It is still possible to limit the effects of human-caused catastrophic climate change and restore the environment. Most of us want to make a bigger difference. We want to stem the tide of devastation caused by climate change. We want to prevent additional damage and reverse as many already existing impacts as we can. Scientists want to galvanize the scientific community and inform the public. Activists want to engage growing numbers of people in the movement to address climate change. Young people want to regain hope and confidence in their future. Educators want to develop better strategies for teaching about the climate crisis. All of us want to increase our capacity to effectively address climate change.

At the same time, feelings of rage, fear, and grief have interfered with our thinking well about what

can be done. We would like to organize ourselves and the people around us to make the necessary changes—but doing this is more difficult in the face of unhealed climate grief. Scientists, lay people, people from all walks of life and all strata of society—we all need to “un-numb” as we face the devastating news about damage from climate change. We need to “thaw out” the feelings that come up, and release them. Only then can we most appropriately and effectively respond to the climate crisis.

### How we do this

We have some tools that have been effective in healing from climate grief, that have increased people’s courage, and energy for doing climate change work. The healing work occurs best in a network of people who support each other to notice, share, and release feelings of climate grief. The easily accessible healing process takes place in a safely structured setting. People become skillful at using it. The tools can be shared with our home communities and organizations. Our tools include information about how to create networks that can support ongoing work to heal climate grief.



*Sustaining All Life (SAL)* is an international grassroots organization working to end the climate emergency within the context of ending all divisions among people. *United to End Racism (UER)* is a group of people of all ages and backgrounds, in many different countries, who are dedicated to eliminating racism in the world and supporting the efforts of all other groups with this goal. UER and SAL are projects of and use the tools of Re-evaluation Counseling. Re-evaluation Counseling (RC) is a well-defined theory and practice that helps people of all ages and backgrounds exchange effective help with each other in order to free themselves from the emotional scars of oppression and other hurts. By taking turns listening to each other and encouraging emotional release, people can heal old hurts and become better able to think, to speak out, and to organize and lead others in building a world in which human beings and other life forms are valued and the environment is restored and preserved. Re-evaluation Counseling currently exists in 95 countries.



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# Re-evaluation Counseling

Re-evaluation Counseling is a process whereby people of all ages and all backgrounds can learn how to exchange effective help with each other in order to free themselves from the effects of past distress experiences.

Re-evaluation Counseling theory provides a model of what a human being can be like in the area of his or her interaction with other human beings and his or her environment. The theory assumes that everyone is born with tremendous intellectual potential, natural zest, and lovingness but that these qualities have become blocked and obscured as the result of accumulated distress experiences (of fear, loss, pain, anger, embarrassment, and so on), which begin early in our lives.

Any young person would recover from such distress spontaneously by use of the natural process of emotional discharge (crying, trembling, raging, laughing, yawning, talking). However, this natural process is usually interfered with by well-meaning people ("Don't cry," "Be a big boy," and so on) who erroneously equate the emotional discharge (the healing of the hurt) with the hurt itself.

When adequate emotional discharge can take place, the person is freed from the rigid pattern of behavior and feeling left by the hurt. The basic loving, cooperative, intelligent, and zestful nature is then free to operate. Such a person will tend to be more effective in looking out for his or her own interests and the interests of others and more capable of acting successfully against injustice.

In recovering and using the natural discharge process, two people take turns counseling and being counseled. The one acting as the counselor listens, draws the other out, and permits, encourages, and assists emotional discharge. The one acting as client talks and discharges and re-evaluates. With experience and increased confidence and trust in each other, the process works better and better.

For more information, you can go to the website <[www.reevaluationcounseling.org](http://www.reevaluationcounseling.org)>.



*Present Time*  
719 2nd Avenue North  
Seattle, Washington 98109  
USA



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