

# Present Time

January 2009

No. 154 (Vol. 41 No. 1)

We each need to make our lion's roar—  
to persevere with unshakable courage when faced  
with all manner of doubts and sorrows and fears—  
to declare our right to awaken.

*Jack Kornfield*

Scorning fear; the experience of being blind; workshops in Ghana, Nigeria, and South Africa; United to End Racism at the European Social Forum; Tim Jackins' latest thinking—just a sample of what you'll find in this January 2009 *Present Time*!

For the April issue, please send us your articles and poems by Tuesday, February 17, and any changes to the back-pages lists by Monday, February 23. We'd love to receive more articles, drawings, and photographs from Africa, Asia, and South America.



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## Being Pleased, and Apology

*From a talk by Tim Jackins,\* at a leaders' workshop  
near Lochem, Gelderland, The Netherlands, May 2008*

Again, I want to talk about things I have already talked about. I often say things that you already know. It's just that you don't always remember that you know them, so I try to talk about the same things in different ways—not because you don't know them but because I want you to think about them again afresh. When we have chronic distress in the way, it takes an effort to think about certain things.

First of all, we have agreed that there is no reason for us to feel bad about ourselves. Agreed? (*Agreed!*) So why are we (and you, in particular) still doing that? It sneaks up on us. We feel just a little bad, not as bad as usual, so we think that's all right.

You are one of the most wonderful things that ever happened in the history of the universe. That is always true, even on your worst days. If you could step back and look at you, you would be pleased. If you could remember that your struggles are there because of what happened to you and not because you failed, if you could keep that clear, you would be pleased—even in your worst times. Anyone else would be pleased with you, so it has to be your confusion.

We struggle with confusion because of distress, and we will continue to struggle for a while. It's not another reason for us to feel bad. It's simply our current state. But it is different now than it ever has been. We understand things we've never understood before, and that gives us the ability to change things more rapidly.

You actually can change anything you decide to—*not* immediately, but with work. Everything takes work. The feeling that you should be able to do it all immediately is part of the distress recording of unhappiness with yourself. You get to enjoy learning how to do things. There are many things you have yet to learn, but you know enough now, and you certainly *are* enough now, to be completely pleased with yourself.

It can feel dangerous to be pleased—like you have to do it secretly. This is because of early distresses. Adults often cannot stand to see children be too happy because it brings up the adults' distresses. While the adults could stop and discharge those distresses, they usually don't know that. And if they can't discharge them, they never want to feel them, and they will do anything to stop from feeling them. They will yell at their children. They will drink alcohol. They will find anything they can to distract themselves. They will stay

in bed for days, trying to sleep. For us it's different now, but we still have the recordings.

It is not a mistake for you to be happy. It is not against anyone. It is perfectly fine that you help people feel their distresses by you being happy. People are more interesting when they are feeling their distresses than when they are numb. They may scare us more, but watching numb adults was probably even more scary. As children we just got used to it. We left them and went to play with the other children. Looking out and seeing blank faces probably scared all of us. You know it scares you now. Some faces are so lost that you don't want to look at them, or stay around them, but they belong to fine people. Seeing them simply restimulates early times.

You get to be pleased. Things do not have to be perfect before you get to be pleased. What I want for myself is to look forward to the next battle. I want to be happy about the next fight—not worried about it, or sad, or scared, or hoping it doesn't happen. A lot of people silently pray, "Please let me get out of here before that happens," instead of, "I want it to happen, because every struggle gives me a chance to move things forward." When someone is feeling the distress, there is a chance that he or she can discharge, and then see that the world is different from the feeling.

I think we should be happy that the world is the way it is. It has never been better. We have never had better chances to make things happen. Things have always been at least this difficult. We just have to discharge where our minds have been stuck in distress. And, of course, societal oppressions are some of the big distresses we have been stuck in. None of us have wanted to have them, but we all carry distresses of racism, sexism, classism. There is a long, long list of oppressions. We can find it hard to work on them, because we feel discouraged and so alone in that work.

We have a lot to do to end society's oppressions and discharge the distress recordings they have installed on us. However, feeling bad about that is simply believing our distresses, which keeps us from daring to face them so that we can move against them.

Often the hardest place for us is where we have been trained to be the agents of an oppression. If we are white, then it is toward people of color; if we are male, toward women; if we are owning class, toward working-class people. Most of the time we just try to act good and not let our distresses

*continued . . .*

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

## COUNSELING PRACTICE

*continued . . .*

show. Of course, no matter how hard we try to do this, we fail. Distresses show. They may not come out as the most horrible expression of oppression, but they make us act unaware, and people get hurt.

We are all in this position. All of us have patterns that act oppressively toward someone. We all have them toward children, because of the way we were treated when we were children. All of us who are white have racism patterns, and it goes on and on. We need to be able to say, “Yes, this is part of my work. I never wanted to have these distresses, but I do.” And we need to not just be able to admit that we have them, but to recognize that they have had an effect—that we have been less able to be allies than we would have wished; that we’ve made mistakes, small and large.

### **APOLOGY**

There is a kind of apology that is useful to make. The idea is not to feel bad that we have made mistakes. We have all made mistakes. We will all make more mistakes, I promise. We will all make lots more mistakes. It’s the unrecognized and unacknowledged mistakes, however, that never get enough attention to be discharged and done away with. Until we can look straight at the distress and discharge it, it will never go away. All of us need to do that. We who are of European heritage need to do it in sessions with other people who are white so that we can work on our racism distresses. They are ours and our responsibility.

Not long ago we saw a good example of an apology, given by the Australian Prime Minister. He had been elected in

part because he could show hopefulness about the future, and he did what earlier governments had refused to do. He apologized for some of the ways racism had been acted out in Australia. As honestly as he could, he took responsibility for those acts of racism, and on behalf of all of his people he apologized that they had occurred. He listed what had happened, and he said that he was sorry for every single item. It was an important step, and not an easy one.

It is that kind of step that we have often not been able to take. We have often been afraid to acknowledge the mistakes we have made, because we have felt so bad and haven’t known what to do about them. But now we do know what to do about them. We just feel like we don’t. It’s the discouragement and isolation. It’s you as a child being sent to the corner because you did something bad—having to go be by yourself for a long time until you knew how bad you had been, and that you were sorry for it. With those kinds of childhood distresses as a foundation, it is no wonder we have been defensive about our mistakes. We don’t need to be. Our mistakes were simply our mistakes, and they happened mainly because of our distresses. We can get rid of the distresses, take responsibility for the mistakes, and do whatever we need to do to make sure that they don’t happen again.

An important step is saying that we are sorry and that we are determined to do the work so that the situation gets better and better. I intend it to get better, and I know that every one of you here intends that, too, whether you can show it in any small way or not. We will do the work. I promise you.



NEIL SOLOMON

## Changing My Life by Doing

Decide—Act—Discharge is what we in RC are encouraged to do, but how many times do we wait for the right moment to do something? We think to ourselves, “Maybe tomorrow I won’t be as terrified.” We promise ourselves, “Next time I see him, I will talk to him,” or, “Next time I will jump into the water.” There is always something to keep us from doing what we want to but fear to do.

I was brought up<sup>1</sup> to think that fear is not a reason to stop myself from doing anything. In the last four years, since I graduated from high school and have become active in RC, I have been trying to live that way. I’ve taken on<sup>2</sup> many battles and challenges, knowing they were important if I wanted to have my mind back, and haven’t limited myself to things I already knew I was capable of doing.

In my army service, I decided to be a hiking and nature guide. I fear speaking in front of people and don’t necessarily feel safe outdoors, but I did it anyway. I led support groups and classes at young people’s and young adults’ workshops and shivered all the way through. I probably stuttered and said some funny<sup>3</sup> things, but I did it anyway. During and after every time like this, I could discharge powerfully, and then see the next challenge ahead of me.

All this work made it possible for me to take on a bigger challenge: traveling on my own for a few months in the United States, with a goal of evaluating how much I had changed and matured and what I still needed to work on.

<sup>1</sup> Brought up means raised.

<sup>2</sup> In this context, taken on means undertaken.

<sup>3</sup> In this context, funny means strange.

I decided to work on a farm in Oregon for two months. At one point I had to build a shelf. Someone showed me where the wood, hammer, and saw were; gave me a short demonstration; and went away. I was left in the tool shed to figure out what to do next. Of course I could have asked for more help, but I decided to see what I could do on my own. I struggled with it and broke a saw, but eventually I got the shelf done—and it was beautiful and got much praise.

One time I went swimming with two friends in the reservoir near the farm. I asked one of them to teach me how to dive because I had not succeeded in diving when I was young. She stood on the two-meter-high platform, dived once, and swam out of the water because it was so cold. Then I stood on the platform for twenty minutes, shaking and shivering, before doing a beautiful belly flop.<sup>4</sup> I did that twice. I was too cold to try the third time, but I promised my friend that the next time we met I would dive with her again.

I don’t need a Co-Counselor near me when I challenge myself. I can stand and shiver with a friend, and later tell the story to more friends and laugh about it with them. Our friendships are precious and valuable, and friends can be allies when we challenge ourselves—even if they do not know about discharging or listening. We just need to be clear about what we want from them, for instance, “I just want to stand and shiver for twenty minutes before I dive.” When we want to take on a new battle, it does help to discharge with a Co-Counselor the fear, embarrassment,

<sup>4</sup> Doing a belly flop means landing on the water on my belly, with a big splash.

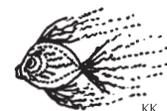
and whatever else comes up, but we shouldn’t wait to act until we have discharged it all fully.

Co-Counseling for me isn’t just about discharging. I can discharge for hours and days and have nothing in my life change until I make a decision and change something. It is about choosing to take a different perspective and actively changing my life.

What stands out brightly is that there is no better time than now. It’s not that there isn’t any time. I still have the rest of my life in front of me; there is lots of time. It’s just that I don’t want to live my life waiting for a better time or moment. There is nothing to wait for. What I am waiting for will not come. It is time to let go of that.

Another thing I now understand more thoroughly is that I never do something until I do it. Of course I didn’t know how to build a shelf. I had never done it before. And I would never have known how without struggling through it and doing it. I don’t need to have a degree or take a course or have any background at all. When I try a new thing, it is always new. There is no way to avoid that. What is the worst that can happen? I can fail! I am now excited about the possibilities—of stuttering, breaking more saws, and doing more belly flops—because I know they will take me another step forward in getting my mind back.

This is the best way I’ve found to make a difference in my life—decide and do something, even though it terrifies me to feel everything I feel on the way, and then do it again.



*Timna Raz*  
Jerusalem, Israel

## The Pattern and the Person

The essential human (is) intelligent, good, powerful, loving, cooperative, willing to grow. All the goodness is there in each other that we know is in ourselves, however obscured by distress patterns. We need to relate to the essential human—with attention, interest, caring, encouragement, appreciation, confidence, love (if we can manage it), support, and a message that we are *for* him or her, that we are an ally. If we can manage this, it redoubles her or his strength ten times.

At the same time, this warm, wonderful human is engaged in a suit made of tin cans and garbage: distress patterns that rattle and squeak as they distort. Toward these distress patterns we have a different attitude. Secretly we despise them and seek their elimination. We are careful, however, not to exhibit this kind of attitude in a way that seems to be directed at the human behind the distress patterns, which would have a negative effect upon him or her.

*Harvey Jackins\**  
From *The Rest of Our Lives*, page 94

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

### Blessing

In present time, I am sitting with counselors who care about me,  
But in my mind, I have traveled back to a small third-floor apartment  
Where I stand over my two-year-old self, who is on the floor, playing.  
I am trying to decide what to do.  
What do I say to this gentle soul, who is baffled by the  
Abuse of power he experiences every day?  
He is about to make a decision that will not serve him well,  
But it is the only way he can figure out how not to become the thing he hates.  
I watch him and suddenly the words come to me.  
“I give you my blessing . . . ” I start to say.  
In present time, tears are streaming down my cheeks,  
But in my mind, my words are calm and clear.  
The boy looks up, and I recognize my face from old photographs.  
I kneel down and put my hand on his shoulder.  
“I give you my blessing to fight.”

*Peter Gruenbaum*  
Seattle, Washington, USA

## Scorning Fear

The following is a letter written by Dan Nickerson, the International Liberation Reference Person for Working-Class People, in response to this question: *Would you be willing to share your version of what “scorning fear” looks like? I am looking for new ways to explain it to people and to spread the work.*

Scorning fear was a key issue in RC back in the 1980s. I remember Harvey<sup>1</sup> saying that a sympathetic attitude generally works well for the discharge of grief but that a counselor often needs to adopt a more aggressive attitude for the discharge of fear: complete respect for the client and his or her struggle, but no respect at all for the pattern of fear.

Harvey would ask, “What fear keeps you from being the leader of a worldwide group moving steadily toward the elimination of all oppression?” or something like that. Then he would look around the workshop and offer contradictions<sup>2</sup> or directions<sup>3</sup> to all who raised their hands in response.

One common fear was, “I am afraid that if I become a strong leader, I will be alone.” Harvey might say, “Try this phrase, in this tone of voice,” and while modeling a tone of immense satisfaction, he would say, “Ahhh . . . Alone again!” People would begin to shake. Tone of voice is everything.

I think of scorning fear as spitting in the eye of the distress—no respect at all.

Some of our RC scrolls display this attitude. I have used the following in sessions.

- From John Brown, the abolitionist, to his followers as they were about to lead an attack on an armory—one of the many acts that led to the abolition of slavery in the United States: “If we live, we free the slaves, and if we die, we die.”

<sup>1</sup> Harvey Jackins

<sup>2</sup> Contradictions to distress

<sup>3</sup> In this context, a direction is something said or done that contradicts a distress recording sufficiently for it to discharge.

- From Georgia O’Keeffe, a famously talented U.S. artist: “I have been absolutely terrified every moment of my life—and I’ve never let it keep me from doing a single thing I wanted to do.”

- From the RC working-class commitment: “I will unite with all my fellow workers everywhere around the world to lead all people to a rational, peaceful society. I am a worker, proud to be a worker, and the future is in my hands.”

At a men’s workshop Harvey asked us what fear would get in our way of leading all men in the elimination of men’s oppression. One man offered what seemed like a “reasonable” fear: “I am afraid of being beaten up.”

Harvey asked, “Are you afraid of being beaten up because you have been beaten up, or have you never been beaten up but are afraid you will be?” (This unexpected question got us discharging immediately.)

The man said, “No, I have never been beaten up.”

Harvey said, “Oh well then, that is easy. Just go to a bar and hang out<sup>4</sup> there. There are always people in bars waiting to beat someone up. After

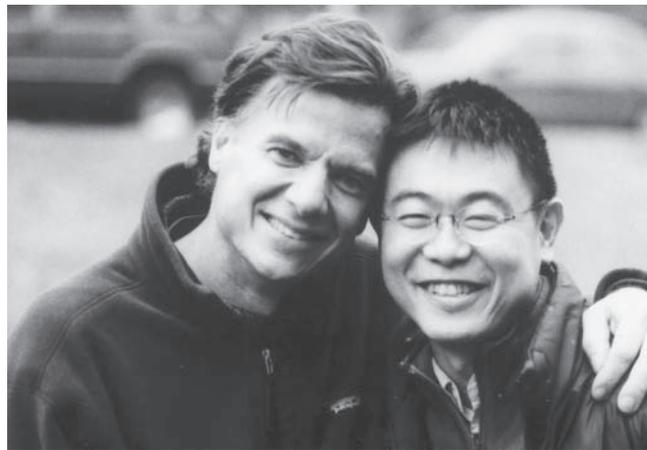
you get beaten up a couple of times, you will have no fear of it.”

We all discharged. I don’t think he really wanted us to go to bars to discharge our fear, but the point was made about scorning the fear.

The *Harvey Jackins Memorial* pamphlet includes a story Harvey told about fear. I often read it at “RC Bedtime Stories” on Saturday nights at workshops I lead. Harvey had always been afraid of being a coward, based on experiences in his youth in which men accused other men of being a coward (which in the culture he grew up in was considered a very dishonorable thing). It so happened that in his union work Harvey suffered a terrible beating. Harvey says, “I . . . was lying in the

*continued . . .*

<sup>4</sup> Hang out means spend relaxed, unstructured time.



LAURIE RHODES

## COUNSELING PRACTICE

continued . . .

hospital, and I felt a strange sense of peace come over me. My thought was that if that was the worst they could do, then to hell with them<sup>5</sup>—and I've never worried since whether I would turn out to be<sup>6</sup> a coward or not."

The many sessions and talks that Harvey gave on scorning fear have shaped my life. I never feel bad anymore about being terrified. I keep my eye on the goal and move forward regardless. I celebrate the ripples of terror that wake me up early in the morning when I am leading workshops.

I think it is possible to enjoy the discharge of terror as much as we enjoy a good cry. I have wondered why we enjoy the discharge of grief but avoid feeling fear and have figured out a possible explanation: Most incidents in which fear was recorded included a heavy feeling of not being safe. It is reasonable to want to avoid that feeling.

Harvey would often correct clients when they said, "I am scared." He would say, "No, you are feeling the fear discharging as you step out of your fears."

It is the counselor's job to help the client remember that the fear is recorded, that in the present he or she is safe, and that the fear can be faced. I think that scorning fear is about scorning the recorded feeling that one is not safe.

In the wide world people often tell me that they feel bad because of the fear they carry. I share the above perspective. They feel much better when I also explain that it is not bad to feel fear, that we are all afraid, that acting against our fears is one of the greatest challenges

<sup>5</sup> To hell with them is a strong way of saying I'm not at all concerned about or scared of them.

<sup>6</sup> Turn out to be means end up being.

humanity faces at this moment in history, and that of course we feel fear when we do what is right, when we act against the recordings of fear that have been placed on us by society. We can congratulate ourselves for these moments rather than believing that we have to avoid them, or that we are bad for feeling afraid.

My life, for the most part, demonstrates that although I am not without fear, I am not afraid of it, and I think this gives people the confidence to take on<sup>7</sup> a similar attitude. And it helps if they also have a theoretical perspective on this issue that confuses everyone so much.

Freeport, Maine, USA  
Reprinted from the e-mail discussion  
list for RC Community members

<sup>7</sup> In this context, take on means assume.



MARTY POTTENGER



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## An Adoption, and Overcoming Early Distress

NOVEMBER 2005

After many years of trying to bring another child into our family, we said yes to adopting a four-week-old little guy and brought him home three weeks ago. I hadn't expected it, but A—'s arrival slammed me, fast and hard, up against early recordings<sup>1</sup> that seemed at the time to be very real and in the present. I now can see that they were left from my own birth and early days, when my mom got lost in old terrors and left me with my grandmother until she could be with me, and from generations of harsh welcomes for raised-poor and working-class Protestant babies in my family.

When the adoption agency staff placed A— in my arms, I felt a roaring "no" inside me. (In pictures taken at the time, I look warm and welcoming; I'm glad I could show what I couldn't yet feel.) In spite of that clamoring feeling, I returned home with the baby. As soon as I was in the door, I called S—, one of my regular Co-Counselors. I was so confused by my fierce feelings of not wanting the baby that I believed that I had to take him back to the adoption agency the next morning. That seemed like the only way I could stop feeling the panic and terror that had overwhelmed me.

S— came right over, and soon other Co-Counselors began arriving at my house—playing with my six-year-old daughter, talking with my husband, and counseling A— and me. I argued and cried and pleaded with them as they held firm, kind, clear directions. C—, my Regional<sup>2</sup> Reference Person,

said that I couldn't make a decision about the baby while in the grip of the old feelings. By the end of that first evening, I had agreed not to take A— back the next day but to wait a week, discharge as much as I could, and then see what I thought.

One of the members of my Area<sup>3</sup> organized teams of counselors to come over to be with A— and me. I tried to use every minute of the attention to discharge. S— came over several mornings in a row, for up to a couple of hours each time, and counseled me through my own birth and first weeks. She also helped me review what I knew about my mom's beginnings, encouraged me to talk with my family about what I was feeling and why, and helped me think about eating and sleeping (both of which I hadn't been able to do for days). C— provided an enthusiastic, unwavering perspective that all of this was old and dischargeable. She talked to many people in the Region, helping them understand the distresses I was battling, and insisted that I get help and resource whenever possible.

It was as if I was re-learning basic RC theory: *all* the feelings were just recordings of what had happened to me. Someone reminded me about the poster with the picture on it of Harvey<sup>4</sup> as a little boy and a quote that says, "You are beloved by all creation, too." *That* was reality. My distresses, some generations old, and the way I was seeing things as a result of them, were pseudo-reality. I understood what "perspective" was in a whole new way: it was what I had to have in order to stand against the fierce pull of the

distresses; it was what I needed others to remember when my feelings convinced and confused me so completely.

It has been an amazing three weeks. I can tell<sup>5</sup> that I haven't yet fully given my heart to this child, but I can see that that is the result of early hurts, and I'm committed to getting rid of whatever separates us.

OCTOBER 2008

Now, three years later, I cannot imagine my life or my family without A— in the middle of it. He is woven tightly into our fabric; he belongs to me as much as any child belongs to anyone. I have had to fight harder for him, and so for myself, than I have ever fought. I love him very much today, and I am confident that I'll love him even more in the years to come.

What I got a chance to do when he arrived remains useful. I now have a reference point, in the experience of my own battle, when I am counseling other people through confusing material.<sup>6</sup> My counselors and I have a clearer picture of my early days, the hurts I inherited, and the healing that's possible.

How thankful I am to have RC theory and practice, my Region and Area, and Tim<sup>7</sup> and Harvey in my life—all standing so strong, steady, and clear against the damage of generations past, and for the possibility of the fullest human connection.

Anonymous  
USA

<sup>1</sup> Distress recordings

<sup>2</sup> A Region is a subdivision of the International Re-evaluation Counseling Community, usually consisting of several Areas (local RC

<sup>3</sup> An Area is a local RC Community.

<sup>4</sup> Harvey Jackins

<sup>5</sup> In this context, I can tell means I'm aware.

<sup>6</sup> Material means distress.

<sup>7</sup> Tim Jackins

## Breaking Free from Fear and Humiliation

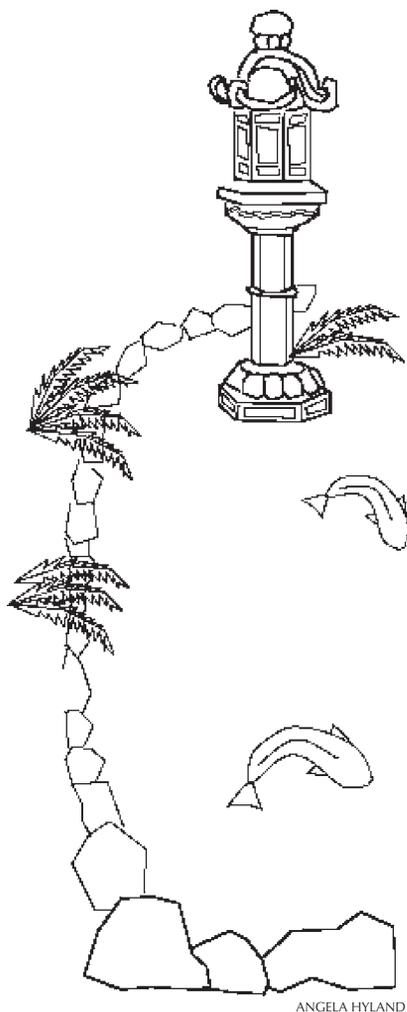
Early in a recent workshop, the workshop leader selected me to lead one of the support groups. There was no time to prepare or procrastinate, or to doubt my abilities. As I was leading, I was hot, sweating, laughing, and feeling vulnerable. I showed naturalness and safety, and no superiority. We were all one and the same in our support group.

Back in the main workshop, I opted to be a demonstration client. I trembled spontaneously in a way that I never had before. I was trembling while perspiring from a cool skin. I went right back to the old hurts, safely knowing that they weren't present-time reality. With the loving, supportive attention of a large crowd, I dared to feel humiliation. After a while I felt physically exhausted and weak; my mind was still and present. A huge load had been lifted.

In the weeks since the workshop, I can be around large groups of people and not need to shut down feelings. I'm much more present in the moment. Not fearing the feelings of humiliation so much, I allow them to rise and discharge.

*Sue Fleming*

Para Hills West, South Australia, Australia  
Excerpted from the newsletter of the Western  
Adelaide, South Australia, RC Community



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(late 1990s)

## Morning Play with My Young Son

I recently heard about the benefits of doing some rough-and-tumble play with one's young child before packing him or her off to school. I tried it and I love it, and I can tell<sup>1</sup> that my six-and-a-half-year-old son does, too.

This morning before breakfast I tugged him away from a computer game and set a five-minute timer. The timer served the dual purpose of insuring that the last waffle wouldn't burn and enabling me to be "saved by the bell" after the pounding I knew I was about to get.

We usually begin a "wrestling match," with me crouching down and smiling, hands claw-posed in a mock-menacing way, while he does the same as he prepares to launch himself at me. When he comes, I exaggeratedly complain of being crushed and destroyed and tell him that I don't know what else to do besides try to kiss him—which I do as much as I can, with much laughter and shouting from him. I make sure that he won't really hurt me. And I make him work to get away from me and then I complain about how he managed to do it. Following this I make an exaggerated effort to get him back on top of me. Often he's back on top instantly, with a body slam. He especially loves it when my speech gets distorted by the sudden exhalation brought on by his weight crashing down on me.

By the time the timer rings, we're both laughing and panting, and though he could go on for longer, he's happy to shift gears.<sup>2</sup> Today he immediately went and got dressed and then came to sit at the breakfast table, with zero prompting from me. He made no complaint when it was time to put on his shoes and coat and backpack and head out the door to school. It seems like that five minutes of intensity lets him know that we are connected and enables him to be cooperative, without my having to say anything about it. It certainly starts my day in an upbeat rhythm.

I know some non-RC parents who fear that such play is "too permissive." I'm finding that it is what brings my son to the cooperative, engaged, emotionally intelligent behavior that those same parents wonder at when they spend time with him.

Jim Pyke

Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA

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

<sup>1</sup> In this context, tell means see, notice.

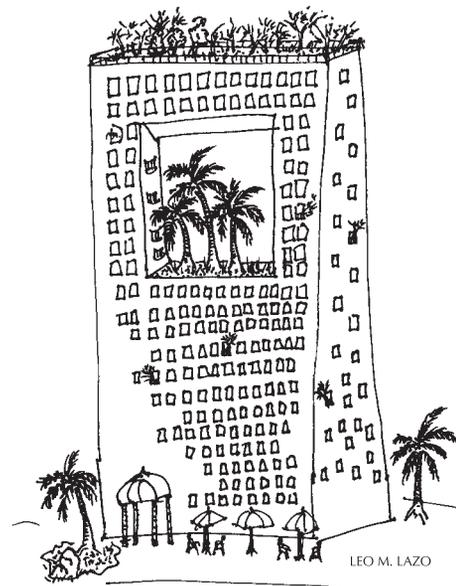
<sup>2</sup> Shift gears means stop doing what he's doing and do something else.

## Conveyor Belt Under Your Feet

I remind you that it is a process that is taking place and you are in progress. Keep your bearings as much as you can, but the conveyor belt is under your feet and is taking you forward in any case.

*Harvey Jackins*

From a letter written in 1975



## Let Me Cry

I have just come into the world  
And I need to cry  
I need to cry long and loud  
I need to recover from my journey here  
Struggles you will never know  
I need to howl and scream  
Not for what is ahead  
Or for what is now  
But for all that was behind

I entered a world full of history  
Broken hearts, forgotten dreams,  
Fights, pain, loss and damage  
Fears and disappointments  
I can see them in your eyes  
Behind the love

The legacy of misguided actions,  
Oppression, suppression and war  
Unhealed and passed on intact  
From one generation to the next  
And so on down the line  
I see it in your eyes  
And if I am not to have to look away  
Let me cry for us all

Don't try to stop me  
Like you were stopped  
With dummies\* and distractions,  
Shouts and threats,  
Shakes and violence  
Until the fear of your reaction  
Teaches me to crush myself

Into a silent ball of pain  
This pain will poison my mind  
Chill my heart  
Block out the present  
Make me ill  
Stop me thinking  
Make me afraid  
Of my own feelings  
Leaving me small and impaled  
Condemned to eternally search for a Someone  
Who knows  
I need to cry

---

\* A dummy is a pacifier, a nipple-shaped device given to babies to suck on. It is often used to stop babies from crying.



JANA CHRISTOPHER

If you let me cry,  
Stay with me and welcome my tears,  
I can dissolve a thousand years of grief  
Keep ownership of my mind  
Notice the love still in your eyes  
The gentleness of your touch  
Your efforts to remain close  
Your hope reborn with me

I will feel the joy of living  
In a breathtaking world of beauty  
Amongst peoples of awesome courage  
Yearn to live each moment well  
Holding nothing back

And when I become an adult  
And you yourself are in need  
I will be able to hold you  
Whilst you cry  
Remind you of your goodness  
Thank you for all you have done  
Forgive your imperfections  
Caress your aged body  
Look deep into your eyes  
Be still and quiet  
Beside you and with you  
For as long as you need me to  
I will let you cry

*Micheline Mason*  
London, England

## Our Minds

*From a talk by Tim Jackins, at the Black Liberation and Community Development Workshop, in Warwick, New York, USA, April 2008*

Re-evaluation Counseling is based on a few important things. One of these is the rediscovery of the discharge and re-evaluation process that's a part of our minds. It has always been there. We didn't invent it. We just try to create the conditions in which we can fight to get it back. But it's ours. It is part of being human.

We are also clear that our minds are good no matter what has happened. It doesn't matter what distresses have come at us. It doesn't matter how badly we've handled them. It doesn't matter if we've had a chance to discharge on them yet. Our minds are still good. Our minds can think and make decisions. The more distress that has piled up, and the less discharging we've done, the harder it is to remember we can do that, the more confusing it is, but we don't lose that ability.

Undischarged distresses and restimulations can make it hard to remember that we have that ability, but it is there and is just as full as ever. In the midst of restimulation and crisis we can still be amazingly intelligent. We can still handle anything. This is an important understanding and different from just about anything we hear in society. Our minds are perfectly good, no matter what hurts have happened to us.

We also get to figure things out, make our own decisions, and have our own perspectives. We don't have to accept anybody else's view of the world. We get to create our own. This is important to remember, because we're all embedded in an oppressive society that is constantly putting out discouraged, hopeless, self-centered, greedy perspectives—perspectives that contain the chronic distresses of the society and push people in unworkable directions. We have the ability to decide that the world is different from that; to choose a perspective, even if nobody agrees with us—including everyone in RC. It's important that there be no limit on this. We collect the best information we can, and check with the people who seem to think clearly most often, but then it's up to\* our own minds. We can track the places where our thinking doesn't work well yet, and temporarily use someone else's thoughts because we know we still have discharging to do, but that's not giving up on our minds.

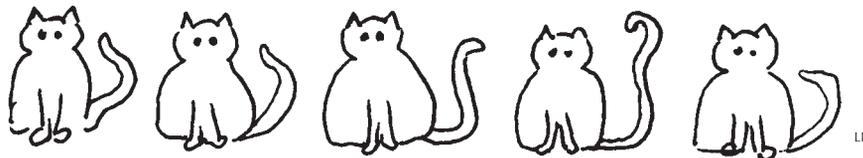
We can make new choices, and have perspectives that nobody else has. This is the way we collectively move forward. Somebody has to think first. Somebody arrives at some juncture, some idea, some place, and this only happens in an individual mind. Some mind has to get there first—has to have a thought, and not throw it away just because nobody else seems to have it. Somebody has to stick with it long enough to say it out loud in spite of everybody looking oddly at him or her. Then other people can consider it, and if it is a good thought, they can accept it and pass it on to other minds. Why wouldn't your mind be the first to produce such a thought? We can treasure the possibility.

But we can't just sit there and hope that new fresh thoughts will come. We need to consciously choose our perspectives and work against our distresses. If we didn't have all the distresses that cloud up our minds and confuse us, new wonderful thoughts would probably float through more often. For most of us, fresh thoughts come mostly after big sessions, after a lot of discharge. Then something looks a little different, at least for a while. We think something different. Our minds show themselves a little more.

Our thoughts and perspectives are not bounded by our chronic feelings.

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\* Up to means the job of.



## A "Scientific" Checking on RC?

I think you are demonstrating a little ignorance of what the scientific establishment is really like in any area that approaches human behavior.

One thing that probably only physicists and perhaps mathematicians are at all clear on is that there is no "objective" point of view from which to examine something; that the observer determines the point of view. Your hope that if you got some scientists involved, they would be outside the frailties implicit in the presence of patterns is, I think, going to be frustrated.

You do not have to put a phenomenon in a test tube in order to study it scientifically or achieve as much objectivity as is actually possible. With RC, the workable approaches in theory and leadership are persisting and are coming to the fore. The unworkable ones, which are continually conjectured both locally and internationally, fall by the wayside, sometimes spawning little spin-off movements that include a certain number of patterned assumptions.

The work that needs doing is not the study of RC from outside the process (where are the pattern-free humans to study it?) but the application of it consistently enough that the humans involved can guide each other and share their workable insights at a faster speed. That's what all the publications and the conferences and the correspondence are about.

Harvey Jackins

From a letter written in 1984



JO PERRY

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## “Epilepsy” and Terror

I would like to share my experience with “epilepsy.” I am going to talk about a “grey area” in which certain characteristics don’t fit the typical seizure model.

My story: I was raised in a white conservative working-class family. At seventeen (I’m forty-four now) I went to study at a university. I was the first person in my family ever to go on to tertiary level.<sup>1</sup> After a few weeks, I experienced a shaky feeling in my legs. All I remember is going for an EEG,<sup>2</sup> having a ball thrown at me a couple of times, and being told that I had epilepsy. I started taking a medication.

I was frightened living away at the university. I had never looked after<sup>3</sup> myself before. Soon after I went back home, I was put on various epilepsy drugs, which I stayed on for two years. During that time the “fitting”<sup>4</sup> increased considerably, until it was occurring every day. I experienced it as a kind of tight clenching of the jaw and arms, followed by a release in which I was limp but conscious. Nothing ever showed on EEGs, and it was decided that I must have “frontal lobe epilepsy,” about which little was known.

Eventually a top neurosurgeon concluded that I had never had epilepsy and that I should spend some time in the hospital’s psychiatric ward being treated for agoraphobia,<sup>5</sup>

panic attacks, and a “disintegrated personality”(!?). I spent a month there and learned how to breathe into a brown paper bag and do things like go to the shops and the cinema “on my own” (“important” in Western society).

The medical model said that I had a short circuit in my brain; the psychiatric model said that my brain produced too much adrenalin and that I was “clinically depressed.” I was put on a strong anti-depressant for a year, and the “fitting” stopped. It was another six years before I came across the RC model. At my first RC workshop, the leader mentioned “terror” in our childhoods, and I remember thinking that that was a bit of an exaggeration . . . “scared” perhaps. Anyway, I got the information that shaking was good, and I promptly started to shake—lots, often by myself at night in bed. I had to pick counsellors who had discharged enough of their

own childhood terrors to be able to be relaxed around my sometimes quite vigorous shaking. Over time, and with lots of counselling, I remembered early childhood and adolescent traumas, including sexual assault. I came to understand that the reason the “fitting” had stopped with the anti-depressant was because the drug had numbed me.

Sixteen years after I started RC, this is my thinking: our culture understands very little about terror. Because adults haven’t recognised or processed their own terror, they cannot acknowledge terror in young people. I had experienced traumatic events that went “underground” for a long time. They were triggered in my later adolescent years, and because shaking was unacceptable, I had clenched to stop what I now understand was the discharge process. That clenching, and the subsequent release, was mistakenly identified as a

*continued . . .*



JENNIFER ROBERTS

<sup>1</sup> Tertiary level means higher education.

<sup>2</sup> An EEG is an electroencephalogram, which is a test that measures brain waves.

<sup>3</sup> Looked after means taken care of.

<sup>4</sup> “Fitting” means convulsing.

<sup>5</sup> Agoraphobia is a fear of open or public places.

## COUNSELING PRACTICE

*continued . . .*

kind of seizure. I readily accepted the diagnoses and medication because at least they represented some kind of attention.

The suppression of terror does funny things to a person. Along with the clenching, I experienced a heightened sensitivity. Things like the flickering of fluorescent lights and the high-pitched noises emitted by computer screens, TV sets, and crowds triggered the “fits.” (I’ve since realised that I was being “hyper-vigilant”—switching on extra senses to make sure that I was never caught off guard again.)

My experience has given me insight and understanding into a relatively unexplored area in our psyches (terror and its discharge). My time in the psychiatric ward allowed me to “stand on the outside” of our culture and look in—a unique perspective that many don’t get a chance at.

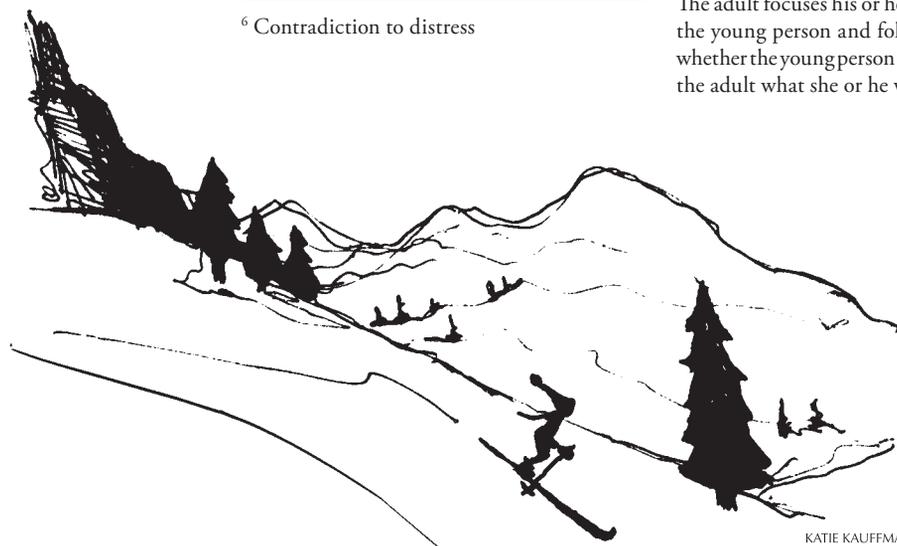
It is a great contradiction<sup>6</sup> that I have had an opportunity to write here about my experiences and conclusions, and that my thinking will be listened to. Thank you.

*Wendy Andrews*  
Ipswich, Queensland, Australia

<sup>6</sup> Contradiction to distress

P.S. My eight-year-old daughter, who is being raised with sessions, has instigated “laughing time,” during which she climbs onto my lap and we proceed to have belly laughs. It has been fantastic for both of us. I was never able to do formalised “special time”<sup>7</sup> with her (although she’s gotten lots of informal attention), and so she took matters into her own hands.

<sup>7</sup> “Special time” is an activity, developed in RC family work, during which an adult puts a young person in full charge of their mutual relationship, as far as the young person can think. For a specific period of time, the adult lets the young person know that he or she is willing to do anything the young person wants to do. The adult focuses his or her entire attention on the young person and follows his or her lead, whether the young person tells, or simply shows, the adult what she or he wants to do.



## Healing and First Thoughts

On your knee, I would suggest that regardless of your final decision it would help to counsel on it. What you need is a counselor who will extort flash answers from you—quickly, with a confident approach, with questions such as, “What does K— need to say right now to begin to heal her knee? First thought.” The counselor needs to insist on getting out the first thought, no matter how ridiculous or irrelevant it seems, and follow it up. I have never known this to fail.

You don’t know ahead of time that this condition is one that can be corrected with discharge, but counseling on it will reveal all the distress around it and will make it possible either for the body to correct itself or for other necessary measures to be relatively easy and un-traumatic.

*Harvey Jackins*  
From a letter written in 1975

## Flexible Thinking About a Food Addiction

I have been struggling with an old restimulation that causes me to overeat, particularly sweets. But recently I had a great experience.

I have tended to feel alone and “left out” when others eat sweets and I try to abstain. My raised-poor patterns of “never having what everyone else had” and “why should I have to be deprived” have come up and sabotaged my success, no matter how hard I’ve tried to resist. After several cries about this, I had the chance to test out a new strategy.

My company likes to celebrate birthdays, and comings and goings, with heavy doses of sugary foods. In the past, if I “wasn’t eating sweets,” I would usually sit kind of sullen and everyone would be aware of my “decision.” They’d almost be forced to comment on it. I can look back now and see that it must’ve been quite a damper<sup>1</sup> on the celebration.

<sup>1</sup> Damper means dulling or deadening influence.



TAMARA DAMON

But this time I was armed with some re-evaluations. I had realized that what I actually felt most left out of was the camaraderie and connection, not the food. So I made a decision to be part of the whole celebration, whatever that meant, while not eating a bite of anything I didn’t want to eat.

As they brought out the cake from the best bakery in these parts, I ooohed and aaahed right along with everyone. I smiled and said, “Yes indeed! Thank you,” when they went around the table serving everyone who said yes. People discussed the richness of the cake, the texture, and so on, and I chimed in<sup>2</sup> whenever possible—with a big smile. While everyone ate, I broke up the cake with my fork and never took one bite. I wasn’t left out a bit! It was also a contradiction to my raised-poor distresses that say *never, ever* waste food.

Soon it was over, and we all threw our plates away and went back to work. No one ever suspected that I didn’t participate fully, and I had just as much fun as everyone else.

Bonny Carroll  
Somerville, Massachusetts, USA

<sup>2</sup> Chimed in means joined in, participated.

### SEEKING MORE INFORMATION?

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## Fighting for My Life

Tim Jackins talks about fighting for ourselves. In my case, fighting for myself and putting myself first have become a life direction.

Several years ago I was diagnosed with chronic lymphocytic leukemia (CLL). The symptoms include extreme fatigue, enlarged lymph nodes, and night sweats—none of which I had at the time of diagnosis. The treatment is watchful waiting, because chemotherapy can be more noxious than the cancer itself. At the time of diagnosis, chemotherapy was projected to be six to ten years away.

It was difficult initially to think about having a potentially fatal illness, especially when I had no symptoms and treatment seemed a long way off. Being a mom, an RC leader, and someone with a busy career, my inclination was to counsel on whatever else was in front of me at the moment.

Also, as a white Protestant female and a daughter of a minister, I had been trained from birth to put everyone else's needs ahead of my own. The idea of putting myself first went against the core of my chronic patterns. I would get a little edge on the distress,<sup>1</sup> and then I'd fall down the slippery slope of putting everyone else before me. To stay focused on fighting for myself has required my young-adult daughter's support and excellent counseling, aggressive counseling from my regular Co-Counselors, and great sessions from others in the RC Community. I have had to fight old discouragement that says that I am not worth fighting for.

I was told that being in good physical shape prior to chemotherapy would produce the best results, so I began to put attention on regular exercise and healthful eating—things I sometimes slack off on.<sup>2</sup> I also scheduled a series of Intensives.<sup>3</sup> In the third one, I took charge and fought the best I knew how. I could fight to live for my daughter, but I needed help to keep facing that I wanted to live for myself. I still have early battles to fight—situations in which I gave up<sup>4</sup> and went quiet—and tons<sup>5</sup> of work to do, but I am

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<sup>1</sup> Edge on the distress means ability to function outside of the distress.

<sup>2</sup> Slack off on means neglect to do.

<sup>3</sup> An Intensive is twenty hours of one-way Re-evaluation Counseling, for a fee, at Re-evaluation Counseling Community Resources, in Seattle, Washington, USA.

<sup>4</sup> Gave up means quit trying.

<sup>5</sup> In this context, tons means a large amount.

getting a handle on<sup>6</sup> being able to show how much I need others by my side.

As time goes on, the CLL symptoms have become more evident. I am feeling more of the fatigue. In April I attended a Women and Physical Power and Well-Being Workshop, which allowed me to put another chunk of attention on my health. With my background, pursuing an alternative medical route was a stretch,<sup>7</sup> particularly since my hematologist wasn't supportive of it, but upon returning home I was able to set up an appointment with an acupuncturist who specializes in cancer. He is an excellent listener, and I have seen a difference in the fatigue.

In late summer I had to have surgery on my ankle, due to complications from a serious break several years before. The surgery went fine, but the following evening I broke out in spots,<sup>8</sup> from a virus related to chicken pox, in response to the stress of the surgery. It was scary to be healing my ankle, fighting off an infection, and knowing that the CLL was beginning to show itself more actively (the infection was due to a suppressed immune system from the CLL). Once again, I am getting through<sup>9</sup> with the support of my family, my Co-Counseling Community, and my medical team. I have been having huge sessions in which I desperately ask for help, and I can finally see that I am unable to fight this battle on my own.

I am figuring out a lot. I am the expert on my condition. I use my sessions to stay on top of what is happening so that when I see the medical professionals I can state clearly what is happening, and also listen carefully to their best thinking. I am learning not to be a victim, and to not give in<sup>10</sup> to believing that they always know more than I do.

I have been able to "fool my pattern" by reminding myself that my *job* is to take good care of myself. Putting it in the realm of a job has helped me remember that taking care of myself is just as important as taking care of others. I am learning to more fully welcome the love of both RCers and non-RCers, and I am understanding more deeply that I am worth fighting for.

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Linda Whitehead  
Wilmington, Delaware, USA

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<sup>6</sup> Getting a handle on means figuring out.

<sup>7</sup> A stretch means difficult to do.

<sup>8</sup> Broke out in spots means developed a rash.

<sup>9</sup> In this context, getting through means surviving well.

<sup>10</sup> Give in means submit.

## Blind to Sighted, Heart to Heart

Some time ago, I sat at Tim Jackins' lunch table on the last day of a three-day teachers' and leaders' workshop in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA. I began by talking easily about my life and where it was going, catching him up on events since our previous conversation of at least a year before that. Suddenly, feeling Tim's great kindness and remembering our connection, I began to cry hard about where I had gotten stuck in Co-Counseling, particularly with regard to leading. What emerged was how difficult it had been to have persisted more or less faithfully in RC for over twenty years and still be the only blind person (and even the only person with an obvious physical disability) at most workshops. "Why have the blind people I have tried to nurture in Co-Counseling not stuck around?" I asked. "Why don't more people in RC have friends who are blind, or disabled in some other way? Why can't I seem to turn things around?" Tim said, "I think it would

help for people to hear just what it's like being you—what it's like, from your perspective, to walk around as a blind person in this society." So, at his suggestion, I am writing this article to give you an idea of what's great about being blind and what's hard about it.

People are good. That means all of us. This is something we say and hear every week in Co-Counseling, but sometimes we say it often enough the same way that we stop taking its meaning in. For a variety of reasons (the drudgery of rigid routines, feeling forced into being a cog in a product-oriented society, overwork in meaningless jobs, any form of oppression), people become numb or edgy. They stop being their best selves. As a blind man, I often give people a glimpse of someone living life slightly outside their experience. I step off of a train in an unfamiliar station, and people almost immediately come up to me to see if they can be of any assistance. They rise to the occasion, and their true selves, the selves that naturally want to connect with another human

being and do something kind, step forward. Maybe I just need a piece of visual information that will set me on track, so we have a brief but warm exchange. But maybe I need more than that, so we walk out of the station and then a block or two through the city together. And then, just like that, I'm hearing about where he's going, or her new job, or I'm talking about the amazing poem I just read, and it hits me<sup>2</sup> that I am walking hand in hand with a stranger, making friends. Maybe we'll never meet again; maybe we will. In some ways, it doesn't matter. For that moment, we have connected, we have let our lives touch each other in a caring way.

I used to teach high school in Philadelphia, at an all-girls school. Because people there got so used to seeing me walk with others, they seemed to feel freer to walk hand in hand with me. Perhaps my blindness gave me a little more permission to do something that everyone wished they could do. I walked those hallways holding the sweating hands of students about to take a big test, or the arms of excited girls whose hands flew as they talked. I've held the rubber-gloved hands of cafeteria workers, the rough hands of maintenance men who guided me past ladders and debris. It gives me great hope to experience so many people at their best. It gives them great hope, I feel certain, to see me out in the world, loving my life and thriving.

Often commercial companies create new products or slightly altered products to encourage people to be dissatisfied with what they have so that they will buy something

*continued . . .*

<sup>2</sup> In this context, hits me means suddenly occurs to me.

<sup>1</sup> Stuck around means continued to be involved.



© BILL HORNE

## LIBERATION

*continued . . .*

new. One doesn't have to wonder as much about people's motivations in creating products for the blind; we blind people comprise such a small market share that people don't usually create something new for us unless they perceive a real need for it.

I am touched by stories like the one I heard in 1970 about John Linvill, the man who developed the Optacon, a device that allows blind people to turn regular print into raised print. His daughter was blind, and he wanted to find a way to give her access to the ninety-eight percent of books that come out each year that are never turned into braille or talking books. I'm moved, too, by the story of Ted Henter, a blind man who, nearly thirty years ago, figured out a way to make computers talk. Both stories are of people with freed-up intelligence and big hearts who used their best selves to make the world a little better. Thanks to Ted Henter and pioneers like him who keep advancing the technology, I am writing this article on a small laptop<sup>3</sup> with synthesized speech and a braille display.

Of course life can also be hard for a person with a disability living in a society built by and for able-bodied people. It used to be much harsher, even cruel. In ancient Greece, for example, babies with obvious disabilities were taken to the Acropolis, a large hill outside the walls of Athens, and left to die. These days the oppression of people with disabilities generally takes subtler forms and comes mostly out of unawareness.

In the United States we have a strong belief in our form of democracy, and people who voted for the losing candidate have to be "good sports" and surrender to "the will of the

people." The trouble with being in the minority simply because you are blind is that you are expected to be a "good sport" and accept things the way the majority (in this case, the oppressor group) wants to set them up. If you have any chronic material<sup>4</sup> (as many of us do) that says that you don't matter very much, then you have to fight off the restimulations from the oppression—restaurants with no menus, theaters and concert venues with no programs, that you can read; braille literacy teachers who only get to your school once or twice a week; web sites that present crucial information in graphics rather than text; major intersections with no audible cues about when to cross; cars built to be so quiet that you can't hear them; airlines that insist that you be the last to evacuate a burning plane. It can create the feeling that, if push comes to shove,<sup>5</sup> you are expendable. You get the message that people would rather do the thing that takes less effort and less money than do the right thing by you.

The oppression of young people instills in children passivity and resignation. The oppression of people with disabilities lays on an extra load of passivity. That passivity, coupled with the discouragement that comes from daily reminders of expendability, can make it difficult for people with disabilities to push through to a sense of their own power in this world.

Imagine you are blind and you want to treat yourself to dinner at a restaurant. Maybe you live alone, as I do, and you cook for yourself most nights, and tonight you want to do something different, try someone else's cooking. You take a bus or walk to a restaurant you have heard about and have been eager to try. You get there, and it's busy. Without thinking,

or without quite knowing what to do, the host or hostess, who has just led you and your guide dog to a table, puts a print menu in front of you. When the waiter comes to take your order, you explain that you can't read print and ask if he can read it to you. "Oh sure," he says, "but it's really busy tonight, so I will have to come back in a few minutes." "The fish looks good tonight," he says upon returning. "Would you like to try some of that?" "You know," you say, "I just had fish last night, so I think I'll pass." "Well, there's another guy who comes in here with a dog that looks just like yours, and he loves our fried chicken—gets it every time. Would you like that?" When you decline, he might mention a sampling of other dishes: the pork roast, a vegetarian entrée, something with pasta. On a good night, you will insist, or he will figure out, that the right thing to do is to read you the categories on the menu and then focus on the particular parts you want to hear. On a bad night, you will simply settle for one of the five or six items already mentioned, then wonder, as you wait for your food, what the other choices might have been.

On rare occasions, you will have to fight just to sit in the restaurant. Once, while I was in Seattle (Washington, USA) for an Intensive,<sup>6</sup> I took myself out to dinner, escorted by my guide dog. The restaurant was small and bustling, its tables crowded together. After I'd waited for about ten minutes, the hostess approached me and said that she couldn't seat me because the tables were too close together for my guide dog. I asked her to show me a table and said I could probably find a way for my dog to fit. "No," she said, "it really is too crowded. But there's a great restaurant just over the next hill. I think you'd really like that one."

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<sup>3</sup> A laptop is a computer that can be held on one's lap.

<sup>4</sup> Material means distress.

<sup>5</sup> If push comes to shove means if the situation really becomes difficult.

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<sup>6</sup> An Intensive is twenty hours of one-way Re-evaluation Counseling, for a fee, at Re-evaluation Counseling Community Resources, in Seattle, Washington, USA.

I stood my ground,<sup>7</sup> saying this was where I wanted to eat and asking if I could speak to the manager. Fifteen to twenty minutes later, the manager came out. The story changed: "For the next couple of hours," she said, "we can only seat people who have reservations. We're just that popular." I explained that that was not what the hostess had implied, but in mid-sentence she turned on her heel and walked away. After shaking for a few minutes, I figured out what to do. As new patrons came in the door and lined up behind me, I asked them if they had made reservations. When they said no, I told them that the restaurant was by reservation only. Most people turned around and left. Not long after, a kind waitress told me she would help me to a table.

Sometimes, restaurant staff have tried to get me to sit in a room away from the other customers. Sometimes, taxi drivers with an aversion to dogs refuse me. On a day when you don't have any slack, these things can really challenge your sense of belonging. What erodes that "slack" or free attention? Often, it's the little things: having to have the same guide dog conversations over and over ("Why can't I pet him?" or "I bet that animal is your best friend in the whole world"); being patronized; low expectations (such as people making a big deal about how you dress so well or didn't spill any food on yourself); people speaking to your sighted companion as though you don't exist or can't communicate verbally; and being pulled and pushed around, like so much furniture, by urgent "helpers." It helps me when I remember that these things come mostly out of ignorance or unawareness, not malice.

What can you do? Make friends with people who are blind. In RC

<sup>7</sup> Stood my ground means didn't waiver from my position.



DIANE SHISK

we have placed an emphasis on ending racism. If you have made any headway on this, you already know something about making friends with a blind person. Similarly, if you have done any work to increase your flexibility around and openness toward children, you already know something about including in your life people who are blind or visually impaired. In principle, it's not all that different. You're allowed and encouraged to make mistakes. Mistakes let us know that you are trying, that you are willing to risk embarrassment. You don't have to know everything. Give up control. In fact, that will be a great relief to us. It makes more room for us to be ourselves and take back control of our own lives.

Of course, I can't speak for all people who are blind, but I can offer some suggestions, based on my own experiences, that will put you a little more at ease around blind people, especially when you first decide to meet them. It never hurts, though, to check things out with the people you meet to see how they prefer to do them.

1. If you think that a blind person might need help but you aren't sure what to do, ask if she wants help. If she says yes, ask how you can best help; don't assume you know. If she says no, assume she knows what she is talking about and don't take her refusal personally.

2. If a blind person wants you to guide him somewhere, let him take your arm. We feel much better having you lead us than having you push us in front of you. Letting us take your elbow puts you a half step in front of us. Walking like that, we can feel, from your movements, when to stop and start walking, when to speed up or slow down, and when to be careful of changes in the terrain.

3. Don't socialize in any way with service animals, unless the owner says you can interact with them. That means don't talk to them, wink at them, pet them, or feed them. Just ignore them.

4. When you hand blind people money, at least in the United States where all the paper money feels the same, tell them which bills are

*continued . . .*



BILL KEEGAN

*continued . . .*

which. We often fold them differently to distinguish their values.

5. If a blind person is with someone who can see, don't address the sighted person when what you mean to do is address the blind person. (This rarely happens in RC, but as an ally it would be good to be aware of it. You might be surprised by how often it happens in the wide world.)

Please receive these suggestions in the spirit of love in which I offer them. As you take risks and step out into the unknown, be gentle and loving toward yourself. Life is too good and the world too full of possibility for us to spend time feeling bad about ourselves, especially outside of sessions. So go ahead, try to meet people who are blind. Make mistakes, feel awkward, discharge, and then come back and try again. Do this not just for us, but for you.

Maybe some day you'll get lucky enough to spend time with a whole bunch of us blind folks. I think you will love it. When we're together, there's nothing quite like it. If we need to find you in the group, we'll just yell out your name. When we travel in elevators, we aren't looking down at the floor; we're jostling against you and asking, "Who's

this?" Come make yourselves known to us, make friends with us, and let us invite you into the family. If, in the process of trying things out, you discover you are missing some essential information about people who are blind or visually impaired, you can contact me by e-mail at <dansimpson@comcast.net>. As Information Coordinator for People Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired, I would be happy to hear from you.

Having lots of different kinds of people in our lives speeds our growth. Besides stretching us, it also grounds us in a larger sense of how we are meant to be in this world. Because we have all been hurt, we all have our own brands of resistance to this. Little voices sound in our heads, saying things like, "Oh, no! I have so much to think about already, so much to do. Do I really have to take on<sup>8</sup> one more group or one more issue?" But the truth is that we need to hold the biggest possible picture out in front of us if we want everybody to get out of bondage to oppression and chronic distress.

Do you remember those airlines I mentioned that insist that able-bodied passengers have to be given the opportunity to get out of an endangered plane before a person

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<sup>8</sup> In this context, take on means take responsibility for thinking about.

with a disability makes a move toward the exit? I want to tell you a story related to that. One day I flew in a twenty-seat jet prop. As is the custom, the flight attendant, after helping me find my assigned seat, explained the plane's safety features. She shocked me, however, with her bluntness: "If we encounter any trouble and need to make an emergency landing, you are to stay in your seat until everyone else but me has left the plane. Then I'll help you." "But I'm so close to an exit," I said. "Why can't I just move to that exit and get out like anybody else?" But she insisted on the airline's policy. I protested, "Well, we'll just see when the time comes." I was furious. Later, after she had passed out snacks and beverages, I called her to my seat to try to converse with her in a more relaxed way. But all I could do initially was sputter out things like, "That is so unfair. How would you like it if someone said to you that you should wait until all the men got out first?" Hearing my anger and anguish, a man spoke from across the aisle. "Don't worry, Buddy," he said. "If it comes to that, I'll make sure you get out. We'll go together."

That's the kind of solidarity I want. That's how I want to be. Now I'm reaching out to you. We're a glorious web and a glorious weave of people. Deep inside, we really want to reach out for each other, but we've gotten hurt and discouraged and timid and shy. I invite you to make friends with blind people and people with all kinds of physical and mental differences. Come fight for us and with us, not because it's a virtuous thing to do, but because your life will be better with us in it. For now, don't even try to get us into Co-Counseling. Just try to get us into your life.

*Dan Simpson*  
Information Coordinator for People  
Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired  
Lansdowne, Pennsylvania, USA

## *We Who Were Raised Poor: Ending the Oppression of Classism*

The pamphlet *We Who Were Raised Poor: Ending the Oppression of Classism*, from Rational Island Publishers, is one of the first things I read when I started RC, and it struck me deeply. I encourage everyone to read this gem. I remember getting an understanding, for the first time, of the brutality of classism.

The author, Gwen Brown, gives a short history of how classism and racism have been installed—how groups of poor people have been divided from one another so that the wealthy minority can maintain control of the wealth. She covers the ways that classism is pervasive and affects all people, and how classist attitudes cling to Co-Counselors.

She recounts how she built raised-poor and people-of-colour Communities and talks about what people

of colour knew that white people didn't get<sup>1</sup> yet. Her perspective on and clarity about the intelligence of all people and, in particular, the brilliance and courage and generosity of raised-poor people make this a powerful read.

Throughout the pamphlet she expresses her confidence in raised-poor people taking on<sup>2</sup> leadership and ending classism. At the end she quotes Tracy Chapman's song: "Poor people are gonna<sup>3</sup> rise up. Can you hear it? It sounds like a whisper."

*Anne Emery*

Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

<sup>1</sup> Get means understand.

<sup>2</sup> In this context, taking on means assuming.

<sup>3</sup> Gonna means going to.



CHARLIE ROSENBERG

### RC—A Tool for Liberation

In my opinion, RC is a tool for liberation in the most fundamental sense—a liberation of human beings from the tyranny of distress patterns. It's also a tool for those who seek the elimination of political and economic oppression in its ability to furnish intelligent leadership and keep the attempts at liberation from getting bogged down on an irrational basis.

*Harvey Jackins*

From a letter written in 1975

## Breaking Through Language Oppression

*Kaixo denoi* (hello dear all):

I want to share with you something hopeful. After the European Social Forum in Malmö (Sweden), some of the twenty-five United to End Racism delegates stayed for one day more, till Monday.

That Monday morning, I was having breakfast with five native English speakers. I asked them if they would like to hear about something I had felt during the week we spent in Malmö. They all said, "Of course!" (They were kind to me.) So I told them that I had had a long week of fighting with language oppression. They listened to me carefully. At a certain moment, I asked them how many words they knew in my language (Basque). They said, "Not one." I let them know that I had learned thousands of words in their language and that I was wondering whether it was time for them to learn one word in mine. All of them agreed that it was. I kept on giving information, while discharging with their good attention, and shared this idea: that it was time for them to make the effort to come close to me; that that was the kind of effort I had been making every time I'd tried to communicate with some of them in their language. They all nodded their heads. When my session ended, I suggested to them, as we had to travel together to Denmark, that we use a "neutral" language to communicate in the group. By neutral I meant not my language (Basque) and not their language (English) but a language we all could use a bit. That language turned out to be Spanish.\* Four of us could use a bit of Spanish; two of us a lot (me, included).

How things changed from that moment on! They suddenly became very close friends trying to communicate with me—slowly, looking into my eyes, calm, excited, and funny. They tried hard to speak in Spanish, and asked me a lot of times to repeat what I had said and to tell them how they could say this word or that expression. While we were traveling, I was crying inside the whole way—feeling included and close, and as important as they were. I could lead some parts of our relationship, which had not happened before with them. I think they could imagine how hard it could be for a non-native English speaker to try to stay close and at the same time be rapidly translating everything in his or her mind. Later

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\* That language turned out to be Spanish means as it happened that language was Spanish.

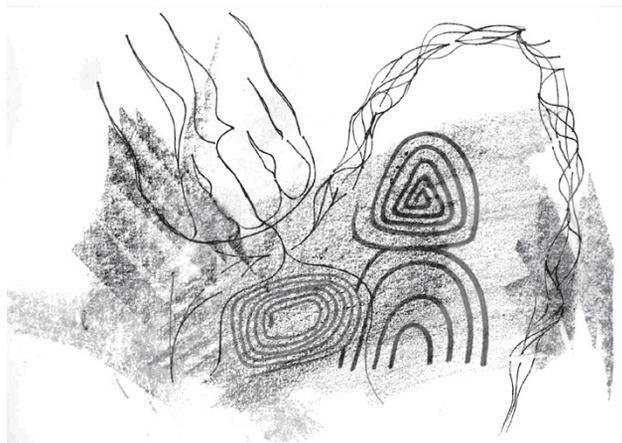
we did another mini-session, and I could cry about how I felt that we'd had more connection among us during that half-hour trip than I'd had in my twenty years of RC, and about how much faster my discharging and re-emergence, and taking leadership and acquiring RC knowledge, would have gone if everything had happened in my language.

The idea I take from this experience is that inclusion is a necessary preliminary step to get to liberation: If I include you in my mind—in my thoughts, in my heart, and in my acts—then I can think about you and your liberation. First I need to put you right inside my mind. That was possible on this trip because we broke language oppression among us—together, consciously. I want to thank everyone who was there. This could be a starting point of an effective alliance. Thanks also to all the people who have supported me in my job of International Commonality Reference Person for Translations and Languages.

If you try something like this, I would like to know what happens for you.

*Maitasun osoz* (with all my love),  
*Xabi Odriozola*  
Donostia, Euskal Herria  
(Basque Country)

P.S. I am sorry for not having been able to write this in your language. You would be welcome if you want to translate this letter into your language, for your Community.



BARUCH SCHUR

## A Great Experience for Me

*Kaixo denoi* (which I guess means “hello dear all” in Basque),

I was one of the first-language English speakers who tried to communicate in Spanish with Xabi for that small period of time. It was a great experience for me. I’ll try to say why.

I know enough Spanish to be able to say some simple things, but often my feeling is that because I can’t say enough to communicate “fully,” it would be better to say nothing at all in Spanish or to only communicate in English. The feeling is embarrassment that I would be taking up people’s time and attention, and slowing things down.

For me, Xabi asking us to communicate in Spanish meant that there was space and time to do things “badly.” It was like being given permission to be client while someone cared about my struggle to communicate.

I got to feel what it was like to have lots of complex and subtle things I wanted to talk about but to only be able to communicate the things that I had the words for—a small fraction of what I was thinking.

During the previous week I had wanted to communicate with Xabi in Spanish, since I could speak it a bit and I knew that he understood it well and it would be important to him if I tried something. However, I had held back because I was aware of the oppression of the Basque people with regard to Spanish, and I didn’t want to make a mistake by using it. And I didn’t just ask him whether it would be okay.

After I did communicate in Spanish, I felt proud of myself for having agreed to a challenge that involved my feeling incompetent while learning. I think I try to feel competent a lot. It’s part of my internalised anti-Chinese racism. The racism I experienced left no room for being anything but competent, and then competence became one of the few things I could feel good about.

*Karl Lam*

Cambridge, Cambridgeshire, England

### We Have Power

We were conceived and, in most cases, born with a sense that the universe was responsive to our wishes. Only distress has occluded that sense, and it can be recovered by discharge of the distress.

Our flexible intelligences are certainly more powerful than inorganic matter or non-thinking life. Since they are flexible, they must be more powerful than rigid, unthinking patterns. Certainly the appearance of the oppressive societies having power over us is only impressive to us because of the powerlessness patterns installed on us when we were young. These can be discharged.

*Harvey Jackins*

From *The Rest of Our Lives*, page 63



PHYLLIS KESSLER

## Big Changes After an Allies to Natives Workshop

The Allies to Natives Workshop, led by Marcie Rendon<sup>1</sup> in Calgary (Alberta, Canada), was a powerful workshop for me. I am putting together my notes so that I can send them to Co-Counselors and friends. The following are some of the good effects of the workshop:

- I am speaking about the genocide of Native people, in many circles. This is new for me.

- I am closer with the white people I live with and more understanding of their and my "stiffness" patterns.

<sup>1</sup> Marcie Rendon is the International Liberation Reference Person for Native Americans.

- I am thinking in a new and fresh way about my cello student who has Native heritage. I am recognizing the "kill or be killed" pattern, listening more, and being more articulate about what I think.

- I've been reading about the genocide of Native peoples in Canada and the rest of North America (this is also new) and thinking about the Canadian government's apology to Native peoples.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Canada's Prime Minister Stephen Harper's apology for the Canadian government's forcing Native children to attend state-funded Christian boarding schools aimed at assimilating them

- As we approach the federal election here, I've been writing to political candidates about next steps.

- I have a new perspective on the Native people who pass by, and whom I now speak to.

- I more often remember that I am good.

- I have set up daily contact with another white Co-Counselor to interrupt my isolation and feelings of being bad and guilty.

Heather Hay  
Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

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JO PERRY

## Liberated by an Allies to Natives Workshop

I'm a woman of South Asian heritage who lives in Calgary, Alberta, Canada, and I recently had the pleasure of organizing our area's first International workshop: Allies to Natives, led by Marcie Rendon.<sup>1</sup> The workshop was a big contradiction to the recordings of denial and despair that keep oppressor patterns in place.

Forty-two of us participated. We came from Alberta, British Columbia, Ontario, and Manitoba (in Canada) and from Washington, Idaho, Massachusetts, Minnesota, and New York (in the United States). We met at a camp that was once Tsuu T'sina land—not far from the present-day Tsuu T'sina reserve.

Canada was founded on the genocide of Native people, and everyone in Canada who is not Indigenous came, or had ancestors who came, as an immigrant (unlike in the United States, where many people came as slaves). It is sometimes difficult for me, as an immigrant of color, to look at this genocide without racism toward other peoples getting in the way. However, it is not impossible to work on both—and I need to, in order to fully re-emerge.

At a leaders' day prior to the workshop, we answered several rounds of questions, including, "What information did you get in school about Natives?" and "What is it that makes you most discouraged?" I loved discharging the discouragement so that I could leave it in my session and not walk around with it. Having permission to do that made it possible for me to jump into the rest of the workshop.

Marcie made certain that we worked on "point zero": remembering our own complete goodness and the complete goodness of everyone around us. Having that reality to draw from made it possible to tackle our oppressor material<sup>2</sup> head-on (*gulp!*).<sup>3</sup>

Marcie clarified the difference between racism and genocide. Racism: people of color are kept alive to do the work of capitalism. Genocide: people are eliminated so that their land and resources can be taken.

We allies got the chance to look at our "white patterns." As a person of color, looking at my "white

patterns" was invaluable for my liberation. My patterns of staying quiet, isolated, and so on, not only have been caused by racism, they are also a vehicle for playing out<sup>4</sup> oppressor (genocide) patterns, and they won't go away unless I get rid of them. The eight of us who were people of color had an excellent support group in which we discharged on how we personally had benefited from the genocide of the First Nations people. As hard as that was, those of us who dove into it also moved some of how we'd gotten hurt by racism.

Marcie had the white people look at their white identities, which on this continent seem to get erased. White people can contradict their loss of identity by reconnecting with whatever their heritage was, and reminding themselves that their people were good. Marcie pointed out that when white people lack a connection to their own heritage, it's easier for them to appropriate Native culture. White people need to find and reclaim their own cultures; otherwise they are playing out oppressor patterns by being fascinated with and romanticizing another culture.

Marcie, her daughter Simone, and Darlene Daniels, the Area Reference Person for Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, spent a few days after the workshop connecting with local Native groups. (Marcie met with a group of middle-school students at a Native school, talked about RC at the Native center of the local university, was a guest speaker at a Native writers' circle, met with students at an adult learning center on the T'su T'ina reserve, and did an introductory RC evening.) The leaders in my RC Community built a solid relationship with these three remarkable women. One of the best compliments I ever received was Marcie's saying that the week she spent with our Community was one of the easiest she'd had in RC.

I cannot say enough about the importance of this workshop and how central it was to my liberation. I encourage all RC Communities to invite Marcie Rendon to their Community. Everyone's life will go so much better!

Sonia Palak  
Calgary, Alberta, Canada

<sup>1</sup> Marcie Rendon is the International Liberation Reference Person for Native Americans.

<sup>2</sup> Material means distress.

<sup>3</sup> Gulp is an expression of fear.

<sup>4</sup> Playing out means acting out.

## LIBERATION

Here is a song I sang at the "Mental Health" Liberation Conference:

I've got good intentions  
but no matter what I do  
only your heart knows  
about the things that you've been through.

So I'll sit here and I'll hold your hand  
and I'll look into your eyes,  
I'll listen to your tale of woe  
and I'll listen to you cry.

And then you'll see  
how good this life was meant to be  
and you'll be free  
to follow your integrity.  
And then you'll see  
how good this life was meant to be.

So this time you just hold me tight  
this time breathe me in,  
we'll go back together  
and then we'll come home again.

We'll go back to that old place  
where your mind don't like to be,  
we'll face down those big old demons  
and then we'll set you free.

And then you'll see  
how good this life was meant to be  
and you'll be free  
to follow your integrity.  
And then you'll see  
how good this life was meant to be.

*Mary Toutonghi*  
Seattle, Washington, USA



MARGIE DOYLE PAPADOPOULOU

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- DVD #228 The Understatement

For ordering information, see page 109.

\* Because many RCers did not have a chance to learn RC directly from Harvey, these DVDs provide a "foundation" of contact with Harvey and his thinking.

## My Thirty Years of Work on Anti-Jewish Oppression

When I first came into RC, there was a lot going on.<sup>1</sup> As a raised-middle-class Catholic, I soon realized that anti-Jewish oppression was a big issue in my life. It had been subtle in my family but had interfered with getting close to Jews and other people. (My feelings were so intense when I was around Jews that I thought the Nazis were going to get me!) I had no idea what was going on.

I started working on it—and to my surprise it ran deep.<sup>2</sup> I went to workshop after workshop and discharged heavy fear (and produced buckets of vomit!).<sup>3</sup> All the memories of when I first heard jokes about Jews surfaced. I went to many workshops as an ally to Jews. I started getting clearer and began getting closer to Jews and being a better ally (as I threw up<sup>4</sup> along the way).

We have worked on anti-Jewish oppression in my men's support group. Getting up in the early morning at workshops and having a group on ending anti-Jewish oppression has also helped me to push through. The closer I get to Jews, the more I understand and ask questions. This helps me think about the long history of anti-Jewish oppression. It helps me think about all people. I had always been afraid to ask questions because of the way I was hurt.

Being divided from people is part of all of our chronic distress. It looks "normal." The fear I felt was intense, especially because I was in it and didn't know it. Anti-Jewish oppression still comes up, but I know now that it is only distress.

Connecting with my dear Jewish Co-Counselors, and with Jews around the world, has made a huge difference in my life. Because of the work I've done on myself, I've met people and I got an opportunity to go to Israel and Palestine. A Jewish woman who was writing her dissertation on racism and had moved to the West Bank with her family asked me if I wanted to go there for a visit in February 2005, and I went.

I've sometimes worn a Jewish star and sometimes a yarmulke,<sup>5</sup> as a contradiction.<sup>6</sup> One day I can be a Jew, one day a Hindu, one day a Buddhist—as well as a Catholic. The purpose of this is to love all people. It would be great to live with a Jewish family. Maybe we should all live with different types of families—to really know the goodness of people.

*Bill Regan*  
Malden, Massachusetts, USA

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<sup>1</sup> Going on means happening. Co-Counselors began to work intensively on liberation issues in the 1970s.

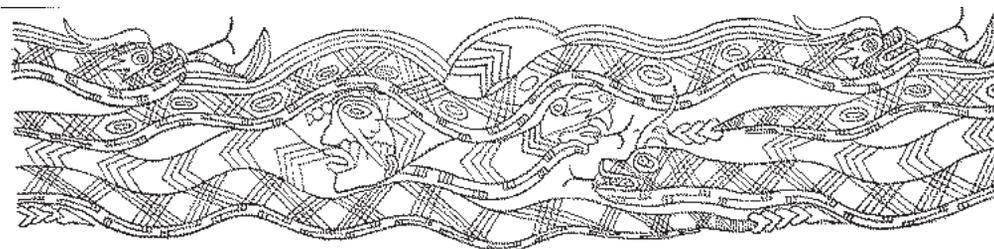
<sup>2</sup> It ran deep means it was a significant hurt that had many repercussions.

<sup>3</sup> Nausea and vomiting are sometimes connected with feeling heavy fear.

<sup>4</sup> Threw up means vomited.

<sup>5</sup> A yarmulke is a skullcap, worn especially by Orthodox and Conservative Jewish males in the synagogue and at home.

<sup>6</sup> A contradiction to the distress recording





STEVE BANBURY

## Avoid the “Mental Health” System

The whole notion of “psychotic,” “chemical imbalances,” and so on, is complete mumbo-jumbo. The people who say these things don’t really know what they are talking about. They’re well-meaning people who because of their ignorance are following theories that they hope will do some good but that in general harm people.

If you behaved so oddly that you got put in this kind of a situation, it was simply that you were demonstrating some old distress that you wanted help for. If the help had been there, you would have moved right out of it. The problem is, of course, that the kind of help you need is that of expert, relaxed counseling, and there is not a great deal of expert, relaxed counseling in the world, even in the RC Communities. We

are just starting to get some people out far enough<sup>1</sup> to be able to do it. And in general our role is not that of therapist but of finding out the reality of the world and starting to do something about correcting the problems.

I would suggest that you get a job, even if it’s a volunteer job. Start doing something that takes your attention away from your distress. Get all the RC literature you’ve missed and read it, especially the parts about keeping your attention away from distress.

Most importantly, decide in your own head that you’re going to be okay and that you’re not going to be pigeon-holed<sup>2</sup> into a

lifetime of being incompetent, and so on. You’re fine. If you have some distresses, so does everybody. If you acted peculiarly, it was in an unaware attempt to get someone to pay attention and give you help; what you didn’t know was that there’s nobody out there who can do it, even though you would like to believe that therapists, psychiatrists, and so on, know what they’re doing.

It’s your life. Grab yourself by the seat of your pants<sup>3</sup> and start living it well. Please do.

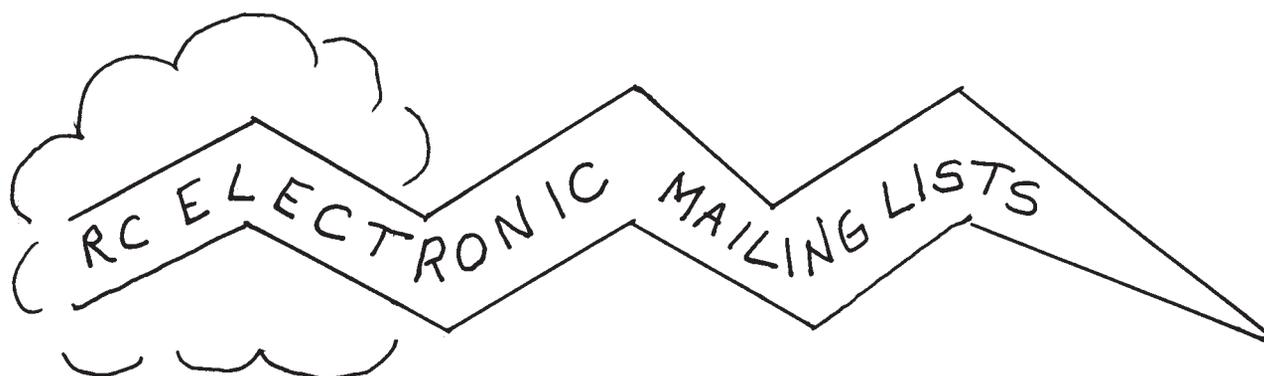
*Harvey Jackins*  
From a letter written in 1984

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<sup>3</sup> Grab yourself by the seat of your pants means take charge.

<sup>1</sup> In this context, out far enough means far enough out of their distress.

<sup>2</sup> Pigeon-holed means categorized.



... for a “jolt” of reality, and RC theory in process! (See page 87.)

## Hope, and Belief in Possibility

I am teaching a fundamentals class, and last night we were dissecting Chapter 17 of *The Human Side of Human Beings*.<sup>1</sup> We were moving right along, and then we got to this paragraph: “This encouraging reality should not be obscured by the fresh outbursts of horror and discouragement emitted by viewers who panic as they take their first aware looks at how bad things are without comparing them with how bad things have been in the past. The trend toward being more rational is unmistakable in human history and human society, even though it is very uneven.”

At first no one could recognize any trend toward more rationality. Then a class member said, “Someone like Barack Obama would never have gotten the nomination of one of the major political parties, or been considered a possible winner of a presidential election, even twenty-five years ago.” That stopped us all in our tracks.<sup>2</sup> Soon we were coming up with<sup>3</sup> other examples and could tell<sup>4</sup> that there actually had been a trend in human history and society toward being more rational.

As an African-heritage USer, I am “over the moon” thrilled that Barack Obama could tomorrow be the next president of the United States. I am thrilled, yet filled with trepidation. I have struggled with a sense of hopelessness about USers being able to transcend their deep distresses and long-held beliefs about people of color—many white people believing that people of color are not quite ready or good enough to lead, and many people of color believing it, too.

One of the things I love and admire most about Barack Obama is that he always seems to be relaxed and himself when in public. His humanness is palpable. What a model and contradiction for me, for all my people, and for all people! I know that within the context of current U.S. electoral politics, no one leader will be entirely the leader I hope for. However, if Barack Obama’s actions leading up to today are an indication of future performance, he has shown that he believes in some measure of consensus; that he has a heart; that he believes in negotiation and compromise as needed; and that although he may be a “decider,” he is also an “includer” of the first order.

<sup>1</sup> *The Human Side of Human Beings*, by Harvey Jackins, describes the basic theory of Re-evaluation Counseling.

<sup>2</sup> Stopped us all in our tracks means made us all stop and think.

<sup>3</sup> Coming up with means thinking of.

<sup>4</sup> In this context, tell means notice, see.

Early this morning, at my polling place in the historically black neighborhood of Bedford-Stuyvesant in Brooklyn, New York, I stood in a line for over an hour and a half. I have voted at this same polling place for the last ten years, and no matter what hour I’ve gone, I’ve never had to wait for longer than five minutes. I loved standing in that line, saying good morning to all my neighbors. Almost everyone was smiling. They looked like children on their way to see Santa Claus<sup>5</sup>: thrilled, excited, scared, as if they could hardly believe they were there. Hopefulness—that’s what I saw on the faces of my neighbors. Many people, walking past after voting, were saying to each other, “We are a part of history. I would never have missed this.”

As I was standing in the line waiting, I was thinking about Malcolm X,<sup>6</sup> Martin Luther King,<sup>7</sup> Frederick Douglass,<sup>8</sup> Fannie Lou Hamer,<sup>9</sup> Rosa Parks,<sup>10</sup> and others, who had fought so hard for the opportunity we were experiencing at that moment. I thought about my own family members who had passed on and thought, “I’m voting for you, too.”

With much hope, and belief in possibility,

*Fela Barclift*

Brooklyn, New York, USA

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

<sup>5</sup> Santa Claus (also known as Saint Nicholas, Father Christmas, Kris Kringle, or simply Santa) is the figure who, in most Western cultures, is described as bringing gifts on Christmas Eve, December 24, or on his Feast Day, December 6. The legend may have part of its basis in tales about the historical figure of Saint Nicholas.

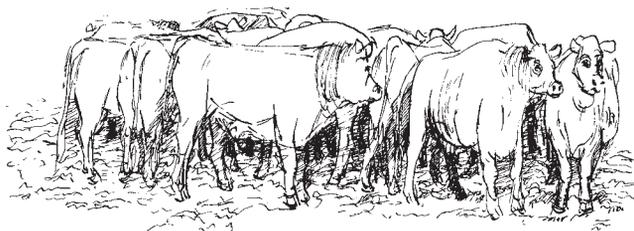
<sup>6</sup> Malcom X was a prominent African American leader in the U.S. Civil Rights Movement. He was assassinated on February 21, 1965.

<sup>7</sup> Martin Luther King, Jr., was a prominent African American leader in the U.S. Civil Rights Movement. He was assassinated on April 4, 1968.

<sup>8</sup> Frederick Douglass was an enslaved African American man who became a famous writer and spokesman for the abolition of slavery.

<sup>9</sup> Fannie Lou Hamer was an African American activist and leader for civil rights and voting rights in the United States.

<sup>10</sup> Rosa Parks was an African American civil rights activist, famous for refusing to give up her seat on the bus to a white passenger—an action that catalyzed the Montgomery (Alabama, USA) Bus Boycott.



FRED KELLER

## We Never Stopped Fighting

With a feeling of pride and joy, and almost disbelief at the exciting historic news of an African American president-elect,<sup>1</sup> I cried. I cried because of the hopefulness of seeing a black man so visible and supported. I cried thinking of those who had fought and died for that moment. I cried thinking of my African ancestors who fought from the time they were captured and enslaved. I cried knowing that there were thousands of instances and hundreds of ways my people had resisted the oppression. Some had been public, but many not. As an African American who grew up in the rural South<sup>2</sup> at the time

of segregation, I have always been encouraged by what ancestors figured out in the face of messages telling them what they could not do.

I remembered my surprise at hearing my mother tell me, ten years ago, how she had boarded a school bus, with a baby on her lap and two of us little ones under four years old, to take a two-hour trip to a courthouse to demand the right to vote. That was in 1948. When I asked her why, I heard the fight in her voice: “Because we had a right!” Sometimes, well after I was an adult, my dad would mention how he had been asked, at least once a year, to sell the small piece of family land we farmed, and how he would tell the neighboring wealthy white land owner, “No.” The man would say, “You don’t need it.” My dad would answer back, “You don’t need it either!” I recall being shocked that my quiet, mild-mannered father had talked back to a white man. On

election night, my eighty-six-year-old mom and I called each other back and forth. (She had promised to stay up until Obama spoke, but fell asleep before then.) I was so pleased that I could listen to her joy and excitement on this historic night that she had thought would not happen in her lifetime.

There are countless stories of us standing up, fighting back, deciding we would not be kept down. Early on I fought to remember that I had a mind and could think. I chose to read, to learn about other worlds through books, and not to dwell on the fact that the books were discarded by the white school. I knew there was more out there, and I wanted more. I was lucky to have African-heritage teachers who encouraged my mind. I have loved Co-Counseling for many reasons, but chief among them is the agreement we make to reclaim our intelligence and assist others to do the same. I have cherished the journey to have more of my mind and have my thinking clearer. It has looked to me like both in RC and out, being visible with one’s mind is powerful and a huge contradiction.<sup>3</sup> Many messages of oppression aim hurts at our minds.

The day after the election, I wanted to remember what had happened on the long journey that led this country to listen to a man with brown skin and actually be able to notice that he was smart enough to become president of these United States.

I was a senior in college in Atlanta (Georgia, USA) when Dr. Martin

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<sup>1</sup> Barack Obama, elected President of the United States on November 4, 2008—the first African American ever elected to that office

<sup>2</sup> The South consists of the states, in the southeastern part of the United States, that were on the Confederate side in the U.S. Civil War—a war fought in part over whether or not the enslavement of African-heritage people should be legal. The Confederate side wanted to maintain slavery.



ROSLYN CASSIDY

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<sup>3</sup> Contradiction to distress

Luther King<sup>4</sup> was killed. I remember the shock, disbelief, and numbness I and my fellow students felt. The night after his funeral the tone of my dorm-mates was somber. We were to graduate the next month and head out into the world—after four years of being in Atlanta, close to the center of the Civil Rights Movement—and now our leader was dead. I remember thinking it was not the end. I wrote a note to myself that I have kept for forty years. It was my declaration that Dr. King's dream would not end, could not end—that we would keep on, that nothing would stop us. Every time I come across it in my belongings, I think of discarding it—but I don't. It is a tangible reminder to keep deciding to fight in the ways that I can.

<sup>4</sup>Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was a prominent leader of the U.S. Civil Rights Movement. He was assassinated in 1968.

I like noticing that there have been many allies fighting, too. Many allies joined in to support President-elect Obama, to say with their vote, "This is a human who is smart and can think about this country." Some of my tears during the election came from noticing the diversity of the crowd gathered to vote and to celebrate.

Perhaps I should not be surprised that anger and grief about racism have been much more accessible to me since the election. It has been good to cry hard noticing the victory, but I have also been discharging about how some of my people can't actively show their joy, because the acting out of racism did not end with the election. I can feel furious at the injustice, hostility, and mistreatment—a feeling I have not always been able to access easily.

Seventeen years ago, on Dr. Martin Luther King's birthday, I almost did not go to my first Co-Counseling introduction, because I was worried I would not be doing something to celebrate Dr. King's birthday. Now I know that I did one of the most powerful things ever by getting introduced to the tool of RC and committing myself to reclaiming my intelligence, and assisting others to do the same. I look forward to using all the material<sup>5</sup> that surfaces in the coming period to keep moving and fighting to reclaim my full self. I like the added hopefulness and sense of possibility.

*Marion Ouphouet*  
Seattle, Washington, USA

<sup>5</sup>Material means distress.



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A special issue:  
***What we have learned in RC  
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## Indian-Heritage People

*At the July 2006 Asian Leaders' Workshop, in Warwick, New York, USA, the Indian-heritage Co-Counselors met as a group. After learning a lively Garba (Gujurati dance), each person had two minutes to think aloud about each of the two questions below. We also shared ideas for a draft Indian commitment. The following are notes from people's turns. Those whose thoughts are represented are (current residence in parentheses): Niti Dandekar (India), Benita Jackson (United States), Sujata Maini (Sweden), Sayanan Pratap (United States), Shashi Raman (United States), Sanjeev Selvaraj (United States), Sonal Sheth (United States), and Anu Yadav (United States).*

### WHAT ARE WE PROUD ABOUT AS INDIANS?

Care about children and education • Care for elders and their experiences • Religious tolerance • Diversity, coexistence of diverse Indian cultures and languages • Strong women's leadership • Interconnections among people who leave India and people who stay; people leaving and then organizing when they come back • Festivals • Good at seeking others out; we find each other • Diversity of languages • Thriving cultures, arts, martial arts • Tribal cultures • Artistic explosion • Know how to laugh • Kerala had the world's first freely elected communist government in 1975; people from all over the world come to study this • Beautiful people • Resilience, strength • Inherently loud, vivacious • Argumentative • Politically-minded, know about organization • Fighters • Community for raising children • Highly intellectual • Amazing mathematicians • Put together philosophy, Hinduism, and so on • Empirical understanding • An old people, been through a lot • Smart, resourceful, highly adaptive • Perceptive, sensitive due to diversity, extended family, the closeness of community • Generous, proud • Easy-going • Innovative in science, art, government • Can show our liking and caring • Make up a large portion of the world's population • Men able to be physically close and affectionate without being targeted with homophobia • Physically beautiful in range of diversity • Understand importance of connection to other people • Ayurvedic medicine • Amazing scientific discoveries and understanding • In Kerala, relatively high literacy, especially among women without great wealth; an example of making things work with few resources • Amazing food • Love of color • Good at reaching out • Strong, smart, loving, caring • Persistent • Cultural richness • Good • Real • Good at being close • Hospitality • Lots of knowledge that goes

back in time, in lots of different fields • Fun • Friendly • Inclusive of the world and humankind • Indian leaders moving around the world, giving what is good • Vedas<sup>1</sup> • First female political leader in the world.

### HOW DOES OPPRESSION AFFECT US AS INDIANS?

• Self-blame, criticism are intense • "Mental health" oppression • Difficult for men and women to be close; platonic closeness stigmatized • The United States using our rapid economic expansion—colonialism all over again; outsourcing • Model minority myth in the United States; we are promised status because of that • Pressures among Indians in the United States to be white • Caste • Colonization • North/South Indian divide • Colorism • Sexual purity • Religious rituals oppressive regarding how to conduct oneself • Saying things to compromise with family elders • Collectivism • Language oppression (Hindi as national language) • Money, status, materialism • Confusions about worth of people who stay in versus leave India • Criticizing others, blaming • Not trusting leaders, not taking leadership • Not trusting our thinking • Pressure to be smart • Pressure in the United States to assimilate; to act out racism against African Americans, poor people, working-class people • High suicide rates, depression • Lack of understanding of oppression in United States, especially sexism • Long-term effects of colonialism • Hierarchical society reinforces sexism • Indian men isolated by sexism, caste-ism, strong sense of obligation • Lots of racism • Female infanticide • Heavy segregation of men and women • Caste separation • Pollution of environment • Religious violence • Afraid to break from the group • Pressures to bear children • Reproductive control • Women less "worthy" • Internalized oppression from colonialism: comparison, competition, difficulty trusting • Looking down on other Asians • Difficulty showing ourselves • Control patterns • "Worthy" marriages • Oppression of children.

### IDEAS FOR AN INDIAN COMMITMENT

• I expressively, affectionately decide to show myself joyfully and with pride!  
• With all my affection and expressiveness, I decide to show myself completely, with pride and joy, and to never shut up<sup>2</sup> again!  
• I expressively, affectionately, decide to show myself joyfully and with pride, and to never shut up!

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<sup>1</sup> Vedas are very old Sanskrit texts, sacred to Hinduism.

<sup>2</sup> Shut up means be quiet.

## Counseling Catholics on Sex

Growing up Catholic, I learned many wonderful lessons about community, closeness, and the fight for justice. However, when it came to<sup>1</sup> sex, there was a great deal I could have done without.<sup>2</sup> I attended an early sexual memories workshop for Catholic leaders, led by Joan Karp,<sup>3</sup> and together we figured out some of what Catholics and their allies can keep in mind when counseling Catholics on sex and early sexual memories.

We Catholics are taught from day one that sex is bad, that any desire to have it is bad, and that ultimately, we are bad. To contradict these messages I need my counselors

to always remember my goodness and to remind me that I am good. I have a counselor who calls me her “good one.” That can bring a smile, or discharge—depending on the day. Additionally, it helps when my counselors remember that sex, and wanting to have sex, are good; when they keep things light; and when they aren’t surprised if the mention of “taboos” brings heavy laughter or sobbing. One of my regular Co-Counselors says things like, “Jesus called and said he hopes you’ll have lots of sex today.” A good direction for me (in “Catholic-speak”) is that the Holy Spirit, Mary, the communion of saints, and the parish priest are all rooting for me.<sup>4</sup>

Joan, who is a Jew, was the only non-Catholic at the workshop. Her outside perspective was helpful. She

noted that although we Catholics get hit<sup>5</sup> with the feelings that we are bad, we at least have one place where we can go: to confession.<sup>6</sup> She said that as a Jew, when she was growing up and before she started to Co-Counsel, having a place like that could have been very helpful. At least we (those of us who can make use of it) have a place to go when our hearts are heavy where to some degree we can get a break.<sup>7</sup> She also noted that we Catholics tend to say nothing (because sex is so taboo) or everything (because baring our soul in confession is familiar to us). There may be little in between. This led those of us at the workshop to challenge each other to be open but also to slow down, to tell only a tiny beginning of the story, in order to contradict our rushing to get it all off our chests, to “confess” it all so that we could be forgiven. Slowing down was difficult, because it went against our programming.

For me, the lessons and messages of Catholicism came in early and hard. They influenced my understandings of gender, sex, and closeness. Catholicism for me was a religion of opposites—and the dichotomy of good or bad, holy or evil, heaven or hell, seemed to play out<sup>8</sup> in the area of sex as virgin or “whore.” There are two main women in our religion, both named Mary. The first is Jesus’ mother, who is said to have conceived

*continued . . .*



EDWARD ELBERS

<sup>1</sup> When it came to means in terms of.

<sup>2</sup> Could have done without means would like not to have happened.

<sup>3</sup> Joan Karp is the Regional Reference Person for Rhode Island and parts of Massachusetts, USA. She has led many early sexual memories workshops.

<sup>4</sup> Rooting for me means cheering me on, supporting me fully.

<sup>5</sup> In this context, hit means burdened.

<sup>6</sup> Confession is where a person confesses her or his sins to a priest and is then forgiven, after a penance of saying a number of prayers.

<sup>7</sup> A break is time away from what is difficult.

<sup>8</sup> Play out means be acted out.

## LIBERATION

continued . . .

by the power of the Holy Spirit and thus is glorified as a virgin. The other is Mary Magdalene, whom we are taught was a poor prostitute.

I've noticed that many Catholic women find it hard to imagine themselves outside of the virgin or "whore" dichotomy. I think this is one reason Catholic girls are said to be, and often are, the wildest. When one has to compete with a *virgin mother* role model (try competing with that!) and is told that sex is bad, bad, bad, rebellion is pretty much inevitable. I've noticed all-or-nothing patterns—either not having any sex at all (and not even thinking about it) or having lots of it without discretion.

It looks to me like Catholic men often look for a virgin in public (a proper woman) and a "whore" in the bedroom. There doesn't seem to be much room for us Catholics, regardless of gender, to be ourselves. It's been helpful for me to be reminded that there are many creative possibilities for my life, not just two options. (This goes for<sup>9</sup> all areas of my life, not just sexuality.)

Jesus, our ultimate role model, is thought of as being above sexuality, above temptation—essentially asexual. (But because of the way sexism works, his virginity, unlike his mother's, is not openly spoken about.) Male sexuality is far from celebrated. Masturbation is a sin, and our church leaders must take a vow of celibacy.

Homosexuality is not an option, according to Church teachings.

<sup>9</sup> In this context, goes for means applies to.

Non-Catholics might be asking, "When is sex okay?" Through the Catholic lens, it is a sacred act to be engaged in only after the sacrament of marriage. However, after internalizing so much "badness" about sex, it's not like Catholics who get married immediately find themselves sexually liberated post-wedding. Like all patterns, the patterns related to sex stick around<sup>10</sup> until we discharge them.

This takes me back to my first point: reminding us Catholics that people are good; that having, or thinking about having, or considering thinking about having sex is good; and that since we are people who may occasionally, sometimes, possibly (one day, in a far, far, distant universe) do one of the above, *we* must be good. Many of us can't fathom<sup>11</sup> that we might be good, or even think it's worth considering. This is restimulation, so when we shrug off, with a "whatever," your suggestion that we are good, you could try some fun Catholic synonyms for good:

<sup>10</sup> Stick around means remain.

<sup>11</sup> Fathom means grasp, understand.

"Well, you might not be good, but you are definitely (take your pick) holy, sacred, blessed, devout." And if all else fails, tell us we're *sexy!* Guaranteed discharge!

Thanks for thinking with me as we Catholics strive to have full lives—filled with good people, meaningful work, and . . . good, meaningful sex!

Stephanie Abraham  
Covina, California, USA



RUTH HYNDS-HAND

## Reach the Timeless Human Being

The only special difficulty in working with us older people is that we are so pent up with the need to talk that we talk too long, and that we have a few more records\* running than the younger people because we have had more time to acquire them. We need to become skillful at dealing with that particular condition and get to the timeless human being.

Harvey Jackins  
From a letter written in 1975

\* Distress recordings

## A Workshop for Native Childhood Educators

It happened! The first RC workshop for the tribal Early Childhood Education folks to whom I have been teaching RC over the past several years.

We met on Saturday, August 23, at the Yakama Nation, in Washington, USA. We were eight people: me, Betsy Hasegawa<sup>1</sup> (Japanese/Ainu); the organizer, Jeri Marcus (a white Native woman who works with me at Northwest Indian College and is a Chickasaw tribal member); and five women from Yakama Nation Head Start<sup>2</sup>—three Yakama tribal members, one Yakama descendant, and one Shoshone Bannock tribal member.

Betsy was a great support to me. Jeri, the organizer, who is quite new to RC, made the workshop happen. She made the personal contact that got people there, and also got folks who couldn't come asking when the next one would be.

<sup>1</sup> Betsy Hasegawa is an RC leader in Bellingham, Washington, USA.

<sup>2</sup> Yakama Nation Head Start is a program that helps pre-school age children from low-income families who live on the Yakama reservation.



TARA JONES

Jeri, Betsy, and I spent the night on cots in a tipi<sup>3</sup> at the Yakama Nation RV<sup>4</sup> Park, then drove to the Wapato Center of the Yakama Head Start. The day began with breakfast around a table in the large adult classroom. Most folks arrived by 9:00, when we were scheduled to start the workshop. They were hungry, so it was just right to gather around the table. (We had good food—the cook for the Yakama Head Start catered for us.)

I appreciated people for the effort it took to get there and asked them to introduce themselves by sharing their names and their relationship to the three parts of the workshop title (Tribal Early Childhood Educators and Allies): “tribal,” “early childhood education,” and “ally.”

Each told the story of her relationship to being tribal. It was a wonderful way to begin. It highlighted the effects of genocide: mixed heritage; adoption; feeling only half Indian or less; and so on. Everyone learned a great deal about each other, including those who already knew each other well. The other parts of the introductions were interesting and useful, too.

I spoke briefly about my three goals for the workshop: (1) discharge, (2) a chance to learn more counseling skills, and (3) a boost to the building of the RC Community at Yakama Nation. I reviewed how to do mini-sessions, and we had our first five-minute mini. “That wasn’t long enough,” was the laughing lament, and I knew we were going to have a good day. The women were glad to be there, glad to see others doing Co-Counseling besides those in their fundamentals classes, and glad to be discharging.

I wanted to do most of my teaching via counseling demonstrations, which turned out to be a good idea. I counseled two people, T— and D—. The attention of the group was better for T— after the review of D—’s session. It was nice how that worked.

I then set up three-way sessions based on my judgment as to which combinations were likely to work best, and Betsy and I did a two-way.

We gathered at noon and did farewells for two people who had to leave. They were reluctant to go and stayed around for several extra minutes until they *had* to leave.

*continued . . .*

<sup>3</sup> A tipi is a conical tent, usually made of animal skins, that is a traditional Native American dwelling.

<sup>4</sup> RV stands for recreational vehicle.

## LIBERATION

continued . . .

I invited anyone who wanted to talk about developing her RC Community to meet with me at lunch. They all wanted to! We did a Wygelian leaders' meeting<sup>5</sup> around the table, taking plenty of time to listen and to think aloud. We got to the last part—the discharge piece—after spending one and a half hours on the first three parts.

After a play break we convened as a support group of the whole. I explained that support groups are based on a commonality and that with our bunch we could base it on being women, early educators, or Indigenous people—at least. We did it on being Indigenous. I spoke about genocide and some of the recordings that have

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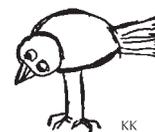
<sup>5</sup> A Wygelian leaders' meeting is a meeting of a group of leaders and potential leaders of a particular constituency in which each person takes a turn doing the following: (1) reporting on what he or she has been doing in the last period, with regard to the constituency, (2) saying what he or she thinks is the current situation facing the constituency, from his or her viewpoint, (3) sharing what he or she proposes to do as a leader in the next period, and (4) discharging on what is getting in the way of his or her leadership. The group does not make any group plans but rather serves to encourage individual initiative. It meets only when the members feel a need for meeting.

resulted from it. Then each person had twelve minutes in front of the group. I went first, and Betsy counseled me. I discharged grief and terror. Then I counseled each person in turn. The only one who didn't discharge in tears commented on how wonderful it was to discharge so much and how much better she felt. Lesson: Never underestimate the value of interested, non-repetitive talking!

After these sessions, I asked them all to get out their calendars and set up their next sessions with each other. Then we had our closing circle and hugs all around. Again, folks kept hanging around, not wanting to leave.

It was a good day. The six new Co-Counselors, including Jeri, were wonderful to be with, learn with, support, and love.

Shelley Macy  
Bellingham, Washington, USA



## Preparing for the “Mental Health” Leaders’ Conference

The last two nights, I've listened to one of Tim's recent talks on CD, *Fighting for Ourselves*,\* just before going to sleep. I think it would make a great structure for the “Mental Health” Leaders' Conference. Tim asks us to consider the possibility that this is the moment, and you and I are the people, to fight for each of our mind's ability (and right and responsibility) to draw close to other minds, form a united force, and battle to transform the future (end “mental health” oppression, liberate our minds). I encourage everyone to listen to it. What if we saw the conference through the lens of this talk? Where might it lead us? How much might we be there for each other? What couldn't we accomplish?

Jack Manno  
Syracuse, New York, USA  
Reprinted from the RC e-mail discussion list  
for leaders of “mental health” liberation

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\* *Fighting for Ourselves* is CD #15 in the RC Teacher Updates, a series of talks given by Tim Jackins at recent workshops. For more information, see page 104.

### A REMINDER:

What used to be called Personal Counselors is now called  
Re-evaluation Counseling Community Resources (RCCR).

## A First Workshop for Owners of Small Businesses

In the April 1991 issue of *Present Time*, Dan Nickerson<sup>1</sup> wrote about the oppression of small-business owners and self-employed people. Little did I know that many years later I would read his article again and that it would be the starting point for setting up the first small-business/self-employed RC workshop.

I had attended a few of Dan's working-class workshops in the early 2000s. At one of them I had asked Dan what he thought of having a small-business/self-employed workshop. He encouraged me to test the idea by calling for a topic table. I had never led a topic table before. I needed to come up with<sup>2</sup> some questions for the group and decided on the following: Why did you decide to become a small-business owner or self-employed person? What do you do well as a small-business owner/self-employed person? What are some of the challenges?

Eight of us showed up.<sup>3</sup> Several people discharged about what got hard in running their businesses. Others proudly affirmed what they did well. The common bond of being in business helped people connect well with each other.

Because of work responsibilities I did not take more action until March 2007. Then, at another workshop, I brought up the idea of a small-business/self-employed workshop in mini-sessions with two RCers who also ran small businesses. Each of them counseled me on taking the lead in setting up such

a workshop. They pointed out that I was the perfect person to do it. Encouraged, I decided to take the plunge.<sup>4</sup>

When I sold my store in June 2007, I had more time to focus my energies on setting up the workshop. I corresponded with Dan, and we decided that he would lead a one-day small-business/self-employed workshop in conjunction with a weekend working-class workshop he was leading the following May in New York, USA.

Twenty-three people showed up for the small-business/self-employed workshop—some from as far away as Texas, Colorado, and Maine (USA). They connected quickly with each other, and discharge was evident from the beginning.

For introductions Dan asked each person to talk about his or her class background and current occupation. Many of us didn't feel

like we were doing a good enough job running our businesses. Could we do more in a more efficient manner? Listening to people made me appreciate how each of us was struggling to find ways for our business to survive.

There were several support groups. I led one on isolation in which each person answered the question, "What gets hard around isolation in running a business?" A common theme was the lack of support in making decisions.

In one of his talks, Dan reminded us that small-business owners and self-employed people often go into business to sell a product or service that mainstream businesses don't provide because they can't make enough profit on it. The small-business owners and self-employed people whose businesses survive could be a major force in the future in guiding us toward a more rational society.

*Mayer Foner*

New Cumberland, Pennsylvania, USA

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<sup>4</sup> Take the plunge means go ahead and do it.



CARYN DAVIS

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<sup>1</sup> Dan Nickerson is the International Liberation Reference Person for Working-Class People.

<sup>2</sup> Come up with means think of.

<sup>3</sup> Showed up means came, attended.

## About Prayer

*From a discussion on the RC e-mail discussion list for leaders of Catholics*

When I was young I had both good and bad experiences with prayer. On the one hand, I was forced to pray—sometimes as punishment. For example, when I was in trouble I had to say the rosary,<sup>1</sup> kneeling on the hard floor. On the other hand, I found it wonderful to pray grace<sup>2</sup> before each meal or to pray before I slept. It gave me the feeling that it mattered to call upon something big and benign that watched over my daily life.

I went to Catholic school, where prayer was often boring. We had to pray every day. However, in church I loved to pray because it was in Latin and I found that beautiful. I loved the prayers at Mass<sup>3</sup> and the sound of all the voices in unison. I felt I was part of something big and important.

For many years I rebelled against the Church and refused to pray. Later I went to theology school and got to think about what prayer meant to me. I was trained as an Episcopal priest. Episcopalians say a cycle of prayers at various times of the day, as is done in a monastery. I loved knowing that people all over the world were saying the same prayers. However, it seemed too rigid to have to say the same prayers every day.

I have discovered that, for me, prayer is opening my heart to the universe. I pray when I walk or am otherwise in present time in the natural world. I open my heart wide and let everything in. My heart grows bigger and I am filled with well-being. For me, prayer is being completely in present time and allowing myself to feel pain or joy or hunger or love. My goal is to be fully aware at all times, and when I am aware, I feel I am in prayer; I feel connected with everything. When I

feel hatred or fear, I pray. I try to open my heart instead of closing it. When I do this, I am reaching for benign reality. Sometimes I pray to the Blessed Mother.<sup>4</sup> She represents to me the part of God that can understand me fully as a woman. She is most accessible to me.

Christine Marie  
Seattle, Washington, USA

*In my early days in RC I was pleased and relieved to learn that yawning is a form of recovery from hurt. I often yawn during prayer. Before I learned RC, that seemed to be a problem. It was helpful to get a more accurate perspective on it.*

*I sometimes cry and shake during prayer. I've found this possible to do during public prayer—for example, during Mass—without drawing attention to myself. People seem to have slack for crying, in particular.*

*I like being at Mass, though I don't always find it easy. It's a time when I can put my mind on "making myself available to God." For me, this is deciding to be as fully human as I can be, to not act on distress. I don't find a conflict between*

*"making myself available to God," which in traditional terms means obedience to God, and the complete freedom (lack of compulsion) that comes from not acting on distress—though in the wide world obedience and freedom are usually put in opposition to one another.*

*It's rare that I feel fully available to God, but it's always good to think and decide and move in that direction. It's useful to see what gets in the way, what I want to hold on to "for myself." I usually hit some heavy fear when I put my mind in the direction of being fully available to God. I find it good to be with others at that point, like at Mass together.*

*In my early days of Co-Counselling I discharged heavy terror for many hours by saying the simple phrase, "God*



SILKE DENKER

<sup>1</sup> The rosary is a set of beads used to guide a person through a set of prayers.

<sup>2</sup> Grace, in this context, refers to a prayer of gratitude said before meals.

<sup>3</sup> Mass is a sequence of prayers forming the eucharistic celebration of the Roman Catholic Church.

<sup>4</sup> The Blessed Mother refers to the mother of Jesus Christ.

loves me." Mostly I didn't tell my Co-Counsellors what was going on,<sup>5</sup> because I'd experienced people not being able to handle what I was doing (though I was clearly having a good session). It would be nice to receive relaxed, active encouragement for thinking, praying, and discharging like that. It's not principally that I want to take prayers and phrases and use them for discharge. It's more like I want to pray in the company of and with attention from someone who is well disposed to prayer and also understands and encourages discharge. The difference seems important to me.

*I've started using traditional forms of prayer more often. I usually read some prayers each morning and at each bedtime. It's a way of making the repeated decision to not let distress run my thoughts, or what I do.*

*For many years (within RC) I was quiet about how important all this is for me. It's good to be more public about it.*

Fionntán Hurley  
Edinburgh, Scotland

As I've read your postings, I've remembered my own experiences with prayer, especially in the convent.

<sup>5</sup> Going on means happening.

There were the daily prayers that were said by many people around the world (like in a monastery). I, too, love to pray when I walk in a beautiful place or hear moving music, or even when I dance or bike or swim. There is something so open about these times, I can scarcely resist calling out a prayer of thanks for the beauty, freedom, calm, or energy of the activities. I often attend Liturgy,<sup>6</sup> where I do a lot of translating in my mind so that my prayers can speak from my heart.

Patricia Orlinski  
Sun City, Arizona, USA

<sup>6</sup> Liturgy is a sequence of prayers. In this context, it refers to the Catholic Mass.

## Love

No, love is not a feeling. Love is an attitude, although all kinds of feelings get attached to it.

Harvey Jackins  
From a letter written in 1976



TYRA TILL

## A Non-Sexual Life Partnership

*I just got home from the North American Jewish Women's Workshop, at which Diane Balsler<sup>1</sup> encouraged us to consider and discharge on the institution of marriage.*

*She asked the young adults at the workshop to share how they had experienced and responded to sexism. I found myself thinking, with surprise, "Oh, I have something to say about this!" I stood up and shared, "Rather than choosing marriage, I've decided to be in a non-sexual life partnership with a woman. It does not preclude our having other relationships, including those involving sexual intimacy, but we keep our closeness at the center of our lives." Diane responded, "That's something we didn't figure out in my generation."*

*Many women at the workshop, of all generations, were inspired and pleased by what R— (also in RC) and I have figured out. Many wanted to know more about how we've set up our lives, so I've written a little about our relationship.*

R— and I have known each other for eleven years and have been living together for eight. Our mutual commitment is simple: to keep our relationship at the center of our lives and to back<sup>2</sup> each other to have the biggest lives we can.

We met during our freshman year in college and built a significant friendship centered on supporting each other personally and as artists. When R— graduated (I had left

<sup>1</sup> Diane Balsler is the International Liberation Reference Person for Women.

<sup>2</sup> Back means support.

college after a year, and we had spent three years writing letters, talking on the phone, and visiting regularly), we decided to live together.

During the first year we lived together, a big question was if and how our relationship would change if one of us got into a sexual relationship with someone. We discharged and came to the conclusion that we didn't want to, or have to, change or diminish our relationship if we wanted relationships with other people that involved sexual intimacy. We also realized that we didn't want to "deprioritize" our female closeness in order to have relationships with men. We gradually decided to commit to our relationship and value it as a primary relationship.

We've continued to discharge about our relationship—both for ourselves and to be able to describe and explain it to our families and friends. Though our commitment hasn't changed much, our feelings about it have. We are more confident about our choice to stay close, and we struggle less with internalized Queer<sup>3</sup> oppression and sexism.

We are fully in there with each other.<sup>4</sup> We share our work space and

<sup>3</sup> People with the identities of Queer, Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender are targeted by Gay oppression, and internalized Gay oppression, from societal attitudes about these groups of people and their presumed behaviors. The term Queer represents in part a non-traditional identity regarding gender, sexuality, and living arrangements. People with this identity may or may not be traditionally Gay, and may or may not stay in intimate relationships with people of the same gender.

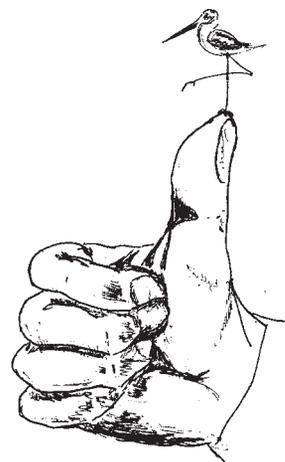
<sup>4</sup> In there with each other means involved with and supportive of each other.

have mini-sessions as we work. These are two huge contradictions to the alienation with which artists often cope. When it comes to<sup>5</sup> standing up against sexism and internalized sexism, we stick by each other. We discharge feelings that come up for us, and we put our minds together to think. We help each other stay clear about how we want our interactions to go—with each other, professionally, with sexual partners, with friends, and so on. Taking time to discharge means taking the time we need to keep our thinking clear. It contradicts the urgency that is so easily triggered in a society that isolates people from one another. Our relationship contradicts desperation about closeness and is a strong center from which to approach all kinds of relationships.

Our committed closeness helps us feel powerful in the world and enables us to open ourselves more fully to all kinds of intimacy.

E. W.  
USA

<sup>5</sup> It comes to means it is a matter of.



XABI ODRIOZOLA

## More Contacts, Steady Contact, and a Picture of Reality

*From a class taught by Tim Jackins, at a leaders' workshop  
near Lochem, Gelderland, The Netherlands, May 2008*

*Tim:* We're going to have a few more questions. Who has one?

*F—:* How can you accomplish getting people in your Area<sup>1</sup> to do enough Co-Counseling sessions?

*Tim (laughing):* How much is enough?

*F—:* Once a week.

*Tim:* That's not enough. (*Laughter*) Once is only maintenance.

People can have a hard time remembering to have sessions. They can also have a hard time remembering to come to class or to support groups. It's not a problem for just one or two people, it's not a problem only in your Community, it's not your failing; there is a real problem here.

We underestimate how isolated people are and how hard it is for them to remember that there is resource awaiting them. Most of us forget. When we get together, we know what is possible; it becomes clear. We get our lives back—why wouldn't we have a session? Because when we're alone we can't remember that. It feels like work. We can't tell<sup>2</sup> that life would be better for doing it. We can't tell that it matters to anyone else. You know how if you get a good session you gain time, everything goes faster and easier, but before the session it seems like you don't have time for it.

These confusions don't go away easily, and it's unreasonable to expect people to be able to think through them by themselves. Nobody should be left alone with them, but we all expect to be. And it seems like we can't reach for each other, like we don't know how to, like people don't want us to, like they will dramatize<sup>3</sup> their material<sup>4</sup> at us.

If you want people to be able to choose to have more sessions, you have to let them know that it matters to you personally that their lives go ahead. It isn't simply that they have more sessions—that's not the goal, but it's the best way you know to make their lives go forward.

<sup>1</sup> An Area is a local RC Community.

<sup>2</sup> In this context, tell means perceive, see.

<sup>3</sup> Dramatize means act out.

<sup>4</sup> Material means distress.

You have to remind them that you want their lives to be better and that you're sure they can be.

The Communities that appear to work best figure out excuses to get together often. Some Communities require a lot of involvement from everyone right from the beginning. Most Communities plead with people to take a class, but some Communities say, "You will be lucky if we let you take a class. And you can only take it if you will have a session every week, and come to class every week for sixteen weeks. Then we will see if you can continue." It works.

### MY INTRODUCTORY TALK

I do an introductory talk about once every two months in Seattle (Washington, USA). I give people the basic theory of RC, and I say, "We have been doing this for over fifty years. We know a lot. We know you can change your life. It takes a lot of work, but we know you can do it, and we know how to help you do it. We are doing it with our lives, and we would like you to join us. We offer you everything we know. What you have to do is work: face fears, face being uncomfortable, face difficulties you have run away from your whole life. You can do that. We will help you, but you will have to do it. We would like you to join us.

"If you get into difficulties or have confusions, we would want you to tell us and not think that you should handle them by yourself. Only with solid Co-Counseling relationships can you go as far as you want to with this theory and practice. If you never come back after this first talk, you can still use what you heard; you can use the ideas and do many good things. It will make a difference. But if you want everything we've figured out, then come fight the battles with us. We would love to have you with us."

I want people to understand that it's not a little thing, that it's something that goes on as far as they are willing to go—and that they will be part of something. We don't get to be part of something very often. We don't usually think of ourselves as being part of something important. And we don't often get to choose to do that. Most of the things we've been part of we were forced to join, so we don't think about it well. But it's what we're asking of people: to come join us.

*continued . . .*

## TEACHING, LEADING, COMMUNITY BUILDING

continued . . .

It's a very personal thing. If you teach a class to people you don't know, the ones who will stay are the ones with whom you develop relationships. Even when people have been Co-Counseling for a while, when they hit heavy distresses they can still get confused unless they've developed enough resource, enough relationships.

Our societies work to keep us separate and alone. Every day the people in your class have to live out there with all of that restimulation. It's not surprising it's hard for them to come back. We have to remember it's that difficult. Every time people come back and get in the group together, every time they don't get lost and stay in their room, it's a triumph over many oppressions.

### "WOULD YOU COME AFTER ME?"

We all have distresses that could make us walk away from this group. We all carry things that are that confusing. Some of us are determined enough that it's unlikely to happen, but we all need someone who will promise to come after<sup>5</sup> us if we do walk away.

If your Co-Counselor gets upset and stomps off, what should you do? What would she want you to do? You can't wait until it happens and then ask her what she wants. You need to know ahead of time. Now, before we're restimulated, each of us can look at somebody we trust and say, as clearly as we can, "No matter what happens, no matter how confused I get, I want you to come after me. If I can't figure it out by myself, I want you to help me figure it out, even if I act like I hate you at that moment, because I could get that confused."

If we're going to give up on someone simply because he or she gets that confused, then we're all in danger. We all have those kinds of distresses. We all forget too easily.

You need to look at what it would take for you to ask somebody, "Would you come after me? Even if it wasn't easy, even if I couldn't help, even if I went far away? Could you care about me enough to come after me in hard times?" People would love to, but that

doesn't mean they will be able to. They have their own distresses to face.

We tend to be good counselors for each other as long as we like each other. As soon as one of us gets stuck in grumpy material, we're not so eager to be counselor. We take it personally. It's not personal. That material was there long before that person knew us.

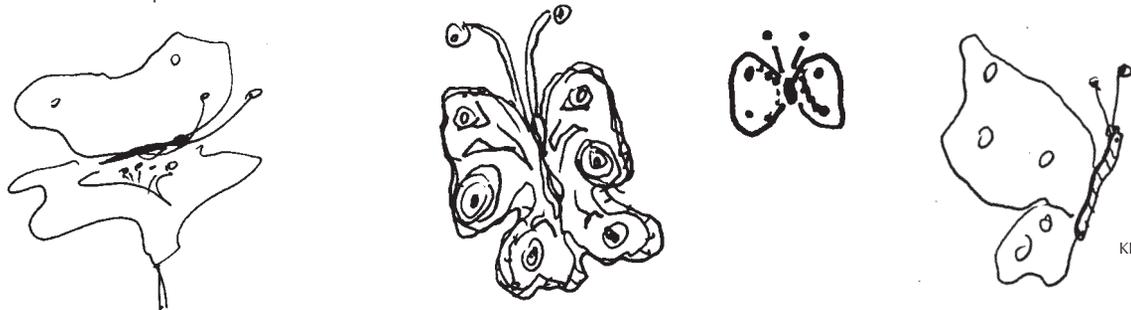
We all need to have sessions about people in the past who didn't like us, so we don't get confused so easily. We may also have distresses that make *us* feel like we hate everyone. There wasn't anybody there, people were behaving badly toward us, and we hated them all. We may carry that kind of distress, but it's only distress, and it's nothing serious as long as no one believes it. Unfortunately, we can get restimulated when one of us acts it out. We may look at each other, shrug, and say, "Well, that's what he wants." That's not what anyone wants. Nobody wants to abandon hope. Nobody wants to give up relationships. Nobody wants to go off alone again. But the restimulations can keep a person from figuring out what else to do.

### STEADY, BIGGER CONTACT

So the answer to your question is that we build in the direction of having more contact with one another; we pull people together where they can see each other, in big gatherings and small ones. One Co-Counselor can be enough for many purposes, but we also need to see a bigger picture. So we invite three people to come over and have sessions each week. It works well, so maybe we invite one more, and then one more. We get to see several people who are committed like we are.

It's that steady contact that makes a difference, not just our discharge. It's having other people fighting alongside us. It's getting a picture of reality that's different from the isolation we feel. This is why the Communities that require that everyone be in a class work well, because every week they get a reminder. It takes a lot of time. Okay, it takes a lot of time. Did you want it for nothing? Do you think the rest of your life doesn't take a lot of time?

<sup>5</sup> Come after means pursue.



## A “Remarkable Weekend” in Johannesburg

In September 2008, Bafana Matsebula<sup>1</sup> led an RC workshop in Johannesburg, South Africa. Sixteen Co-Counsellors attended—from Katlehong, Alexandra, and Soweto. This was my first such workshop.

We began on Friday evening. Bafana covered the fundamentals, because new RCers were present. He emphasised the importance of discharging and pointed out what could happen if we did not discharge our hurts—how distress could pile up on us. It was good for the experienced Co-Counsellors to be reminded of our inherent goodness. We had three-way sessions to finish off the evening. We discharged, discharged, and discharged.

On Saturday morning Bafana threw us into the deep end<sup>2</sup> with long sessions. The workshop could not have come at a better time—we were all uncertain about our country’s and our individual futures. Our president, Thabo Mbeki, had just received a vote of no confidence and had resigned. We were able to discharge about that, and other distresses.

In the afternoon we had support groups. Later on we had discussions. There were two discussion groups: of young adults and of men. We discussed what it meant to be part of our particular group, what made us proud of belonging to it, the perceptions other people had about us, and the kind of support we

expected from our allies. For most of us, it was the climax of the workshop. After the discussions we all looked hopeful. The young women had a perception of men that differed from that of the society at large.

I led the evening class and focused on a question that had lingered in my mind for almost four years: “Do you want me in your life?” (For most of us it was a difficult question to answer. We had been hurt so many times that we had decided we did not need anyone.) It made us realise how important it was for us to connect with one another. How wonderful it would be if we could create our own universe, one in which RC would be available to everyone. The topic made us even more determined to introduce RC to our families and the rest of the community; they need it, they need us, and we need them.

On the last day we all made a commitment to be there for one another, to support each other, and, most of all, to appreciate one another. We also spoke about our Communities and the way forward. We agreed to have monthly meetings for the coordinators and assistants in each of the different Areas.

It was a remarkable weekend. We all left feeling lighter. We had achieved what one person referred to as “off-loading.”<sup>3</sup> It was indeed a wonderful experience for the new Co-Counsellors, who said they were ready to face the world with a different perception. Many thanks to Bafana!

*Ntombi Wauchope*  
Johannesburg, South Africa

<sup>3</sup> “Off-loading” means throwing off heavy burdens (emotional distress).



COILS OF INCENSE, IN A TEMPLE IN HONG KONG • DIANE SHISK

<sup>1</sup> Bafana Matsebula is the Apprentice Regional Reference Person for Southernmost Africa.

<sup>2</sup> In this context, threw us into the deep end means immersed us in something intense.

## New to RC, in South Africa

**M**y name is Zamekile. I'm a Swazi girl currently studying in South Africa. Last weekend I went to an RC workshop held in Johannesburg (South Africa). It was my first time at an RC workshop, and I really enjoyed it. One rarely finds people who can listen without criticizing, giving an opinion, or interrupting before they actually know what you are talking about.

Before I went, I could not share my problems with anyone. However, because of the confidentiality sworn at the beginning of the workshop, I was able to have a session with anyone. I wish to do this more often and hope to trust even more.



JULIE ANNE FORGIONE

The counselors were great. I was able to off-load my burdens, some of which I had never realized were there. It was great to have someone listen and remind me of the benign being that I am.

The main topic was "I need you in my life." This opened my eyes to the fact that I need people who will listen to me. And I, in turn, will be there for them when they need me.

My highlight was the culture sharing. Even though we were from diverse cultures, we were able to unite and be there for each other. That was amazing to me. It showed me that if we all could put our differences aside and try to be there for each other, we could all be happy.

*Zamekile Mtsetfwa  
Ntondozi, Swaziland*

## A Workshop in Ghana

I'm happy to have participated in the RC workshop in Ghana. I discovered that I'm inherently great, zestful, and beautiful and as powerful as a man could be on this earth, especially in this society.

I grew up in a neighborhood and family in which I heard negative things. This tended to weaken my relationships with other genuine people I met later on. The negative messages accumulated in my brain and made me relatively inactive in certain areas of my life.

At the workshop we were asked to meet one-on-one and bring out anything that had been secretly hurting us. We were told that whatever we shared was confidential, so I began to say anything that came into my mind. We were also invited to tell what we wished we would have said to whoever humiliated our intelligence.

It was a great experience for me, and I have been telling my friends about it.

I owe a lot to the RC Community—especially Urbain Bamana, our Community leader, and Melfy,\* our resource person from Zimbabwe. I look forward to another such wonderful meeting.

*Waizey Anyormisi, Jr.  
Accra, Ghana*

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\* Melfy Sakupwanya, the Regional Reference Person for Sub-Saharan Africa

## New to RC, in Ghana

It is about seven months since Urbain Bamana<sup>1</sup> met my husband and me at church and invited us to join RC. We decided to give it a try but then never gave it a thought again. Sometime in August, Urbain reminded me. I then reminded my husband, and he quickly agreed to attend the RC Community building workshop, from 5 to 7 September, 2008.

We prepared ourselves for the opportunity. As the days passed by, the more anxious we became. It was a delight when the day finally arrived and we found ourselves in the Mariset Plaza (Hotel) where we lodged and attended the workshop. It was wonderful to hear Melphy Sakupwanya<sup>2</sup> explain RC. We learned to focus and listen attentively when someone speaks to us. We have benefited a lot. We now give maximum attention when listening to our children and friends. We are learning more and benefiting from our meetings and have introduced a couple of friends and colleagues to RC.

*Vickenzie Offei*  
Accra, Ghana



DEBBY GLICKMAN

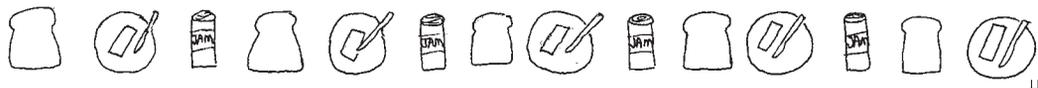
<sup>1</sup> Urbain Bamana is an RC leader in Accra, Ghana.

<sup>2</sup> Melphy Sakupwanya is the Regional Reference Person for Sub-Saharan Africa and was the leader of the workshop.

## The Leader Role

It is necessary in the leader role to be fierce and firm occasionally, but underlying that, everyone's ideas must be taken into account and the good ones put together for a policy that actually belongs to everyone.

*Harvey Jackins*  
From a letter written in 1977



LK

QUIZ: What priceless treasure costs only \$84 (in the U.S.) and \$104 (outside the U.S.)?  
(Go to page 68 for the answer!)



## RC in Northern Nigeria

I am presently heading the Zaria RC Community. Zaria is in the northern part of Nigeria. I have introduced RC to many people. They have shown willingness, but the problem I am facing is getting them to come out of their shells.<sup>1</sup> The first meeting centered on the art of listening to one's children and opening up to close ones. We also discussed keeping people's secrets (confidentiality).

After the meeting people seemed to feel happy and fulfilled. We planned to hold another meeting in November.

### **Later**

Our November meeting was equally wonderful. People showed great happiness in Obama's<sup>2</sup> election, believing it will help end racism and discrimination. At our next meeting we will focus on fighting racism.

*Ngozi Okolo*  
Zaria, Kaduna State, Nigeria

<sup>1</sup> Come out of their shells means open up, be less guarded.

<sup>2</sup> Barack Obama, the newly elected president of the United States and the first African American ever elected to that office



ZOE COHEN

## High Spirits in Nigeria

We've had a series of workshops in Nigeria. Indeed, I can tell you about four new RC Communities in Lagos State! The spirit is high here, and in other parts of Nigeria. Our classes are continuing, while we continue to encourage the new Communities.

*Onii Nwangwu-Stevenson*  
Lagos, Nigeria



Where are you ???

**ARE YOU MOVING?**



*Present Time* won't find you unless you tell us (in advance) of your address change. Please let us know.

## Seeing Goodness, Facing Oppressor Patterns

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

I recently led a one-day United to End Racism workshop for the Melbourne (Victoria, Australia) RC Community. I decided to act big, bold, and loud, and ooze likeability. This is not how Australians usually act, and it made the workshop more fun for me. I attempted to model a white person liking herself when talking about racism. I am an owning-class woman whose ancestor shaped the White Australian Policy,<sup>1</sup> so I have had to discharge my way to seeing the goodness of my people (with a huge hand<sup>2</sup> from my working-class Area<sup>3</sup> Reference Person, Louisa Flander).

In the morning I spent lots of time talking about the nature of human beings. I started from a cellular perspective and tried to build a rich picture of our connectedness and goodness, from which we could discharge oppressor material.<sup>4</sup>

I see money as key to keeping racism in place—to maintaining patterns of isolation, privilege, entitlement, greed, and busy-ness. After all the participants had paid for the day, I asked them how long it had taken them to earn what they'd paid and what they would do with that money if they got a refund. From their responses it was clear that we are good people who do our best to work out<sup>5</sup> confusing patterns related to money.

Anne Emery  
Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

At the United to End Racism workshop I was reminded of my

<sup>1</sup> The White Australian Policy restricted the immigration of people of color into Australia from 1901 to 1973.

<sup>2</sup> A huge hand means a lot of help.

<sup>3</sup> An Area is a local RC Community.

<sup>4</sup> Material means distress.

<sup>5</sup> Work out means figure out.

own and everyone's "original innocence." I think this will help me to stick around<sup>6</sup> when people are being honest about racism, either as victim or as oppressor.

Rowan White  
North Fitzroy, Victoria, Australia

*I heard Anne say that white people are generous and have been forced to be ungenerous. Also, I liked how she got us to tell the truth about real things happening right now, with questions like, "What did you pay?" "How long did it take you to earn it?" and "What are you going to do straight after this workshop ends?" It was a refreshing relief from pretence.*

Rachel Bailey  
Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

Anne spoke about our beginning as a nation. As our first prime minister's great granddaughter, she has taken the initiative to discharge and understand us white Australians as good people doing our best, now and historically. This is not to deny our past but to face it head-on and discharge, knowing that we are good white people. This is a radical position for white Australians.

Christine Marnane  
Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

*Anne reminded us that in society we are set up to feel that there is not enough to go around, that there is not enough time to be together and become closer. This is not true. Consumerism pulls our attention away from the truth about our goodness and our ability to be close.*

Cynthia Johnston  
Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

<sup>6</sup> In this context, stick around means stay present.

Many times during the day Anne reminded us of the agency<sup>7</sup> we all have in the world, and that we have a lot more capacity to be leaderly in all of our interactions than we usually feel. She modeled how much more fun life is when we act responsibly and take on<sup>8</sup> racism in our daily lives, when we work on our own backgrounds and that of our country, whilst getting close to people who are similar to us and those with different backgrounds.

She consistently asked us to look at all aspects of our lives, leaving no stone unturned—how we act within RC, what we do with money, what we pay for things—bringing into the light of day the ways we might be being dishonest or unprincipled.

Lisa Rasmussen  
Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

*I have had a week of doing things that I said I'd do and things that I'd been meaning to do for a long time. The clearer my goodness is to me, the easier it is to own up to<sup>9</sup> my patterns of irresponsibility and hiding.*

Ailsa Wild  
Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

I got to discharge on how I was taught to ignore my history in relation to Indigenous people and how that numbed me out in many ways in the area of connecting to others. I loved looking at early memories of generosity. It's clear that I come from a warm and generous people.

Vicky Grosser  
Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

<sup>7</sup> Agency means the capacity to exert power.

<sup>8</sup> Take on means confront and do something about.

<sup>9</sup> Own up to means face and admit to.

## A Family-Work Class, for One Family

In our RC Area—Northeast Berkeley, California, USA—we’ve done various versions of family work over the years, including a special-time<sup>1</sup> class, a parents’ support group, and playdays. The most recent was a class I taught for almost two years in which we focused the Area’s<sup>2</sup> resource on one extended family.

The idea for the class began at an Area workshop. One of the participants, Harriette Davis, had brought her teenage granddaughter to the workshop. The two of them were the only African-heritage people there. Harriette had been in RC for many years and was the only African-heritage leader in our Area. She was a friend of mine who had learned RC from me and then assisted me in teaching. She lived with one of her adult daughters and five grandchildren. At the end of the workshop, Bob Gomez, the workshop leader and our Area Reference Person, exclaimed, “Harriette, we are going to figure out a way to put your family at the center of this Area.”

I decided to figure out how to implement that idea. I started discussing possibilities with Bob, Harriette, and Alison Ehara-Brown, our Regional<sup>3</sup> family-work leader. We decided to start a nine-month class focused on Harriette and her three youngest grandchildren (the two older ones were already in our Area’s teen class). The three youngest had been to playdays but hadn’t been involved in any other regular RC activities. I asked Bob to assist me, and invited six other experienced Co-Counselors to participate.

At our first meeting we set up teams of two allies per child. Harriette would be an additional ally for the two youngest grandchildren, ages four and six. The oldest grandchild, age twelve, had expressed a preference for doing special time with just the two male allies.

I talked about how the class fit with two of the goals of the larger RC Community: (1) ending racism, especially

that directed at African-heritage people, and (2) making RC more accessible to young people. I also talked about special time being the backbone of family work, with playdays and workshops as extra resources, and how that was parallel to Co-Counseling sessions being the basic work for adults—with classes, support groups, and workshops building on that. I suggested that the allies discharge on any feelings about African American teenage boys, Harriette’s family, their own childhoods, and anything else that might get in the way of their being fully present during special time.

Each month, each pair of allies usually did a two-hour block of special time with the child assigned to them. During the special times in which Harriette was present, the allies’ role was to support her relationship with her grandchild. She would be the primary counselor, with the allies enthusiastically backing<sup>4</sup> her.

All three grandchildren were usually happy to do special time, and over time they became more enthusiastic. The two youngest would keep track of whether they were getting their monthly time, and whether one was getting more than the other. The allies would keep saying to the children, “You’re the boss.” They’d repeat, “I’m the boss!” and experiment with what that meant.

Over time, all the children opened up more and showed more of themselves. They tried all sorts of new activities. The youngest grandchild, a very physical boy, consigned us adults to waiting in “dungeons,” made us slide down fast cement slides, and pushed us to run, jump, and play basketball. The next older grandchild, a girl, led us in gymnastics and make-believe activities and wanted to spend at least some of her special time on the playground at her school. Once in a while other young people on the playground would ask if they could join us. I guess it was clear that everyone in our group was having a great time.

It didn’t work to meet in Harriette’s home, so we met in city parks, skateboard parks, and playgrounds, and in our houses and at Lawrence Hall of Science (a young people’s science museum that is part of the University of California at Berkeley). Often the allies were the only adults at a playground or park who were actually playing

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<sup>1</sup> Special time is an activity, developed in RC family work, during which an adult puts a young person in full charge of their mutual relationship, as far as the young person can think. For a specific period of time, the adult lets the young person know that he or she is willing to do anything the young person wants to do. The adult focuses his or her entire attention on the young person and follows his or her lead, whether the young person tells, or simply shows, the adult what she or he wants to do.

<sup>2</sup> An Area is a local RC Community.

<sup>3</sup> A Region is a subdivision of the International Re-evaluation Counseling Community, usually consisting of several Areas.

<sup>4</sup> Backing means supporting.

with young people, rather than sitting and watching them play.

Alison suggested that we start sharing two-way counseling with the oldest grandchild, so once in a while we'd offer mini-sessions and he would participate.

During the two years, each of the young people participated in fifteen to twenty special-time sessions of two hours each. Once a month we allies would meet together to talk about how the special time was going, and to discharge. It was a good way for us to deal with our restimulations about what the young people, and Harriette's extended family, were having to handle. Harriette and her family were dealing with one difficulty after another, many of them the result of classism and racism.

By the end of the first nine months, seven adults—including Harriette, Bob, and me—were still active with the class. We all wanted to keep going, so we committed to a second year, which has now ended. Near the end of the second year, one of the class members moved away and another became too busy to participate. Harriette's daughter decided to move about an hour's drive away from Harriette, and take the three young people with her. I am hoping we'll continue doing special time with

them, though it will need to be less frequent, given the greater distance.

I was happy to see what an RC Area could do to make a difference in the lives of one family. And putting Harriette and her grandchildren at the center of our Community improved the lives of everyone involved.

Nancy Lemon  
Berkeley, California, USA

*At the start of the family-work class, I had a hard time saying goodbye to the young person I was assigned to. I would always feel inadequate for not having done enough for him. That feeling became stronger when I learned that he had unexpectedly lost a cousin. I started discharging the feeling, and it became clear how hard it had been for me to say goodbye at his age, and how I'd experienced loss and loneliness growing up in a large family in India. With enough discharge, I was able to move forward with the project and began to acknowledge positively my special-time role and the contradiction<sup>5</sup> that I was.*

Bishu Chatterjee  
El Cerrito, California, USA

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<sup>5</sup> Contradiction to distress



JOS SJOLLEMA

## A “Learning About the *Guidelines*” Class

In response to Tim’s e-mail (below) about the *Guidelines*, I am leading a “learning about the *Guidelines*” class in my Community. It’s a one-evening class that is meeting three separate times so that people can choose a time that works for them. It’s fun. I just led the second class tonight. I am requiring participation (in one of the three classes) for all RC teachers and assistants in my Region.\*

I talk about the *Guidelines*—why we have them, how to use them, who makes them, and so on—and then offer a variety of topics people can choose from. We take turns reading from the *Guidelines* and discharge when necessary, and everyone seems to learn a lot. Popular topics have been (1) What does it mean to be an RC Community member instead of “just” a Co-Counselor? (2) How does money work in RC? (3) What is RC policy on psychiatric and recreational drugs? (4) How does one become an RC teacher? (5) What do we do about patterns of criticism, attack, and violence?

As they begin to understand that their thinking is welcome and their ideas are taken seriously, people seem more invested in the Community as participants (rather than observers). One person said that she would be much less likely to be critical of the *Guidelines* now that she saw them as a composite of all of our thinking—including, theoretically, her own.

*Andrea Blum*  
Regional Reference Person for  
Central, West, and South Texas, USA  
Austin, Texas, USA  
Reprinted from the e-mail discussion  
list for Regional Reference Persons



Dear Reference Persons,

As the Pre-World Conferences begin, it’s time for RCers who are familiar with the *Guidelines* to consider what if any modifications to them would be useful for the next four years. There are two main categories to consider: changes of substance and changes of wording. Additionally, we have the opportunity to set a few new goals for our Community.

Since many RCers have had limited contact with the *Guidelines*, their history, and their purpose, this is a chance for them to understand the Community more fully by looking at the *Guidelines*.

Would you please help the leaders in the Areas of your Region, and those outside of Areas, think about how best to use this opportunity, by means of gather-ins and so on?

It would be useful if Reference Persons shared their ideas about and experiences with this on this list.

Thank you.

With love and appreciation,  
*Tim Jackins*  
Reprinted from the e-mail discussion  
list for Regional Reference Persons

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\* A Region is a subdivision of the International Re-evaluation Counseling Community, usually consisting of several Areas.

## A Class on the *Guidelines* and “Goal Four”

My Regional Reference Person, Joel Nogic, gathered together our Regional leaders’ group to discuss the *Guidelines of the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities* and Goal Four.\* The following are three highlights from the class.

1) There was time to connect and laugh before we started the discussion. This created an atmosphere of closeness and connection before we got to work.

2) Joel gave a fresh talk on the topic, and we had copies of the *Guidelines* we could read while Joel spoke. Together we looked through the table of contents—seeing how it was organized, discovering parts that some of us didn’t know were there. Joel explained that

Community members are invited to think about the *Guidelines* and propose changes to the content, wording, or organization, and that these proposals are discussed at the Pre-World Conferences and perhaps adopted at the World Conference. He included some history of the *Guidelines*. Finally, we read Goal Four out loud, with different people reading different parts.

3) After reading through Goal Four, we had mini-sessions in which we were encouraged to work on the goal. The mini-sessions went especially well—I think because we were doing them together in the

context of our relationships. Joel then gave three people sessions in front of the group. They used their sessions to work on heavy chronic feelings that had gotten attached to RC, or to teaching it.

In closing everyone was asked to say a next step related to the *Guidelines* or to any of the current RC goals. One of my next steps was to write up a summary of the class, to share with other Reference Persons.

*Chris Austill*

Somerville, Massachusetts, USA  
Reprinted from the e-mail discussion list for Regional Reference Persons

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\* “Goal Four” refers to the new goal for the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities adopted by the 2005 World Conference of the RC Communities. The previous World Conference, in 2001, adopted three new goals. For this reason, the new goal from the 2005 World Conference is sometimes referred to as “Goal Four.” It reads as follows:

That the RC Community and its members put increased attention and effort into reaching a large and diverse population with the ideas and practices of RC, and into assisting them in becoming members of the RC Community.

That in order to intelligently pursue this goal, Co-Counselors have ongoing sessions on the distresses that interfere with their thoughts and actions in this area and that classes, Areas, and Regions organize gather-ins, support groups, workshops, and other events to assist Co-Counselors in this effort.

That as part of this goal, Co-Counselors target the distresses that hold them back from making a thoughtful and sustained effort to reach those with whom they already have caring and committed relationships.

### Well-Being No. 6

*Well-Being* is the RC journal for exchange of information and ideas about health. The editor, Pam Geyer, writes, “It’s been nearly twenty years since the last issue of *Well-Being* was published. During that time much discharge, thinking, and communication has taken place. . . . At a workshop a few years ago one of the questions for introductions was, ‘How has your life changed since the last time we met?’ More than seventy percent of the participants replied that there had been a positive change in their physical well-being. I thought it was time to bring this work to the fore by putting out another issue of the journal.”

*Well-Being* No. 6 touches upon many aspects of health. There are articles on addictions, men’s health, eating distresses, drugs and alcohol, pain, anesthesia, counseling on specific conditions, and more.

\$3.00, plus postage and handling.

See page 109 for ordering information.



ANTHONY TASSI

## ***Keeping in Contact with Young People***

For a couple of years we have had a project of assisting young people to keep using RC as they reach the age when they head off on their own, away from home. Stacey Leeds and Jenny Sazama are the two people most involved in this project.

We collect the names of such young people who would like an RCer to be a resource for them. The ally is to stay in touch with the young person by phone—taking all the initiative, if necessary, for several months. He or she is to listen to the young person, Co-Counsel with him or her (by phone or in person), help him or her figure out how to be in contact with the local RC Community (if there is one), help him or her figure out which new acquaintances might make good Co-Counselors, and more. We have built a list of people who want to fill this role of ally.

Young people and allies are matched and put in contact with each other. Sometimes they already have a relationship, and sometimes they build one afresh. More than thirty pairs have been set up. Some of these pairs have been quickly and wonderfully useful, and some have been slow to get working.

I would like your help in this project. We want to continue to build both the list of young people and the list of potential allies, and I ask your assistance in finding people to add to both lists. At this time we have a shortage of allies. How about you?

You can send information to Stacey Leeds, at <leeds@snet.net> or P.O. Box 153, Eastford, Connecticut 06242, USA. If you e-mail, please put “Allies to Shifting Young People” in the subject line.

Thank you.



*Tim Jackins*

## A New Resource for Beginning Teachers of RC

Rational Island Publishers has recently published some new material to assist beginning teachers of RC fundamentals classes. It is intended especially for those teachers who are far from established RC Communities. (As RC spreads, some teachers are in places so far removed from where RC has already been that they have never had the chance to be in a fundamentals class themselves.)

This new material includes a *Fundamentals Teaching Guide and Class Outline* covering more than enough topics for a first series of fundamentals classes (twenty-six chapters, a hundred and eighty-four pages). It also includes readings on each topic for the students, readings on each topic for the teacher, and page-sized posters of related RC ideas. The teacher has permission to make copies of the readings for the students.

It is not meant to prescribe what someone is to teach in a fundamentals class, nor the order of topics, nor how a teacher is to teach. It is intended to give beginning RC teachers something solid to help them think about what they wish to teach and how they wish to share those ideas.

It is available from Rational Island Publishers for \$25.00 (U.S.) per copy, plus postage and handling. (For ordering information, see page 109.)

## Quotes, photos, art!

Please send us quotes

for *Present Time*

sometimes (though often not)

in rhyme.

Photos, too,

keep us on track

when inspiration

we may lack.

Artwork, doodles,

we need oodles.\*

Join our crew—

we count on YOU!

\* Oodles means a lot.



VAL DI COMINO, ITALY • JULIE ANNE FORGIONE

## RC Teaching: It's Okay Not to Be Perfect

Sorry if you feel a little low<sup>1</sup> about your class. I don't have to pretend to you that you necessarily taught the best class in the world; you know darned<sup>2</sup> well that to begin with, all of us goof<sup>3</sup> a lot. The important thing is that if you do keep teaching, and I'm glad you've decided to, the classes will get better and better.

We have quite a number of excellent teachers around the country who taught classes quite poorly the first, second, or even third time but kept discharging on their teaching difficulties and wound up<sup>4</sup> being excellent teachers. I certainly taught poorly to begin with. I was so self-conscious that I was almost tongue-tied,<sup>5</sup> and I think only my great earnestness and desire to help, shining through the difficulty, kept any students coming back. I think you are doing just fine.

*Harvey Jackins*

From a letter written in about 1973

<sup>1</sup> In this context, low means unhappy.

<sup>2</sup> Darned means very.

<sup>3</sup> Goof means make mistakes.

<sup>4</sup> Wound up means arrived at a place of.

<sup>5</sup> Tongue-tied means unable to speak.



### Short Talks by Tim Jackins, on CD

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

*The following CD from 2009 is available for \$10:*

- An Effective Way to Work Early

*The following CDs from 2008 are available as a set or separately:*

- A Recent Introduction to RC
- The Early Years of RC
- Fighting for Ourselves
- Overcoming Early Defeats



*The following CDs from 2007 are available as a set or separately:*

- White People Continuing to Move Against Racism
- Overcoming Early Distress
- Perspective and Decision
- RC Leaders, on Class Issues (DVD)

*The following CDs from 2006*

*are available as a set or separately:*

- Oppression and Sex
- The Uses and Limitations of Reassurance
- Participating in the RC World Conference 2005
- Moving Forward Together: RC Pre-World Conferences 2005

*The following CDs from 2005 are available as a set or separately:*

- Together for Larger Lives
- Ourselves and Our Societies
- A Human Perspective
- Three Steps Forward

*The following CD from 2004 is available for \$10:*

- Perspectives on Ourselves and Our Communities

Anyone can order any of these CDs for \$10 (U.S.) each, plus shipping and handling. The entire 2005, 2006, 2007, and 2008 4-CD sets are also available to anyone, for \$25 per set, while supplies last. If you are a certified RC teacher, the four CDs for the current year are available on a subscription basis, one calendar year at a time (but mailed out quarterly as they are released), for \$25 a year. (For ordering information, see page 109.)

## Helping Young People Move from Family Work to Two-way Co-Counseling

My adventure began many years ago when I was a young-adult parent of two young boys. My RC Community had no parents' support group and no family work.<sup>1</sup> At a Wygelian meeting,<sup>2</sup> shortly after my youngest, Aki, was born, I was asked what I thought needed to happen. Although I was on the verge of dropping out of RC, I said, "I want to make RC work for parents and children," and I left with a mission: I was going to make RC work for my family and other families.

When I became a mom, almost all the parents in my Community had stopped Co-Counseling. This was before we knew about parents' oppression. All we knew was that it seemed impossible to do sessions and that we had become "the agents of the oppression of young people." I phoned the few parents who remained and reached out to those who'd disappeared. We came together and began to meet. Different parents would come to my support

group each time, which eventually got hard for me. After a while I said that in order to be in the group, people had to make a six-month commitment and show up<sup>3</sup> (unless their child was in the hospital). I figured I'd lose most of them, but instead a solid crew of about twenty parents committed, and we all built a parents' community together. I had a strong sense that I didn't want to build family work without a solid parents' community as a foundation.

### BUILDING FAMILY WORK

To build family work, I started by encouraging parents to do "special time"<sup>4</sup> and by assisting at every family workshop I could find in order to learn how to lead family work. Initially, because we had mostly parents and not many allies, we held family classes as follows: one month we would meet with the adults; the next month we'd have a playday<sup>5</sup> for the younger children, with the parents of the older children as allies; and the third month we'd have a playday for the older children, with the parents of the younger ones as allies. We worked on ending isolation, building community, finding childcare, and setting up

our lives. We spent years building a strong Community, with parents at the center of it and gradually creating a place in it for young people. Eventually, we held family workshops for children of all ages, while keeping the parents' work going, too.

When my children were eight and ten, I met Ayana Morse,<sup>6</sup> a young leader active in young people's liberation in RC, and began Co-Counseling with her. She was a huge inspiration to me. We were both interested in making RC available to young people. Her strong belief in giving young people the tools of RC led me to start offering short young people's classes at family workshops. Some young people would come on their own. Some would choose an ally to bring. We would do go-rounds<sup>7</sup> in which each child would answer questions like,

- What is it like to be four? What is great?
- What don't you like about how people treat four-year-olds?
- If you could be in charge of the world, what would you change?
- What do you know about RC? What have you noticed your parents doing? What do you think Co-Counseling is all about?

Then we'd talk a little about RC. Often one of the young people was ready to explain it and did a far better job than I could have. Sometimes the children would ask questions,

*continued . . .*

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

<sup>2</sup> A meeting of a Wygelian leaders' group, which is a group of leaders and potential leaders of a particular constituency in which each person takes a turn doing the following: (1) reporting on what he or she has been doing in the last period, with regard to the constituency, (2) saying what he or she thinks is the current situation facing the constituency, (3) sharing what he or she proposes to do as a leader in the next period, and (4) discharging on what is getting in the way of his or her leadership. The group does not make any group plans but rather serves to encourage individual initiative. It meets only when the members feel a need for meeting.

<sup>3</sup> Show up means appear, attend.

<sup>4</sup> "Special time" is an activity, developed in RC family work, during which an adult puts a young person in full charge of their mutual relationship, as far as the young person can think. For a specific period of time, the adult lets the young person know that he or she is willing to do anything the young person wants to do. The adult focuses his or her entire attention on the young person and follows his or her lead, whether the young person tells, or simply shows, the adult what she or he wants to do.

<sup>5</sup> A playday is a several-hour workshop that includes time for children to do whatever safe activities they choose, with the encouragement and appreciation of the adults, and to discharge if they wish, as well as discharge time for the adults.

<sup>6</sup> Ayana Morse is an RC leader who later became the International Liberation Reference Person for Young Adults and the Regional Reference Person for a part of California, USA.

<sup>7</sup> Go-rounds are go-arounds, which consist of everyone in a group taking a turn to talk.

## TEACHING, LEADING, COMMUNITY BUILDING

continued . . .

which would open up opportunities to give them a bigger picture of RC as something they could have for themselves.

### OUR FIRST YOUNG PEOPLE'S CLASS

It seemed like the young people could be using the discharge process more fully. Ayana had already taught a class at her high school and was willing to teach a class to younger people. She started a class for nine- to fourteen-year-olds in which she was the teacher and I was the assistant. At the beginning it consisted mostly of playing and learning to do mini-sessions. Over time we included "news and goods," topics, and demonstrations. The young people learned to Co-Counsel and did it well.

The class was messy and fun, and we tried all sorts of things. To keep the young people interested, we had to keep it playful and as unlike school as possible. We gave the young people permission and encouragement to sit next to each other, cuddle, touch feet, and so on. We encouraged everyone to have physical contact with at least two

other people at all times. They were all eager to be close and connected in a safe way, and it made discharge much more available.

In that class we came to see how exhausting young people's oppression is and how the pressure to be "cool"<sup>8</sup> tires everyone out. One of the most amazing classes we did was on exhaustion. We gave each young person a chance to lie down and simply absorb relaxed aware attention. It was a huge contradiction<sup>9</sup> for them to have the attention of other young people and *not* have to do or say anything—just feel or giggle or rest. It was something I'd often done with parents, and I was amazed to see how applicable it was to young people, who are battling exhaustion from keeping up their guard at school and trying to stay cool enough to not get targeted.

It was an amazing experience for these young people to have their teacher be a young person herself (Ayana was eighteen). They loved

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<sup>8</sup> "Cool" means guarded, not showing much of oneself, attempting to look impervious, successful, and above-it-all.

<sup>9</sup> Contradiction to distress

listening to someone talk who was not that much older than they were. Ayana was excited about young people's liberation and communicated her passion to the class.

Ayana went on to teach many other young people's classes. She also backed<sup>10</sup> several of the young people from this class to lead boys' and girls' support groups and to continue Co-Counseling. She took a number of the class members to young people's workshops locally, and in Pennsylvania (USA) and England, and encouraged their leadership over many years.

I took what I learned from Ayana and continued teaching this group that had come out of local family work. My twelve-year-old son, Colin, assisted me. We covered all kinds of topics, focusing a lot on school and young people's oppression.

### THE "RAISED AROUND RC" CLASS

During those years we also held a variety of fun family workshops—on boys' liberation, girls' liberation, Jewish families, families of color, and so on. Because the young people at these workshops liked the classes we taught there and were showing more interest in having RC as their own, I started up a "raised around RC" class for a group of young people ages ten to eighteen. Some of them had been doing family work since they were babies, and some had parents who did RC. Others had acquired step-parents who Co-Counseled and had suddenly found themselves in an RC family.

Gaby Alter and later Davora Tetens assisted me with the class. In the beginning the young people, mostly raised-in-RC at that point, used it in fascinating ways. Many,

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<sup>10</sup> Backed means supported.



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especially the girls, wanted to go back to wrestling sessions they'd had in family work, choosing consciously to go back to places where they had fought against their distress when they were younger. They set them up brilliantly and were able to fight hard and have big sessions. Their doing these sessions on their own terms, with other young people, was powerful. We also played a lot of games. At first we were doing more playing than two-way (Co-Counseling) sessions, but over time the class evolved into a playful two-way Co-Counseling class, with all the aspects of a regular class.

### GAINING PERSPECTIVE ON DISCOURAGEMENT AND PARENT CHRONIC PATTERNS

The initial big challenge with the raised-in-RC young people was helping them figure out the difference between Co-Counseling theory and practice and their parents' chronic patterns. In most families, RC theory had become mixed in with the parents' distresses, and what the parents had tried in the direction of counseling their children had tended to be a mix as well. It was wonderful for the young people to figure this out with each other and begin to have RC on their own terms.

We had another challenge. Many of the young people had gotten as much of a hand<sup>11</sup> with their struggles as their parents could figure out, which meant that most of their intermittent patterns had been discharged and we were left dealing with the harder chronic ones. Also, many of them had experienced awesome counseling from allies at workshops and now had to learn how to counsel with each other, and allies, at a more basic level. Talking about this made it easier for both

<sup>11</sup> As much of a hand means as much help.



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the young people and their parents to keep perspective on feelings of discouragement.

### MAKING RC AVAILABLE

We figured out early on that embarrassment and the pressure to be cool made two-way sessions difficult. One older young person said that doing a two-way session with another young person felt about as safe as being on a first date. That captured it<sup>12</sup> for a lot of them. So we would do three- and four-ways. With mini-sessions it helped if we had a topic. Open-ended time with other young people was often just too hard.

For a while panels were the most effective thing we did. Something about seeing that one's struggles and feelings weren't just one's own made discharge easier. It became clear that those struggles were part of being human, being young, being part of a group. We did panels on being guys and being girls, on feelings about hair, on parents, on homework.

<sup>12</sup> Captured it means described it well.

We also did lots of overnight workshops. For a while we'd do an overnight every month or so, at a big house that had a piano. We would start after lunch on Saturday, have a class, Co-Counsel all afternoon, cook together, do a big creativity night with skits and singing, spend the night, have another class in the morning, and end about lunchtime on Sunday. Gaby is an amazing musician and encouraged everyone to try things musically. The young people did hilarious skits about different oppressions. One evening the entire group put bras on over their clothes and laughed together for an hour. We had mini-fashion shows and worked on many feelings that were there in the room all the time—about clothes, bodies, and so on.

It made such a difference to have regular long times together, as it could take a while for all of us to get connected and be ready to discharge.

### ADDICTIONS

A class on addictions was one I especially remember. I talked about

*continued . . .*

*continued . . .*

the need to have real allies in our lives and said that as things have gotten tighter in our society, and we have less time for play and fewer easy ways to connect and make friends, we are offered pseudo-allies—other things masquerading as allies—in place of real connection.

I talked about feeling embarrassed and shy in a society that wants us to show nothing and act cool. I talked about wanting friends so much and how it can be hard to make friends. I talked about yearning for closeness and how scary it can be to let that show.

I talked about dancing, having bodies and crushes,<sup>13</sup> and all the feelings that can come up—and how we are offered big ways to shut down and jump over the feelings so that we don't have to face them: drugs, alcohol, video games, pornography, and many other things that numb us out so that we can “fit in” without feeling. I talked about how it looks like these things will help and make the feelings go away but how they really just leave us stuck. I said it made sense that they would look appealing but that in RC we know that we can actually be present with other people and have real connections.

I was in the middle of this part of the talk when one of the youngest students raised her hand and said, “I drink milk every day. I feel like I can't start my day without it. Do you think I am addicted to milk? Should I stop and counsel on it?” That was followed by one of the high schoolers jumping in and saying, “Before you go on any further, I think that you and Gaby and Davora should tell us about all the drugs you've tried. We should know what you've done if we are going to counsel about our own struggles.” At that moment it

became clear to me that we needed to divide the group for discharge and demonstrations. We divided into a younger and an older group, did great demonstrations in each, and then Co-Counseled in the separate groups. Everyone had great sessions. After that we often divided into two groups for discharge. We did classes on addictions many times over the years.

### IDENTITIES

I remember a series of classes on identities. We did panels and go-rounds and had everyone talk about the different groups and identities in their middle and high schools. The lists were long: jocks, stoners, skaters, hootchie mamas, aggies, nerds,<sup>14</sup> to name a few. Several of the young people were being raised rural—one in a conservative farming community, another in an “alternative” area; some were attending poor public schools; two were among a very few young people of color in an expensive private school. The class members came from an immense diversity of environments, with different racial mixes. It was fun and helpful for each person to describe the different social groups in his or her school and what the “rules” were for each group—how one had to dress, act, and talk in order to belong. This led to a wonderful understanding of the identities the young people were being pressured to take on,<sup>15</sup> such as racial and sexual identities, and identities related to class and perceived smartness. Talking about the social groups was a neutral way to make obvious that any identity has a set of rigid rules; that even if it allows us to “belong,” the belonging is conditional; and that what we all really want is to hold on to our humanness.

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<sup>14</sup> Slang terms for different groups of young people

<sup>15</sup> In this context, take on means adopt.

One great thing about the class was that it let the young people get to know people whom most of them would never have gotten to know outside of the context of RC. They got a picture of many different ways of growing up; different kinds of schools and oppressions; what “belonging” meant in different groups; and what it was like to choose not to belong and face that battle.

### A MEDICAL CRISIS

During the middle stage of the class (it went on for over eight years), one of the young people had to have open-heart surgery. It was amazing being with her through that process, watching her take charge of it, and giving her group attention before and after the surgery. She got to discharge openly on fear of dying, with all of us in close. The group loved being there for her.<sup>16</sup> It also allowed others in the class to pull up their own fears from early hospital and other experiences. She had the hospital make a video of her surgery so that she could watch it later and discharge, and she showed her scars to the group so that she and everyone else could discharge.

### ALLIES, AND SUPPORT OUTSIDE OF CLASS

Over time the class became more of a teen class—as the younger people grew older, other people joined the class, and the older ones went off to college or into other classes. Eventually we worked our way to a more manageable age span.

Many wonderful allies participated in the class. They also met with the young people outside of class for sessions, often three- or four-ways, and other contact.

The young people faced many big real-life struggles and got to counsel

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<sup>16</sup> Being there for her means playing a supportive role with her.

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<sup>13</sup> Crushes are infatuations.

each other through them: divorce, the death of a father, sexual assault, addictions, arrests, court battles. They were in each other's corners<sup>17</sup> in big ways throughout. They would show up at a funeral or in court and offer time<sup>18</sup> before or after. The allies were wonderful in their ability to stay present in the lives of the young people, no matter how challenging or messy it got. And we all learned a lot.

### MAKING THE MOST OF WORKSHOPS

We made sure that we had yearly teen family workshops, led by Sara Wood Smith<sup>19</sup> and Tim Jackins, as well as local playdays so that the young people didn't lose the chance to play or get help with their families.

Sara came up with<sup>20</sup> a brilliant idea for the teen family workshops: Each of the teens got to have a session with an ally and his or her parent. The teen got to tell his or her parent what to work on, and then the ally would counsel the parent on that issue. The teen could either stay to watch the session or go off with another ally to counsel about his or her parent, knowing that the parent would be working on whatever was getting hard or confusing or tight for the teen. These non-permissive sessions for the parents moved families in huge ways. As the years went by, we got to a point where we would do them both ways: the teen would tell the parent what to work on, and the parent would offer the teen a challenge to work on. These sessions were very effective. We also gave teens and parents chances

to work openly on how much they loved each other.

After the second year of the class, Sue Yoshiwara<sup>21</sup> and I led an Area<sup>22</sup> workshop that was about half young people and half adults. Many of the adults were parents of the young people. We played a lot and did a young people's panel. We had everyone do two-way special time, which was moving for the adults in particular. Sue and I did some amazing demonstrations that showed how internalized racism varied between generations. The parents got a hand with their relationships with their children and got to be allies and counselors to children who weren't from their own family.

Before one parents' workshop, the young people talked to me about what they wanted parents to know about young people, and I incorporated that into my key talk at the workshop. The most important thing they all communicated was

that worry was unhelpful. They wanted their parents to discharge their worry enough that they could either watch their children make mistakes and be there to counsel them afterward, or offer real help. They also talked about obligation and how they'd much rather have a parent say no than stretch too far and then be resentful. There were many other pieces of wisdom, but those stuck with me the most.

Ayana and I led yearly teens and allies workshops. Many wonderful young adult allies came, and the parents came as allies, not parents. It was an interesting shift for the parents to come as allies to all of the teens. They got to see how much slack they had for the teens who weren't their own children, and that moved them into being better allies to their own teens. We set up four-ways, with two adults and two young people, that met over the course of a year, and many of them continued to meet for months or years after that. They provided a way for the young people to have regular sessions with support.

*continued . . .*

<sup>21</sup> Sue Yoshiwara is an RC leader in El Cerrito, California, USA.

<sup>22</sup> An Area is a local RC Community.



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<sup>17</sup> In each other's corners means fully there for, completely supportive of, each other.

<sup>18</sup> In this context, time means counseling resource.

<sup>19</sup> Sara Wood Smith is an RC leader in Santa Cruz, California, USA.

<sup>20</sup> Came up with means thought of.



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continued . . .

### A PARENTS' GROUP

For most of the years, especially early on, a parents' group, led by Morgen Elizabethchild,<sup>23</sup> Janet Hughes,<sup>24</sup> or Gail Mandella,<sup>25</sup> met at the same time as the young people's class. This meant that the young people had a ride to class, a chance to be with their parent before and after, and the awareness that at the end of the class they'd go home with a well-discharged parent who was in good shape<sup>26</sup> for connecting with.

If you are going to teach a raised-around-RC class, I highly recommend having a parents' group at the same time. It helps the parents keep perspective, get in there with each other,<sup>27</sup> and not run<sup>28</sup> their worries at the person who is leading the young people's class. (Setting limits on parents calling me with agendas for their children was key to creating safety for the young people and

<sup>23</sup> Morgen Elizabethchild is an RC leader in Oakland, California, USA.

<sup>24</sup> Janet Hughes is the Area Reference Person for Marin County, California, USA.

<sup>25</sup> Gail Mandella is the Area Reference Person for West Berkeley, California, USA.

<sup>26</sup> Shape means condition.

<sup>27</sup> Get in there with each other means support each other without holding back.

<sup>28</sup> In this context, run means repetitively express.

making teaching sustainable for me.)

### FOUNDATION HELP

During the later years of the class we applied for and received a grant from the Re-evaluation Foundation.<sup>29</sup> The grant helped the young people from the class, and the high school class that developed out of it, go to RC workshops together, enter the larger Community, and get a picture of what RC was like beyond their class and family work. The raised-around-RC teens got to meet teens not raised in RC who had no RC issues connected to their parents and who thought that older people discharging and going after<sup>30</sup> their re-emergence was cool<sup>31</sup> and hopeful.

### THE NEXT STEP: A HIGH SCHOOL CLASS

Teaching the class gave me and Martina Chavez,<sup>32</sup> and later Naomi

<sup>29</sup> The Re-evaluation Foundation is a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation established in 1972 for the purpose of providing resources to help disseminate the ideas and skills of RC, and RC leadership training, to people whose circumstances limit their access to RC.

<sup>30</sup> Going after means pursuing.

<sup>31</sup> In this context, cool means good, great, wonderful.

<sup>32</sup> Martina Chavez is a young adult RC leader currently living in Seattle, Washington, USA.

de Tablan,<sup>33</sup> the confidence to venture out into the local high school and start an RC class there. Having a strong group of young people who were raised in RC and committed to using it made a huge difference as we began to bring the young people from the high school class into the Community. (The high school class is described on pages 29 to 45 of the April 2008 *Present Time*.)

Alison Ehara-Brown  
Richmond, California, USA

## Reports from Class Members and Teaching Assistants

For quite a few years I was the youngest member of Ali's class. I had had a lot of sessions when I was growing up and was used to discharging when feelings arose, but I learned about two-way counseling from Ali, and I think I started using it right away.

At age eleven I had open-heart surgery and dealt with facing death. I remember getting attention in class before my surgery and crying really, really hard. As a young person with physical disabilities, I have been expected to shut down and become numb about my humanness and drive to live. I think RC, and the intentional decision to discharge the fear that can come up with health problems, has kept me unnumb and fully functional as a human.

Unlike many of us who were raised in RC, I decided to stick with<sup>34</sup> two-way counseling and began leading in my Area on the topic of disability oppression. I'd had a lot of experience getting emotionally and physically close

<sup>33</sup> Naomi de Tablan is a young adult RC leader currently living in Singapore.

<sup>34</sup> Stick with means continue doing.

with members of Ali's class, and that gave me an expectation of such while leading and discharging with adults.

Many young people who are raised in RC get hurt by adults' expectations of the "young wonder," and it can seem too difficult or embarrassing to continue with RC. The amazing thing about Ali's class was how wonderful the adults were—at leading, supporting, and taking a back seat in the class. It worked!

*Camila Cribb Fabersunne  
Santa Cruz, California, USA*

*I was a regular part of Ali's ongoing class for young people from the time I was nine until I was eighteen. It made a huge difference in my life. Practicing and learning about two-way counseling with other young people (mostly young people of color) who had already been exposed to RC, doing it with enough allies, building closeness with other young people and with allies over many years, and having tons of play and fun incorporated into it all, shaped my experience of Co-Counseling and kept me invested in RC. I made many of my most solid Co-Counseling connections, and all of my closest Co-Counseling relationships with young people, in that class. The class was exactly what those of us in it needed to contradict internalized young people's oppression and get close to each other. It opened up my perspective on what's possible in relationships with people my age and younger. On top of that, it was refreshing to be in a situation in which RC theory was neither dumbed down nor boring.*

*Because of the class, a lot of us got financial or logistical help that allowed us to go to workshops we would not otherwise have been able to attend. I got to go to women*

*and physical power, raised-poor, teachers' and leaders', early sexual memories, and young leaders' workshops, which changed my life. They gave me a chance to be part of the mostly adult RC Community (and, in the case of the Young Leaders' Workshop, the East Coast USA young people's Community), to get a sense of the thinking and work being done in different areas, and to bring information and resource back to my crew of young people.*

*Ali's class, including the relationships that came out of it and the access it gave me, has been by far the most solid, consistent, important part of my Co-Counseling.*

*Alicia Raquel Otis-Levins  
Oakland, California, USA*

Being a part of the raised-in-RC classes as I was growing up was incredible. Being raised in RC was not always easy. At RC events it was great, but outside of those events, especially when I was with peers, things could feel funny<sup>35</sup> and weird and scary and confusing. When the class would get together, I would

<sup>35</sup> In this context, funny means strange.

always feel like I was home with my family. Sometimes I wouldn't see some of the other class members for a long period of time, but it was always like a big love fest reunion when we got together. Over time we developed so much safety. We cared and still care about each other deeply.

As a much younger young person (in the beginning), it was revolutionary to be given the space to figure out relationships with the other young people without parents' involvement. I remember setting up a session with Alex Burr and Colin Ehara. We set up a three-way, met at Alex's house (our parents drove us), and proceeded to have a timed session with no allies or parents involved. Colin and I were ten, so Alex must have been eight. I know many eight-year-olds and ten-year-olds now (not in RC), and it's hard to imagine that adults would allow them to set something like that up for themselves.

I'm a young adult now, leading and teaching RC in the wider Community of Seattle (Washington, USA), and I'm still in touch with many of the

*continued . . .*



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## TEACHING, LEADING, COMMUNITY BUILDING

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young people (now young adults) from those classes. When we get together, I always feel like I am spending time with long-time friends. I recently Co-Counseled with Isaac Zones, who was visiting with his girlfriend, and we just hung out<sup>36</sup> and laughed and looked at pictures of Colin Ehara's wedding (which they had attended). I started taking it all in—how these relationships are so strong and intrinsic in my life and how I have no doubt that they will always, always be a part of my life. I will never lose these people. We have bonds that take us way back to our childhoods, and the pivotal points in our lives that we shared, and learned from, and cried through are sacred. It's a big deal what we experienced, and continue to experience with each other as we get older. Alison Ehara-Brown fought hard to make all that possible, and so did every one of our parents, and the allies that stuck with our group as we grew up. It was so simple really: get together with a bunch of people you like, have a lot of fun, play a lot of games, be creative, and

<sup>36</sup> Hung out means spent relaxed, unstructured time.

create a space that makes it okay for people to show how much they care about each other and what life is like sometimes—the good and the bad. Now when we get together, we can remember back then and love each other that much more. We know there is safety with each other, because we established that almost twenty years ago!

*Martina Chavez*  
Seattle, Washington, USA

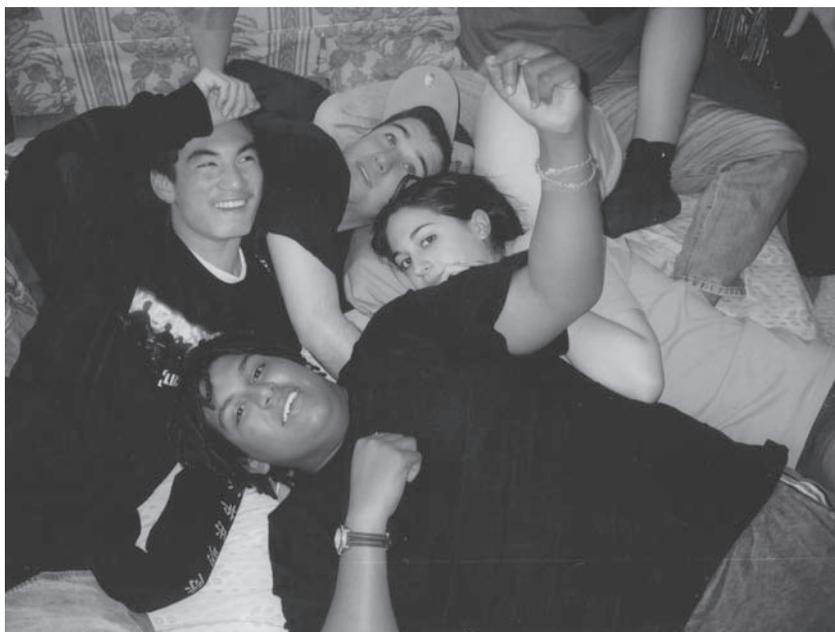
I loved assisting in Ali's young people's RC class. At the time, I was a young adult who worked with young people in professional settings in which I was sometimes called on to be an enforcer of young people's oppression. One of the great things about the class was how much of a break it was from that oppression, both for the young people and for us allies. It was a powerful realization of how different things could be with young people just by using the tools of RC in a thoughtful way and treating the young people with respect. My job there was to be an ally and not an oppressor—to let the young people get a break from

their oppression, learn RC, and connect with each other. Through counseling and hanging out, I got to connect as an equal with the young people in the class. It was a powerful experience to assume that we all could use RC tools and were capable of thinking well about our lives, and to not assume that the adults had to tell the young people what to do.

Davora, Ali, and I, and the other adults who later joined as allies, worked easily together as a team. It helped that we had a common commitment to young people's liberation and that Ali treated us well as allies, making sure that we got enough resource for ourselves. I loved watching Ali amass all of our thinking and come up with plans for the class.

A lot of what we did, as Ali mentioned above, had to do with giving the young people a sense of ownership over RC and the RC Community. Because they had been raised in Co-Counseling or had parents in RC, they had been given information about RC by their parents, who had, often unwittingly, transmitted some distresses as well. Also, most of them had done lots of RC in family work but relatively little in a two-way setting. Keeping things playful was important. The panels took some pressure off by not focusing on one person in front of the group and also gave the young people good information about the various oppressions they were facing. For instance, young men and young women face very different oppressions, and each group got a valuable glimpse of the other's struggles.

Because most of the guys in the class had known each other since they were little, and they trusted Ali from knowing her through family work, there was already



ALISON EHARA-BROWN

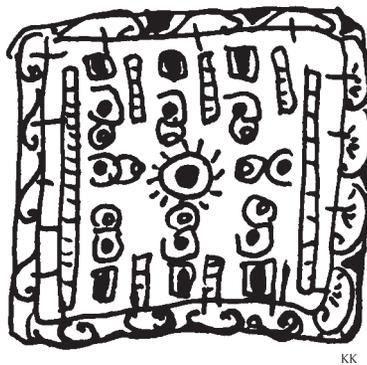
some safety in place for them. That they'd been given a chance to discharge as they grew up made a big difference, too. However, they still faced the reality of growing up male: the tightening of the lid on discharge, and not being allowed to show themselves in their lives. In the class they had a lot of room to hang out, joke around, and openly be themselves. This helped to create an environment in which they could try out the tools of RC for themselves, without pressure, and the heavy oppression around showing feelings could loosen. The discharging they could do was mostly laughing and talking, which was great—it was a big deal for them to show themselves in those ways in a counseling context.

The same issues came up in class that would come up with most teens, given enough safety. One of these was drugs. I remember Ayana giving a particularly clear talk at a weekend workshop in which she explained that adults often had little to no relaxed attention for the issue of drinking and drugs, and how they would often come down harshly on young people, giving them little room to work on or think through the issue. She also explained that drinking and drugs affect our ability to think, and lay in recordings of terror, because we lose some control of our minds when we take them (although the terror can sometimes feel “fun”). The key was her tone, which was completely non-condemning and non-judgmental. She acknowledged the confusing nature of the issue and that it was hard for adults to have attention, but also held out the reality of drugs' harmful effects.

Because the class went on for several years, it had a cumulative effect. Members stayed close. Some would graduate from high school and go live elsewhere for college

but would return to visit and renew their connections with others in the class. It was clear how important the class had been to them. The reminders that Ali and the rest of us had given them as they passed through the oppressiveness of junior high and high school—about young people's brilliance, the importance of discharge, and the ability to connect with many kinds of people across lines of difference—were a big deal for them.

Gaby Alter  
Brooklyn, New York, USA



For five years I was an assistant and part of the leadership team in the “raised around RC” class led by Alison Ehara-Brown. I *loved* the class.

Of course it was important to me that the young people got to hear RC theory, try out two-way (and three-way) Co-Counseling, talk about their lives and discharge, and form close, supportive relationships with each other. However, what I want to write about is how the class was helpful to me.

An important part of the class was hanging out and playing different kinds of games. Now I have more slack for play and use more games in the adult classes I lead.

It was good for me to experience a balance of leading, leading from behind, following, and backing others.

It was great to get close to many different young people. I have counseling relationships with some of them to this day.

The folks who worked and played together on Ali's leadership team formed special relationships.

And of course it was a good opportunity to work on my teen years.

This class was the first time I had heard the theory on crushes—what a great opportunity they are for discharge, and how to work on them. Immediately following the class on crushes, I began to get mini-crushes on lots of people. Then I found the right situation in which to go for it,<sup>37</sup> got a *big* crush on a Co-Counselor, and worked for two years on tons of stuff<sup>38</sup> attached to that.

Often feelings from my teen years would get restimulated (big surprise, ha ha ha), and I didn't want to do the “when I was a kid” thing. I developed my ability to discharge about my old experiences without talking about them too much.

I had many sessions in which I noticed, out loud, that I liked the person who was counseling me. Of course it was embarrassing, and that was great. I discharged plenty.

In many classes the young people had the opportunity, by being on a panel, to speak out about their experiences with various oppressions. I would not have thought I needed a reminder, but I was struck afresh by the fact that sexism, racism, and the other oppressions are *not* experienced by teens in a lighter form than they are by adults. I have been an ally to young people for many years (both in RC and in the rest of my life).

*continued . . .*

<sup>37</sup> Go for it means pursue it in a big way.

<sup>38</sup> In this context, stuff means distress.

## TEACHING, LEADING, COMMUNITY BUILDING

*continued . . .*

I believe in their intelligence, the power and creativity of their minds, the importance of their relationships, and their ability to discharge and heal. I take the experiences, feelings, and struggles of young people seriously. But even with all that, I had been contaminated with society's disrespect for young people. I live in a society in which young people's oppression trivializes the experiences, feelings, and struggles of young people, including teens. It was helpful to have a palpable reminder of the subtle and not-so-subtle influence of all kinds of oppression on their daily lives.

I was reminded that the oppression we all experience as young people and teens gets recorded in our brains and changes the way we live. It gets into the intimate details of our lives. It messes with our relationship with our bodies, with food, with taking care of ourselves, with our minds. It affects our relationships with ourselves and with each other.

We will end oppression when young people can fully discharge and resist the oppressions that poison their lives.

One thing I will add, for people who are thinking about leading, assisting, or being an ally in this kind of class: *be consistent*. Supporting the leader is also important. And don't let young people's uneven attendance confuse you about the significance of the class.

*Thank you, Alison, for leading this group of young people and allies for so long and so well.*

*Davora Tetens  
Fairfax, California, USA*

*I was an ally in the raised-in-RC class and was always impressed with how the class was so different from other RC classes I had been in, but at the same time similar. It was very relaxed. We almost always started by jumping on the trampoline, we*

*played and hung out a lot, and the snacks were yummy. It also included a lot of solid RC theory and practice: theory talks, panels, mini-sessions, demonstrations. I was touched by the courage and vulnerability of the young folks as they worked with us adult allies and each other. Topics were often those that were key to the young people: school, friends, parents, big life changes and crises.*

*I loved being part of the team of adult allies who were trying to figure out how to have peer relationships with the young people and help them get more of Co-Counseling and have the lives they wanted. It required me to work a lot on young people's oppression, and because we were close and connected and having fun, this was a lot easier to do than in other places.*

*Yonah Camacho Diamond  
Oakland, California, USA*



BILL GARZA

### Change Takes Time

It takes time for people to change their lives. If you appear assured rather than anxious, they will be drawn to your assurance.

*Harvey Jackins  
From a letter written in 1975*

## Counsel-the-Leader: A Useful Format

For over twenty-five years, we in New York City (New York, USA) have been using some version of the counseling format “counsel-the-leader” as part of our Area<sup>1</sup> and Regional<sup>2</sup> workshops. I originally learned about counsel-the-leader from writings by Harvey Jackins. The first time I saw it used was at one of Julian Weissglass<sup>3</sup> week-long educational change workshops back in the late 1970s. It immediately made sense to me as a way to better understand my beloved Co-Counseling leaders (not just look up to them or be afraid of them) and to take an active role in thinking about them.

Through the years the format has evolved. We realized relatively quickly that it saved a lot of time if the leader picked his or her own counselor beforehand. And we now make it clear to all the people attending a workshop that counsel-the-leader is not part of the formal workshop and they need to have a mini-session and think for themselves about whether it makes sense for them to participate. Here are some of the questions we think are worth their considering and discharging on:

- Can you keep confidentiality?
- Can you think about the leader’s distresses separately from the leader?
- Are you too angry or confused about RC leadership in general, or this leader in particular, to be a good counselor?
- Are you too sick or tired to stay awake with good attention on this particular day?
- Do you have a separate agenda other than the leader’s re-emergence?

We take our jobs as counselors seriously. We understand that the more attention each and every member of the group has, the safer it will be for the leader and the better the session will go.

When the counsel-the-leader group convenes, if some participants have never been to a counsel-the-leader

before, the leader or his or her counselor explains as much as is needed. Then for about five minutes the leader speaks about what she or he has been working on and shares any information that would be helpful for his or her counselors to know. Sometimes the leader discharges during this time; sometimes not. Occasionally we take time for people to ask questions, especially if there are people in the group who don’t know the leader well as client.

Then the leader goes out of the room with someone of his or her choosing, and that person gives the leader “special time.”<sup>4</sup> Sometimes the leader chooses to use this time as a formal session, and sometimes he or she wants to take a walk or talk about his or her life, the workshop, or something else. While the leader is out, the rest of us do a short mini-session on anything that would get in our way of being the leader’s counselor. Then we have a discussion about counseling the leader.

In the discussion we don’t strategize directions or how the session should go. We trust the leader’s mind to know what to do with the resource offered, and we trust the counselor to be able to follow the leader’s mind. We ask ourselves, “What do you think the leader’s counselor should keep in mind in counseling the leader today?” People share specific things the leader has said or has struggled with, or remind the group how smart a person and client the leader is. Often we remind the counselor why he or she is a good counselor for the leader and the importance of their relationship. People sometimes have suggestions for the seating arrangements.

After the discussion the counselor gets two to three minutes of group attention. Then the leader comes back and gets about a twenty-five-minute turn.

We don’t use counsel-the-leader for someone who is “stuck” in his or her leadership or not getting good

*continued . . .*

<sup>1</sup> An Area is a local RC Community.

<sup>2</sup> A Region is a subdivision of the International Re-evaluation Counseling Community, usually consisting of several Areas.

<sup>3</sup> Julian Weissglass is a former International Liberation Reference Person for Educational Change and the current International Commonality Reference Person for Wide World Change.

<sup>4</sup> “Special time” is an activity, developed in RC family work, during which an adult puts a young person in full charge of their mutual relationship, as far as the young person can think. For a specific period of time, the adult lets the young person know that he or she is willing to do anything the young person wants to do. The adult focuses his or her entire attention on the young person and follows his or her lead, whether the young person tells, or simply shows, the adult what she or he wants to do. Adults can also give “special time” to each other, following these general guidelines.

## TEACHING, LEADING, COMMUNITY BUILDING

continued . . .

counseling. We use it as a way to contradict some of the society's distresses that get attached to the relationship between a group and its leader. We have other ways to think about someone who is "stuck" or has other major challenges.

One of the reasons we do all our counsel-the-leaders at workshops is that there is a particular relationship between a group of workshop attendees and the leader of the workshop. The role of the leader, like that of a leader anywhere, is to formally and informally collect information and thinking from all the attendees—via introductions, sessions, demonstrations, conversations, and observation—and then distill them and present them back to the group in a way that will help the group move forward. This process usually involves the leader pushing up against his or her chronic distress, and functioning at the edge of his or her thinking. When the leader receives group attention, it allows everyone to help move the leader forward.

The elegance and correctness of this process has always been more clear to me as a member of a workshop than as the leader. As the leader, if I hadn't trained my Community so well, I often would have skipped counsel-the-leader. For years it seemed like there were always more important things to do than have me take a session in

front of the group. But during the past few years, things have shifted for me and I now often (almost) look forward to counsel-the-leader as a time when I get a good session. I still feel afterward that I haven't done a good enough job as client, but even that is starting to shift.

In my Region in New York City we have about ten Area and Regional workshops a year at which we do counsel-the-leader. We do it with both local leaders and leaders from outside our Region. I think counsel-the-leader helps all of us learn to think about and treasure our leaders—instead of being in awe of them, idolizing them, being distant from them, or hating them for their patterns. It also makes us more likely to give leaders good counseling at other times and to think about them well in general, including by helping them with their work. I think it helps us train new leadership more quickly, too.

*Corinne Goodman*

*Regional Reference Person for Brooklyn,  
Long Island, and Staten Island, New York, USA  
Brooklyn, New York, USA*

## Warm Support Does Not Lead to Dependency

I don't think you need to worry about people not taking their power or not getting out of dependency, as if you have to urge them out of it. People become independent spontaneously if they have enough safety, enough chance to discharge. Your feeling that I should brush these people off and tell them to stand on their own two feet is understandable but exactly wrong. The warmer support I give them, the quicker they start being independent.

It's an old mistaken theory that you train people to be dependent by being supportive, and it's part of the oppression and the harshness in the culture. You don't want to buy into<sup>1</sup> that. If you will give people all kinds of support (far above and beyond what their frozen needs<sup>2</sup> call for), they will discharge well, and quickly take an independent position. I would like you to join me in going that direction.

*Harvey Jackins*

From a letter written in 1980



DALE EVARTS

Answer to QUIZ on page 47:



It's a five-year subscription  
to *Present Time*!  
To order, see page 110.

<sup>1</sup> Buy into means believe, uncritically accept.

<sup>2</sup> Frozen need is a term used in RC for a hurt that results when a rational need is not met in childhood. The hurt compels a person to keep trying to fill the need in the present, but the frozen need cannot be filled; it can only be discharged.

## UER at the European Social Forum

*I have wanted to write this report for a long time, but it has felt hard. I was busy, then ill, then busy, then ill, then tired. Then I realized last week that the whole event had been such a contradiction to isolation, to hopelessness, to powerlessness, that it was bound to bring up strong old feelings of many different kinds. Here comes the report!*

We, a United to End Racism (UER) delegation of twenty-five people from ten different countries, went to the European Social Forum in Malmö, Sweden, from September 17 to 21, 2008. The headline of the Forum was “Another world is possible,” and we wanted to highlight the ending of racism as crucial for creating another world.

I led the delegation and prepared for the job for a year beforehand. I met with a great team of local RCers once or twice a month and shared my thinking and listened to theirs.

Before we met in Malmö, I made contact with as many members of our delegation as possible. We had phone conferences based on constituencies and met in support groups with each other at workshops. We could fill a book with the preparations!

Diane<sup>1</sup> did an amazing job of organizing, before and during the Forum, and was at my side through the whole event. I deeply appreciate her commitment as a USer to supporting this European conference, and my leadership as a Danish woman. Fredrik Eklöf, from Sweden, did a marvelous job as on-site organiser, thinking about every logistical aspect of the event.

<sup>1</sup> Diane Shisk, the Alternate International Reference Person and overall organizer of the UER delegation to the European Social Forum

A major goal, besides reaching many people and letting them experience the power of RC tools, was for us to get a sense of our own importance and connection. This was part of the reason we all started working long before the Forum. When we finally met together as a delegation, I felt like we were already one body.

We had busy days! At the Forum we were in action from 6:30 in the morning to midnight or later. We worked according to carefully-worked-out individual schedules so that we would know what to do, when, and with whom.

Key pamphlets and articles had been translated into nine languages. There were handouts in different colours.

All of our efforts melded together into a deep satisfaction: we were doing this together, we had each other, we were not alone. Obviously, when we act under pressure, we cannot be as careful and protective of our distresses as we often try to be. Everything—including the mistakes, problems, and oppressions we acted out at

each other—reflected how we were all pushing ourselves way beyond our comfort zones. We risked making mistakes and learned how to be honest with each other.

I felt happy deep inside every time I saw groups of us in contact, having conversations, listening to people. It was how humans are meant to be: wanting each other; reaching for connection, love, and respect.

We held workshops; listening projects; a party on Saturday evening; and support groups, including for non-delegate RCers at the Forum.

We were worried about people not finding our workshop places, as they were scattered all over Malmö and the walking distances were long, but our worries were unjustified, as we got to see!

There were Co-Counselling sessions every day—a longer one once a day and a shorter one in the morning and again in the evening. We all met together in the evenings and discharged, and evaluated

*continued . . .*



PENGUIN ISLAND, SOUTH SHETLAND ISLANDS • NINA HASEN

## WIDE WORLD CHANGING

*continued . . .*

the learnings from the day. In the mornings we did final planning for the day and discharged.

At each of our workshops we organised translations into two to six languages, according to the needs and wants of the participants. We stressed that translation was not an attempt to compensate for some people's not knowing English but was about liberation and inclusion, and was to the benefit of everyone. Thank you, Xabi,<sup>2</sup> for putting that forward so passionately!

People had great sessions in the support groups. Some of them seemed surprised and overwhelmed by how quickly and easily they could experience enough safety and support to feel feelings they were not aware they had and discharge.

The first workshop, on Thursday evening, was called Listening as a Tool for Social Change. It was led by Greg Foister. His assistants were Anna Van Heeswijk, Jenny Martin, and Eva Amundsdotter.

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<sup>2</sup> Xabi Odriozola, from the Basque Country—the International Commonality Reference Person for Translations and Languages and one of the delegates to the European Social Forum

Greg, Anna, and Jenny are from England, and Eva is from Sweden. Most of our workshops were led by both people targeted by racism (the term we used for people of colour) and white people to show that we do this work together. It was a good workshop! About ninety people were there.

On Friday morning we did two parallel workshops. One was Uniting People Targeted by Racism, led by Karl Lam, assisted by Jenny Martin, Bernadette Chelvanayagam, and Dorann Van Heeswijk. All four of them are from England. The other was The Role of White People in Ending Racism, led by a white woman, Brigitte Theeuwen, from The Netherlands. She was assisted by a black woman, Olivia Vincenti, from England, and a white Jewish woman, Leah Thorn, also from England.

The next workshop on Friday afternoon was East-West Alliances and Relationships, led by Jacek Strzemieczny, from Poland. Galina Kurganova, from Russia, and I assisted. A large group of Polish trade-unionists came and a large group of Russians, too. In the beginning of the workshop, some

of the official Forum interpreters thought they should interpret. When we told them they could have a break from interpreting, some of them wanted to leave. We invited them to stay and get some attention, and several of them did.

Also at that workshop, a woman who was originally from Turkey, who had lived for nineteen years as a political refugee in Sweden, said, very carefully, that there was a sort of hidden racism here in Scandinavia. She said that many of the people targeted by racism who had lived for fifteen or more years in Scandinavia said there was not much racism, but that those who had come more recently talked about how they had experienced it, including in ways that we who are white tend not to see as racism: over-eager sympathy, or pity, or attempts to protect or hide.

Saturday morning's workshop was announced in the program as Listening as a Tool in Ending Racism and Other Oppressions. Again we had a huge group—almost a hundred people. The workshop was led by Dorann Van Heeswijk, assisted by Brigitte Theeuwen, Karl Lam, and Olivia Vincenti.

Some of the interpreters came back to our workshops again and again and also came to our party on Saturday evening. They came because they'd had great sessions in the workshop support groups and realized how much they were functioning at the Forum without any space to notice what they were feeling.

A frequent comment from people was something like, "It's amazing how much you succeed in making people like each other and want to be together and not leave." Another typical comment: "You seem to be everywhere at this Forum. We see



ELLIE HIDALGO

you cooperating, supporting the whole conference, supporting each other. You don't seem to struggle on your own."

On Sunday morning we did two workshops. One was Strategies Against Racism. It was led by Annie Hoekstra, from Friesland, with Jenny Martin, Bernadette Chelvanayagam, and Eva Amundsdotter assisting. From what I heard, it went very well.

Together with Kaisli Syrjänen, from Finland, I led the other workshop on Sunday morning: Listening as a Tool for Ending War. We had a diverse group that included a large number of people of African heritage. Besides giving basic information about our tools and project, I focused on how racism and war are related and how ending racism also means ending war.

My fears of people being upset by discharge and RC didn't match the reality at all. When I dared to listen and support the discharge, people were eager to grasp the chance.

I noticed another thing: It seems difficult for white people living in the Nordic countries, and even in Europe, to realize how much racism is a part of our own distresses and struggles. The level of denial and pretence is huge. (I heard USers say that the denial is not as pervasive in the United States.) One reason may be that the recent wars on our continents have made it harder for us to look at our oppressor distresses. I learned that I must start with how people have been victimized.

There is another aspect of racism that I saw more clearly: how much it has been a part of the European history of colonialism and imperialism for us white

Europeans to think of ourselves as interveners, observers, mediators, and problem solvers for others, and to not see the role we have played in the problem becoming a problem. This looks to me a lot like owning-class distress, regardless of what our class backgrounds have been.

Those of us on the political left<sup>3</sup> often act in condescending ways toward those we think must be helped. I found it hard at the Forum to listen well to the white people who acted like this. (I know it is also one of the forms my own racism takes. I want so much to be one of the good guys! I must remember that I *am* one of the good guys, and so are the others. Basic theory—still forgettable when things get heated!<sup>4</sup>)

There is an ingrained belief that either we give or we take, either we sacrifice ourselves and do good

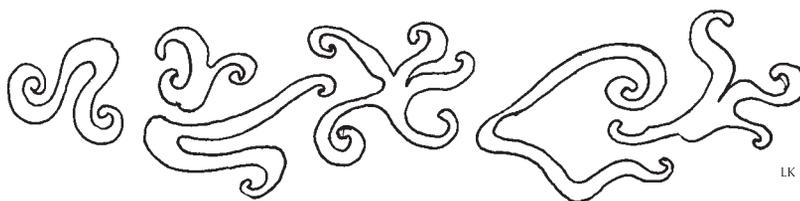
or we benefit. That this is a false belief was visible in our delegation. Giving was sharing, and getting was giving—the wall between the two crumbled. One for all and all for one is really what all liberation struggles are about.

Another insight: Doing something together, sharing a project like this, having a common goal, are what bring us together and strengthen our relationships. I am loveable because I exist; there is nothing I must do to deserve love. The same is true of all others. When we join hands, hearts, and minds in a common struggle, we get to realize this. Then personal difficulties seem uninteresting and unimportant compared to the fact that we are together. The mistakes that occur can feel scary and dangerous, but not so much so that we don't deal with them. We are bigger than our struggles and fears.

Susanne Langer

<sup>3</sup> The political left means the progressive end of the political spectrum.

<sup>4</sup> Heated means emotionally intense.



## What We Know About Organizing

We know that having a correct policy by itself is not enough. We know that organization of people is necessary. We know that action must follow correct policy and good organization if either of them is to have meaning. We know that everyone would like to be a leader. We know that solving any shortage of leadership simply requires encouraging people to become leaders.

Harvey Jackins  
From "The Present Situation  
for Working-Class People,"  
*The Kind, Friendly Universe*, page 157

## Togetherness and Unity

I was honoured to be part of the United to End Racism delegation to the European Social Forum, in September 2008, in Malmö, Sweden. We were a beautiful, diverse, international delegation of many constituencies and languages.

What I liked most and miss most was/is our working together. I worked on two workshop teams and the party team.<sup>1</sup> I also did translations and several other tasks. We had fun and worked with commitment and enthusiasm, even though the days were long. I liked *doing* things together. It was different from just being together and having sessions at an RC workshop. The contradictions<sup>2</sup> were in our commitment to the project. We pushed ourselves, faced fears, and of course made mistakes that we then worked to correct. It's not that things were not hard—despite the great preparation, the discharge, the thinking, and the good leadership, they sometimes were—but by working together and pushing ourselves, we belonged more to each other.

Working together in a project like this gave me a better, more real picture of what we are up to<sup>3</sup> and what we are capable of—and that is a lot.

I took the sense of togetherness and unity back with me to The Netherlands. I am now able to express it in my family and at work. I often initiate doing things together with people—like working in the garden, or working late at my office with someone until she is done, too. In my (quite busy) life it can seem more efficient to work separately, but I've learned more about doing tasks together, in unity. I like working together until enough is done and then taking a rest. It reminds me of my life when I was young. The adults had to work long and hard, but they had a sense of cooperation and unity. As in the present, the work was never finished, but at some point enough was done to take a rest.

A sweet memory of the Forum is of a white man in his sixties who attended our morning workshop on the role of white people in ending racism. He asked a few questions and wanted to get into a discussion (which we did not do); he seemed to focus on the questions in his mind and have little attention for other people. After the workshop I was able to listen to him, connect a

bit, and explain more of our thinking and theory. Once he understood how we use listening as a tool to change the world, he got more enthusiastic. That day we held another workshop in the afternoon. He hesitated, because he had already scheduled something else, but then he decided to come. I did a mini-session with him there, and he was in the support group I led. It was a large group with many young people from his country. He was able to listen well to them and was in touch with his emotions. He also talked a bit about himself up in front of the group. Those of us who had seen him in the morning could hardly believe with how much awareness he shared his story in the afternoon, only five hours later. He left the workshop having decided he wanted to know more about RC. He sent me a postcard immediately. I trust we will stay in contact.

*Brigitte Theeuwen*  
Gelderl, The Netherlands  
Reprinted from the e-mail discussion  
list for RC Community members



MYRNA CHARRY

## No Impatience

**D**on't get impatient. Either listen people out, or if that takes too long, change the subject with a compliment.

*Harvey Jackins*  
From a letter written in 1975

<sup>1</sup> The teams that worked on two of the workshops and the party held at the Forum by United to End Racism

<sup>2</sup> Contradictions to distress

<sup>3</sup> Up to means trying to do.

## Öppen om parsamtal, på European Social Forum

**M**in största höjdpunkt på European Social Forum<sup>1</sup> var att vara öppen med United to End Racism (UER) och parsamtal bland alla mina vänner, kamrater och bekanta. Jag känner många aktivister som var på forumet men för de flesta hade jag inte berättat om parsamtal.

### PRATA MED VÄNNER OCH BEKANTA

Under ett pass där jag skulle ta kontakt gick jag tillsammans med en parsamtalare som hade varit min grundklasslärare 10 år sen. När jag var försiktig runt mina bekanta och mest lyssnade, pratade hon mycket och bjöd in dem till våra UER arrangemang. Jag blev inspirerad.

En kompis kunde inte hitta den workshop han ville gå på, så jag föreslog att han kunde titta in på en UER workshop istället. Jag sa att om den var tråkig kunde han ju gå i pausen. Han gick och tackade mig rejält efteråt.

Jag hade lärt känna några aktivister från Bolivia i mitt fackförbund som jobbade för papperslösa arbetare trots att vi inte pratade samma språk. Jag bjöd in den man som jag fått bäst kontakt med (genom att dansa tillsammans) till en av våra workshops. Han kom, och tog med sig fem andra kamrater från fackförbundet, varav två hårda anarkister. En av dem, en kvinna, reagerade starkt på workshopsledarens entusiasm vilket gjorde att hela gänget gick innan de hade hunnit ha ett miniparsamtal. Jag kände att det hela var en katastrof och att det var kört men följde dem ut och lyssnade på dem på gatan. Kvinnan (själv uppväxt i starkt katolsk tradition) sa att vår workshopsledare lät som en präst. Den andra hårda anarkisten försvarade till min förvåning vikten av att arbeta mot rasismen i vår rörelse. Senare hade jag ett mini med rejäl urladdning. Nästa dag pratade jag med gänget igen och märkte att de inte tyckte illa om mig, utan snarare att vi hade en djupare relation, och jag insåg att jag skulle ha möjlighet att prata mer om UER. Jag kan se nu att det var bättre att de gick på workshop där de blev upprörda än att inte ha haft dem där alls. Veckan efter European Social Forum frågade min kompis om vi skulle gå och dansa igen!

En vän tog med sig sin bror och pappa till vår "Ending War" workshop. Hon går nu i min grundklass. Tre andra vänner ska också vara med.

<sup>1</sup> United to End Racism skickade en delegation av parsamtalare till European Social Forum, som hölls i september 2008 i Malmö, Sverige.

### ANDRA HÖJDUNKTER

Här är några av mina andra höjdpunkter:

Vid ett lyssna-projekt hann vi inte ens skriva upp frågorna vi ville fråga på affischen för att så många kom fram och ville veta vad vi höll på med.

Två unga kvinnor var förtjusta över att få våra flygblad på svenska för att de skulle göra ett skolarbete om rasism och behövde information.

En bekant till mig bar en t-shirt med "Space invaders against anti-semitism" skrivet på den. En judisk kvinna i delegationen uppmärksammade den med entusiasm. Väl hemma mejlade min bekant mig och ville ha kontakt med "den där trevliga kvinnan". Dessutom föreslog att han och jag skulle samarbeta om något för att han tyckte jag var intressant att diskutera med.

Under "Ending War"-workshopen sa en svensk man först att han inte hade några krigserfarenheter för att sedan berätta om sina år i lumpen, och återkom till ett tillfälle då de värnpliktiga blev tillsagda att ropa "hurra" när de anföll. Det hade fått honom att besluta sig att lämna lumpen.

En ung spansk kvinna sa att vi skulle agera istället för att gråta. Jag förklarade att vi bara vill lägga till känslurladdning till agerandet. Efter det var hon mycket intresserad av oss.

Jag har fått självförtroende när det gäller parsamtal och har haft mycket lättare att introducera nya personer. De ställde svåra frågor, jag säger vad jag tänker och de är nöjda.

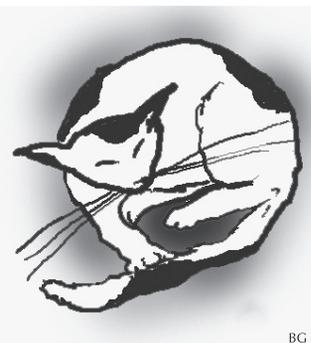
### VAD JAG LÄRDE MIG

Följande är något av vad jag lärde mig på forumet:

Folk som är på ett socialt forum är intresserade av att lära sig. Många blir intresserade av parsamtals teorin. Vi kan lära ut hela teorin. Det kan vara bra att prata om "mentalhälso"förtryck för att visa att vi förstår länken mellan samhället och folks svårigheter med att släppa fram sina känslor.

Jag lärde mig att hela tiden under UER-projekt - i miniparsamtal, stödgrupper, i foajen och på stan - är jag parsamtalslärare. Det finns ingen anledning eller tillfälle att hålla tillbaka mitt tänkande och ledarskap.

*continued . . .*



BG

## WIDE WORLD CHANGING

continued . . .

Det kan vara bra att hålla fram mer tydligt att känslurladdning är ett komplement till att agera storpolitiskt i världen. "The world needs action, active people need sessions!"

För mycket fokus på gråt återstimulerar en del människor. Vi behöver peka på vikten av fniss, gäsningar och att skaka – urladdning som män faktiskt vågar visa. Vi kanske ska prata mer om att tillåta urladdning än att förvänta det.

Det verkar vara viktigt att ha ett första miniparsamtal tidigt på en workshop. Om de sedan får upp jobbiga känslor senare under workshopen har de fått uppleva odelad uppmärksamhet.

Flera workshopdeltagare som gick tidigt gjorde det endast för att de skulle på annat men var ändå intresserade av vad vi gör. När vi hade någon i dörren som fångade upp dem fick vi flera att fylla i våra kontaktkort.

När vi arbetade med att ta kontakt, borde två parsamtalsdelegater arbeta tillsammans. Det ger möjligheten att visa våra relationer. För mig var det också lättare att prata med mina bekanta om UER när en annan delegat var med.

Det har betydelse att jag berättar om parsamtal för mina vänner och bekanta även om de inte kommer på våra

workshops eller klasser. Jag bygger långsiktiga relationer och för eller senare kan folk komma på att de behöver något som parsamtal och då vet de var de kan vända sig. Vi kommer också att ha fler UER-projekt i framtiden, jag behöver inte låta mina bråttom-känslor styra mig.

Genom att vara närvarande och inte återstimulerad bland folk jag känner gör jag "reklam" för UER. Till exempel träffade jag några utmattade kamrater efter den stora demonstrationen. Jag hade precis haft ett parsamtal och på sprittande partyhumör och skojade massa med dem. De frågade vad sjutton jag hade gjort. (Tyvärr var jag för generad för att säga att jag just hade haft parsamtal, det gör jag nästa gång!)

Jag tror vår delegation arbetade för mycket. Några delegater offrade sina parsamtal för att göra annat. En vän kommenterade att varje gång hon såg oss hade vi bråttom och sprang omkring.

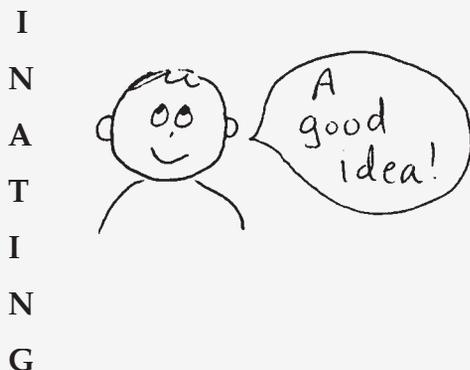
Jag har under flera år grubblat över vilken form av världsförändring jag ska satsa på. Efter European Social Forum tänker jag att sprida parsamtal till aktivister kan vara det största bidraget jag kan ge till mänskligheten. Jag delar nu tid kring att göra detta till min högsta prioritet.

Tack, tack, tack allihop!

*Erik Mägi*  
Göteborg, Sverige

### JOIN AN RC E-MAIL DISCUSSION LIST ON

L  
I  
R A C I S M . . . if you are using RC to eliminate racism.



E-mail Tim Jackins and Diane Shisk at <uer@rc.org>, giving a short description of your eliminating-racism activities, and ask your Area Reference Person or Regional Reference Person to e-mail them with his or her support for your membership.



AARON GALLOWAY

English translation of the preceding article:

## Open About RC, at the European Social Forum

My greatest highlight at the European Social Forum<sup>1</sup> was being open about United to End Racism (UER) and RC with my friends, comrades, and acquaintances. I knew many activists at the Forum but had not told most of them about RC.

### TALKING WITH FRIENDS AND ACQUAINTANCES

During a making-contact time, I walked around with a Co-Counsellor who had been my RC fundamentals teacher ten years before. While I was careful around my acquaintances and mostly listened, she spoke a lot and invited them to our UER events. I was inspired.

A friend couldn't find the workshop he wanted to attend, so I proposed that he go to a UER workshop instead. I said that if it was boring, he could leave in the break. He went, and thanked me a lot afterward.

Although we didn't speak the same language, I had gotten to know some activists from Bolivia who were in my union and who worked on behalf of workers who lacked working permits. I invited the man I had made the best contact with (when we were at a dance together) to one of our workshops. He came, bringing five more comrades from the union—two of them hard core<sup>2</sup> anarchists. One of them, a woman, reacted strongly to the enthusiasm of the workshop leader, which made the whole group of them leave, before

they'd had a mini-session. I felt like it was a disaster and that there was no hope, but I followed them out and listened to them in the street. The woman (raised in a strong Catholic tradition) said that our leader had sounded like a priest. To my surprise, the other anarchist defended the importance of working against racism in our movements. Later I had a mini-session and discharged a lot. The next day I talked to this group again and noticed that they didn't dislike me—that instead we had a deeper relationship—and I realized I would have more opportunities to talk with them about UER. I can see now that it was better to have them at a workshop in which they got upset than to not have them there at all. The week after the European Social Forum my friend asked me about going out dancing again!

A friend brought her brother and dad to our "Ending War" workshop. She is now going to attend my fundamentals class. Three more friends will also attend.

### OTHER HIGHLIGHTS

Here are some of my other highlights:

At one listening project we didn't even have time to write on the poster the questions we wanted to ask because so many people approached us and wanted to know what we were doing.

Two young women were delighted to get our flyers in Swedish. They were writing a paper about racism in school and needed information.

An acquaintance of mine was wearing a T-shirt with "Space invaders

against anti-Semitism" written on it. A Jewish woman in our delegation acknowledged it with enthusiasm. Later my acquaintance mailed me and wanted contact with "that lovely woman." He also proposed that he and I cooperate on something, because he found me so interesting to discuss things with.

During the UER "Ending War" workshop, a Swedish man first said that he didn't have any experiences with war but then talked about his years in the military service, mentioning that the soldiers had been told to shout "hooray" while attacking. That had made him decide to leave the military service.

A young Spanish woman said that we should take action instead of crying. I explained that we simply wanted to add emotional discharge to action. After that she was interested in us.

I have gained self esteem with regard to RC. It's much easier now to introduce new people. They ask tricky questions, I say what I think, and they are pleased.

### WHAT I LEARNED

The following is some of what I learned at the Forum:

People attending a social forum are eager to learn. Many become interested in RC theory. We can teach the whole theory. It might be good to talk about "mental health" oppression, to show that we understand the link between society and people's difficulty in releasing their feelings.

*continued . . .*

<sup>1</sup> United to End Racism sent a delegation of RCers to the European Social Forum, held in September 2008 in Malmö, Sweden.

<sup>2</sup> Hard core means means militant, fiercely loyal.

## WIDE WORLD CHANGING

continued . . .

I learned that all the time during UER projects—in mini-sessions, in support groups, in the lobby, and on the streets—I am an RC teacher. My having had sessions and my not being stressed and restimulated can be important to people. There is no reason or occasion to hold back on my thinking or leadership.

We might say more explicitly that emotional discharge complements acting broadly and politically in the wide world: “The world needs action; active people need sessions!”

Focusing too much on crying restimulates some people. We need to point out the importance of giggles, yawns, and shaking—discharge that men actually dare to show. We might also talk more about *allowing* discharge rather than *expecting* it.

It seems important for people to have their first mini-session early in a workshop. Then if they feel upset later on in the workshop, they have had an experience of undivided attention.

Several workshop participants who left early did so only to be able to get to something else; they were interested in what we do. When one of us was at the door to catch them, they filled out our contact cards.

When making contacts, two RC delegates should work together. This enables them to show their relationship. Also, for me, it was easier to talk to my acquaintances about UER when another delegate was there.

Talking about RC to friends and acquaintances makes a difference, even if they do not attend our workshops or classes. I’m building long-term relationships, and sooner

or later people might find themselves needing something like RC; then they’ll know whom to turn to. There will also be more UER projects in the future; I don’t have to be led by my feelings of urgency.

When I can be present and not restimulated among people I know, it’s like doing a “commercial” for UER. For example, at one point at the Forum I met some exhausted comrades. I had just had a session, was in a bright party mood, and made jokes with them. They asked what the heck<sup>3</sup> I had been doing. (Unfortunately, I was too shy to say I had just had a session. I’ll do that next time!)

<sup>3</sup> The heck is an expression that adds emphasis.

Our delegation may have worked too much. Some delegates sacrificed having sessions to do other things. A friend commented that every time she saw us we were busy and running around.

Over the years I have thought deeply about what form of wide world change to prioritize. After the European Social Forum, I think that spreading RC to activists might be my greatest contribution to humankind. I’m now having sessions on making this my top priority.

Thanks, thanks, thanks to everyone!

Erik Mägi  
Göteborg, Sweden



### RC “Old Timers”: Read RC Literature

Over time, we change and grow  
and find that what we now can know  
and use, absorb, and try in session  
is—hooray!—a brand new lesson.  
Something read in days of yore  
perhaps at that time seemed a bore,  
but now it leaps forth, relevant  
to current struggles prevalent.  
No need to reinvent the wheel—  
thus these “old” books still have appeal.  
Read them and you’ll be amazed  
at thoughts you’ll have, at time you’ll save.

## More Highlights from the European Social Forum

As a United to End Racism (UER) delegate to the European Social Forum, I was impressed by all the work that had been done beforehand by Susanne, Diane, and Fredrik<sup>1</sup>; the series of memos we received; and all the telephone conferences we did. They helped us to become a team.

Each of us had our own schedule and knew what we had to do. Every day we put up posters and flyers. A Forum participant commented, "You are the most visible here of all the organizations." We were very focused on our work. A highlight for me was being a European, with a UER delegation, at a European Forum. It made me long for a strong European RC Community. To build that, we will need to discharge more about borders, language, and differences.

Before the Forum I made contact with Xabi<sup>2</sup> to discharge and think about language. How should we deal with all the languages? I was going to lead a workshop, but in which language should I do that? What would be most clear? Sessions about it helped. I discharged some language oppression and was able to think better about it. I ended up deciding that we were going to the Forum to end racism, not to be language activists. When I've been abroad, it has been practical and helpful to be able to communicate in English. English is a beautiful language. I discharged on the fear that my first language would die out.

Europe is so rich in languages. It remains a challenge to do justice to all languages. We need more consciousness raising about language oppression. This is also of great importance for the growth of RC in Europe.

I couldn't (even if I wanted to) do my workshop in Frisian, because no one would be able to translate. Dutch is my second language, but what would it mean for me and the workshop if everything was translated from Dutch into English? And what would it mean for me as a Frisian woman to use the language that for us

Frisians represents our oppression? I opted for doing the workshop in English and decided it was completely okay if my English was not perfect. I decided that during the Forum, just as always, I could show that I am happy with all languages, and am always prepared to learn a few words.

At our UER meetings at the Forum, I felt pulled to pretend, as a non-native English speaker, that I understood everything. The program was full, the time for our meetings short and precious. Every time I could have said, "I don't get<sup>3</sup> it," could have felt like time wasted. This is what oppression has created, and it is good to remind ourselves of that. How can we arrange things so that everyone can take part equally, so that everyone can be included?

I enjoyed the Shabbat our delegation led. The Yiddish songs touched me, because we were a European delegation and Yiddish is the language of many European Jews. The Dutch language includes many words that came from Yiddish.

During the Forum I felt more than ever like an activist. I enjoyed cycling through Malmö with piles of Forum newspapers, and UER posters and workshop flyers, to distribute at strategic places. It was beautiful to see all the places where we had already been. The cooperation among us was good. Each one of us had our own schedule. We were

true to our schedules, and everything went well. We were challenged to show what we stood for. Diane was clear about that: we had come to work on ending racism. That was our goal. There were all sorts of pleasant activities that could have easily distracted us, but they were not what we had come for.

Bernadette Chelvanayagam, from Devon, England, was on my team for the workshop I led. She and I hadn't known each other before the Forum. To get to know each other a little more than just by voice, I had sent her a photo of myself and she had responded by sending me a photo of herself with her Forum support group. That

*continued . . .*

<sup>1</sup> Susanne Langer (Copenhagen, Denmark), the leader of the UER delegation; Diane Shisk (Seattle, Washington, USA), the overall organizer; and Fredrik Eklöf (Oxie, Sweden), the on-site organizer

<sup>2</sup> Xabi Odriozola (Donostia, Basque Country), the International Commonality Reference Person for Translations and Languages and a UER delegate to the Forum

<sup>3</sup> Get means understand.



DANNA BYROM

## WIDE WORLD CHANGING

*continued . . .*

was nice and made us feel connected. We also got to know each other in telephone conferences, through e-mail, and then, of course, every day during the Forum. Bernadette was a continuous ally in the project.

I led a listening project and felt supported by a team that made sure that all the necessary materials were there and exhibited on time. We stood at the entrance of Folkets Park, where many of the Forum activities took place, and a lot of people walked past. I remember a young adult looking intently at our pink poster. She wanted to take a photograph of it, as she found it beautiful. When she asked about UER, I told her a little and she became interested in our work. She recognized in our principles the way her mother had raised her. Her mother had told her that pain feels the same for white people and for black people—that we are all human. She filled out one of our postcards with her address. A group of Eastern European young people, possibly Roma,<sup>4</sup> were sitting on the grass with a guitar. Karl<sup>5</sup> and I joined them and tried to make contact. We had no common language other than the music. With our encouragement, they sang. And we joined in with clapping and the imitation of their sounds. Karl also sang a song with the guitar. It was a shame that we couldn't make contact with words.

In the workshop Greg<sup>6</sup> led, there was a Palestinian man who paid good attention and was touched by our theory. He was impressed by the freedom with which we could share our stories with each other. He and I did two mini-sessions, Julian<sup>7</sup> did another mini with him, and at the end Greg did a demonstration with him. Our cooperation as UER delegates was beautiful. I led a support group in that same workshop. A young woman was touched and had to discharge. She wanted to know more about us. She filled out a yellow card, and I put her in touch with Erik<sup>8</sup> so that she could talk in her own language. She was from Malmö (Sweden) and now has contact with Fredrik.

During another time when I was scheduled to make contact with people, Bernadette and I went to the park. After a conversation with an African lawyer, we were approached by a man from Mali. He had been sitting on a bench for a long time and then passed by us so slowly that we had to make eye contact. He really wanted to talk to us. He had been invited to the Forum by an

agricultural association. I could see that for black people it made a difference that I as a white woman was paired with a black woman.

At the end of some of our workshops people came to tell me that they felt particularly welcomed and that our workshops were different from all the others. Many people seemed to leave our workshops satisfied and touched. It showed me how the world is waiting for our information and approach. Some people kept following us, or we kept meeting them. One of these people was a woman from Germany. Before the start of Greg's workshop, she and I had a special conversation and she was curious about us. She attended a later workshop, too. I also met her in the park and at our party.<sup>9</sup> At our party there was another young woman from Germany who didn't live far away from her and who was already active in RC and so enthusiastic about it that I decided to put the two of them in touch with each other. Since the Forum I am trying to stay in contact by e-mail and ensure that RC in Germany is a good place for these women.

The workshop I led on Sunday morning, *Strategies Against Racism*, was one of our two final workshops, and I felt that I stood on the shoulders of the leaders who had gone before me. What helped me most in leading it was to discharge a lot of fear early Sunday morning and to notice that I and my team would be doing it together. My team consisted of two black women and another white woman. I was pleased with our collaboration and with the stories the three of them shared at the workshop about how they had used RC tools in their daily lives. The workshop was mostly about how listening and discharging have been helpful in our work to end racism. People could practice in mini-sessions and in separate black and white support groups. A young black woman took the opportunity to use the attention of the group to discharge. A Swedish female representative of unions, who was going to lead her own workshop right after ours, was touched by our approach. Some of our delegation who knew the Swedish union work well stayed to support her in her workshop. There is now a good basis for UER to stay in contact with the Swedish unions.

Taking part in this UER project had more impact on me than I can yet realise. It fit in well with my wish to end racism, and to make sure that RC is not too inwardly focused—that we share our gains and insights passionately with the outside world.

*Annie Hoekstra  
Ljouwert, Fryslan,  
The Netherlands*

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<sup>4</sup> The Roma people are a widely dispersed ethnic group with origins in South Asia. They are also referred to as Gypsies.

<sup>5</sup> Karl Lam (Cambridge, England), a UER delegate to the Forum

<sup>6</sup> Greg Foister (Nottingham, England)

<sup>7</sup> Julian Weissglass (Santa Barbara, California, USA), a UER delegate to the Forum

<sup>8</sup> Erik Mägi (Göteborg, Sweden), a UER delegate to the Forum

<sup>9</sup> The UER delegation hosted a party for the Forum participants.

## A Treat to Be Part of the Delegation

It was a treat to be part of the delegation. I have been an activist all my life, and it was contradiction\* to be with a group that was so eager, cooperative, loving, and smart. When a task needed to be done, people volunteered immediately. I especially enjoyed leading a UER workshop, assisted by four working-class women.

During one of our workshops I did a whispering translation for

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\* Contradiction to distress

a white Swedish couple in their sixties. I also did several mini-sessions with them. After some time they both cried. The man hid his face behind a magazine, but in the end he and his wife could show each other their tears and emotions. It was special to be with them throughout that process.

At our first workshop, *Listening as a Tool in Social Transformation*, we had about a hundred people, and that was exciting. We ended the workshop, as we did many others,

with support groups. I led a group of mainly white men, and several of them were upset about many things. They didn't leave, but it was a hard group to lead. With so many Co-Counsellors in the room, it would have been good to have more than one in a group.

I really liked leading a gathering of women UER delegates. It made a difference to meet as women.

*Eva Amundsdotter*  
Stockholm, Sweden



MOUNT FUJI, JAPAN • DIANE SHISK

## Listening to Different Opinions

Listening to others who have different opinions, and sharing our own thinking without judgments and distress, can be a big challenge.

We need to have Co-Counseling sessions about how we feel when listening to people with views that upset us. I want to read some books by people with starkly different views from my own and then discharge on what feelings it brings up. I'd like to ask people I know who have different views from mine to share their opinions—and not argue with or challenge them, and then discharge on it. This would be more for my own re-emergence than to move them from their position. I don't think we can move others when we're restimulated by what they're saying.

We need to consider the possibility that we might be wrong and be willing to modify our own views. Many of us need to discharge arrogance, being judgmental, defensiveness, assuming that any sensible person would agree with us, and unwillingness to question our own views.

Discharging these kinds of attitudes will make it possible for others to use our attention and discharge the distresses that are woven into their views. We all have distresses that interfere with our thinking. We all need opportunities to think aloud without having to defend our thoughts, and chances to discharge our distresses.

One way to move things is to briefly share a simple rational position and then listen warmly to whatever the other person needs to say, without challenging or pointing out the illogic that he or she might be expressing. When he or she winds down, we can restart the "session" by again stating a simple rational position. We don't need agreement in order to stay close and friendly. We do this as Co-Counselors in our sessions—and as we listen, our clients start to hear themselves and notice where they are not making sense.

In the recent U.S. election, I knocked on doors and talked to people, to build support for my candidate. It worked well to listen and then just state why I was supporting my candidate, and not criticize the other candidate or argue about anything the person said.

*John Irwin*

Wilmington, Delaware, USA  
Reprinted from the e-mail discussion  
list for RC Community members



DEBBY GLICKMAN

## Listening Long Enough

I was on vacation when a woman in our multi-family vacation group sat down next to several of us who were rocking in our chairs on the front porch, looking out over the ocean. She said, "I am fed up with\* all this affirmative action nonsense." (Affirmative action is a U.S. public policy that gives people who have experienced discrimination, based on race or gender, a fairer chance at obtaining education or employment.)

The two others sitting on the porch got up immediately and left to go walk on the beach. I knew they didn't want to hear that kind of talk. Even though I was upset and strongly disagreed with this woman's attitudes, I could not imagine walking away. I didn't want to discuss politics on vacation, but I decided to listen and see what else she had to say. She talked on in the same way for about twenty minutes, expressing a great deal of anger and frustration about how unfair affirmative action policies were. She is someone who lives in

a nice house, wears lovely clothing (much nicer than mine), and drives a much more expensive car than I do. I could not imagine what she was so upset about.

Since I had no idea what kind of response made sense, I just kept quiet and she talked on. Finally she said that she had recently applied for a job, that she had an advanced degree in the field of home economics, and that the city had hired an African-heritage woman without a high school degree. The job involved coaching poor women about household budgeting, and I thought the city had hired the right person. I realized, however, that this woman had lost a job opportunity and that her angry comments were

about that loss. So I replied, "That must have been hard on you." She got tears in her eyes, was choked up for a few minutes, and then was silent for a while. Then she said, "You know, this must be how black people feel when they can't get a job." I decided that nothing more needed to be said. She was doing her best to be a cooperative human being by having a session about her confused and upset feelings. It was exactly what she needed to do to think more clearly, and it was one of the most instructive sessions I have ever offered.

*Anne Mackie*

Cary, North Carolina, USA

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

\* Fed up with means completely tired of and disgusted with.

*I am human,  
and nothing  
human is alien  
to me.*

*Terence*



JULIE ANNE FORGIIONE

## Winning by Listening

This discussion about listening to people with whom we disagree reminded me of an event in the struggle to not segregate disabled children within the education system.

In England, many people are passionate about the need for special schools for disabled children, and many others are equally passionate about the need to educate disabled children in inclusive mainstream schools. The people who believe in special schools are, for the most part, professionals and people who run these places. The people who argue against them are mostly the people who have been in them, and their allies. Parents are divided between the two camps and are often used as evidence that there isn't enough agreement to warrant a radical change of policy.

As part of a strategy to build a campaign for inclusion, I joined a consortium of people who were involved in "special needs children's services," thinking I could out-argue them. Of course, I couldn't.

Eventually I suggested that all the members of the consortium come together for a whole day during which every person would have ten minutes to present his or her position and no one would criticise or argue, only ask questions for clarification, and then we would try to construct a policy that we could all support.

It was an amazing event. In the stillness of the listening people saw the weakness in their own arguments, or realised they had not understood other people, or cried, or learned new things. The result was that my most vocal "enemy" backed down and we agreed on a policy that would see the long-term closure of all segregated schools. The event also permanently changed the way we related to each other.

### Check back pages for inaccuracies!

Maybe friend or Dad or wife  
is searching for a better life

and maybe seeks an RC teacher.  
We would want him/her to reach her!<sup>1</sup>

Having finally made the leap  
to try RC, the path's still steep

so we would wish and hope and pray  
that accurate data smooth the way.

That's why we keep lists<sup>2</sup> up-to-date:  
It matters! It determines fate

more than you or I can know.  
So to back pages—ready? Go!<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> or him

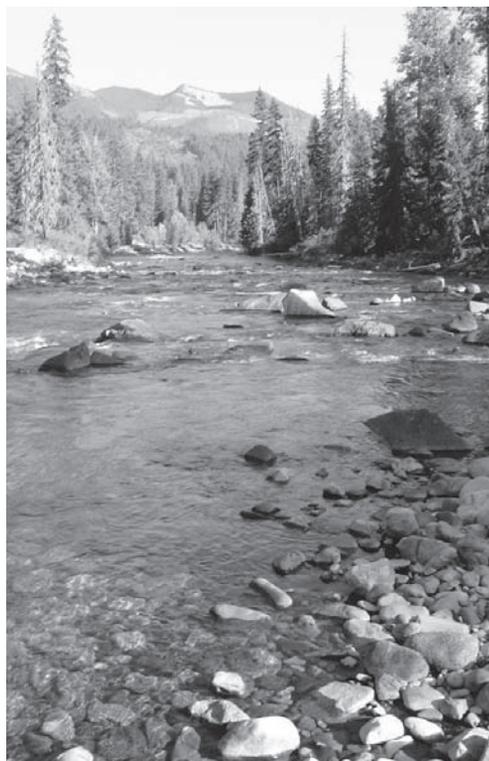
<sup>2</sup> The lists of Information Coordinators, Age Group Leaders, Area Reference Persons, Liberation and Commonality Reference Persons, Teachers Outside of Organized Areas, Contacts, and Workshops

<sup>3</sup> Please e-mail any corrections to <publications@rc.org> or mail them to Rational Island Publishers, 719 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue North, Seattle, Washington 98109, USA.

*Micheline Mason*

London, England

Reprinted from the e-mail discussion



SUSAN HUTCHISON

## The Collapse of Capitalism

Last week in my naturalized<sup>1</sup> RC fundamentals class, we worked on the collapse of capitalism, which seems to be on everyone's mind lately. In searching for readings for the class, I found an article in Harvey Jackins' book *A Better World* entitled "Discussion Toward a Classless Society." It was written in 1992. The passage that seemed most cogent—to say nothing of prescient—to most of us was the following:

"The current society, now a worldwide system, is nearing its final collapse. As one indication, it is now plainly impossible to pay off the enormous national debts or to even believe for much longer that they can keep increasing. Massive unemployment threatens the lives of a larger and larger portion of the world's population. Desperate, senseless attempts to overexploit the environment endanger the entire ecology. Larger and larger numbers of people are 'excluded' from participation in the economy. The worldwide system of capitalism is 'coming apart' in every function that one can examine.

"Past political programs that have called upon working-class people to 'overthrow' the society miss the reality of the situation. These societies are 'overthrowing' themselves through their malfunctioning and built-in contradictions. The responsibility of the working class, and all other thoughtful humans, is to prevent this collapse from being allowed to damage large numbers of humans, the accumulated benefits of past human work, and our precious environment through further environmental damage, poverty, continuing unemployment, or lack of health care or educational opportunities. Our responsibility is to help it collapse gently and to have the beginnings of a sensible structure widely explained and supported to take its place."

It occurred to me that Harvey spent his life preparing us for this very moment in history.

One thing we discharged on in the class was that no matter how it feels, the collapse is in reality a good thing, because it is laying the basis for a more egalitarian order. Many of us, particularly in the United States and Northern Europe, will "suffer" a substantial decline in our standard of living, but this will enable others, who now live in poverty, to raise their standard of living. Much of the "wealth" that capitalism has created is not real. It is a function of addictive patterns of acquisition and consumerism. Bankers have issued paper that they've



ALIX WEBB

said had value but that turns out<sup>2</sup> to have been worthless. People will now have a chance to reflect on what is truly valuable: human relationships.

So how do we help capitalism collapse gently, and how do we lay the basis for a more rational order? I'm not sure how to do these things on a grand scale, but one thing that has been working for me is to integrate my Co-Counseling life, my work life, and my political life. For the past eight years I've been developing a non-profit organization called Oakland Parents Together. One of our programs involves teaching parents about the discharge process by using Patty Wipfler's<sup>3</sup> excellent pamphlets *Listening to Children* and *Listening Partnerships for Parents*. A grant from the state agency that taxes cigarettes is funding us to teach these classes in local child development centers. In order to expand the effort, I have had to train additional facilitators, which I am doing by holding the weekly fundamentals class referred to above. The class currently has ten members, half African American and half Latino/a. After all these years, I have finally learned how to talk to people about the discharge process in a way that doesn't scare them and that keeps them coming back for more.

Yes, we're all scared about the collapse of capitalism, but because I've surrounded myself with people who know about discharge, and are committed to spreading knowledge about it throughout the schools, I feel a lot safer—and I think they do, too.

Henry Hitz

Oakland, California, USA

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

<sup>1</sup> In this context, naturalized means adapted to a wide-world environment.

<sup>2</sup> Turns out means is being shown.

<sup>3</sup> Patty Wipfler is the International Liberation Reference Person for Parents.

## Courage and Power

I saw an old friend of mine, Bill Dobbins, model power once at a Democratic Party state convention where the majority of the delegates were progressives but the then governor, who was very reactionary, had appointed the chairperson. This chairperson was ruling progressive delegates out of order and refusing to let them speak. He was challenging the credentials of the progressive delegates and insisting on replacing them with supporters of the governor.

I was sitting in the balcony watching. The progressive delegates were indignant and resentful but

also intimidated and passive. They were just looking bewildered and talking to each other. The chairman would come down with his gavel and rule each progressive out of order. When several people objected, the chairman called in a group of state police troopers from the next room, and the captain of the troopers said, "Keep this orderly, or you'll be arrested and removed."

In this confusion, Bill rose up and said firmly and loudly, "Mr. Chairman," and began moving slowly toward the chair. As he came up the aisle, he was ruled out of order repeatedly, but he kept

moving. The progressives began to take heart\* and started moving in a crowd behind him. When Bill got up close enough, he shouted, "I'm not out of order, you are!" The captain of the state police stepped in and said, "I'm warning you, one more step and you'll be arrested." Bill kept moving. He said, "My taxes pay your wages. *You* sit down and behave!" Finally the chairman panicked; screamed, "You're all out of order"; threw down the gavel; and ran. The progressives chose a legitimate chairperson. One person with courage was enough.

Harvey Jackins

From *The Rest of Our Lives*, pages 20 to 21

## A Wide-World-Change Opportunity

A wide-world-change opportunity came to me recently at a meeting of the Commission on Christian-Jewish Relations. A guest speaker, a kind and compassionate man, restimulated everyone by recounting in a desperate way how bad things were in our community and how little Obama\* would be able to do, if elected.

I posed the idea, for the first time in a semi-public venue, that in the collapse of our current economic system (something that in itself isn't usually acknowledged, as people await a "recovery") lay the seeds for building a more humane and rational system. I suggested that, regardless of the outcome of the election, the religious leaders present could start posing questions about what kind of system would meet human needs.

I was pleased at how ready people were to think about the idea and take action. I have warm personal relationships with the individuals in this group, so I will continue having one-to-one conversations. I'll also be figuring out how to introduce the concept of discharge.

Joyce Herman

Penfield, New York, USA

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



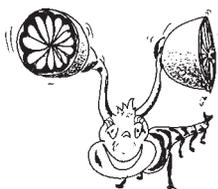
BOB ROMERO

\* Barack Obama, the president-elect of the United States

# Appreciating PRESENT TIME

Thank you for your effort to publish PRESENT TIME, which is full of inspiration every time.

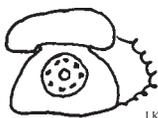
*Akane Tanizawa*  
Ichikawa-shi, Chiba, Japan



XO

*I particularly liked the "literature promotion" in the October PRESENT TIME, with all those covers of different publications. Most creative!*

*Rowan White*  
North Fitzroy, Victoria, Australia



LK

I have been laid up with a cold for a few days, and our Community bulk order of the October PRESENT TIME arrived as a great tonic. Wonderful articles as ever, and I love the beautiful images of the literature as well the funny little cartoon reminders.

*Anica Gavrilovic*  
Beeston, Nottingham, England



MK

*PRESENT TIME is one of my favorite publications!*

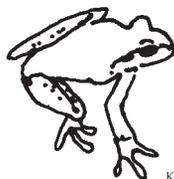
*Stephanie Abraham*  
Covina, California, USA



JV

Wow! Many thanks to all who make PRESENT TIME possible! Specifically I want to appreciate the work and thinking that goes into the editing and typesetting to make each article easy to read—making reading that much more enjoyable. I love how in an article that has many voices, for example, Marion Ouphouet's "Trusting My Thinking Made a Difference" (July 2008), each person's thought has a different typeface, which makes it more personal, more easy to read.

*Sonya Greyeyes*  
Calgary, Alberta, Canada



KK

I love reading PRESENT TIME. The treasure of intelligence among those pages brings a smile to my face every time.

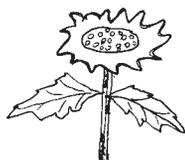
*Sonia Palak*  
Calgary, Alberta, Canada



XO

*PRESENT TIME is great—thanks for all your work.*

*Portia Rosenberg*  
Burwell, Cambridge, England



KK

I laughed at the little informative rhymes in the July PRESENT TIME, and loved the little drawings in October. I am hoping for more of both, plus maybe some dance, in January.

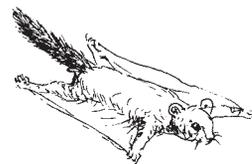
*Russell Hayes*  
Lexington, Kentucky, USA



MR

*You know, I've been noticing that PRESENT TIME just keeps getting better and better.*

*Peter Gruenbaum*  
Seattle, Washington, USA



FK

Thanks again for the inspiring and well-organized PRESENT TIME journals. I so look forward to reading them, cover to cover.

*Nanci Luna Jiménez*  
Portland, Oregon, USA



LK

*PRESENT TIME October 2008: Gee,<sup>1</sup> you again presented us with a feast. I find my mind responding with "ah's" to practically every sentence I read, starting with Tim's<sup>2</sup> article on the enormous value of literature, Katie's<sup>3</sup> poetic invitation to all of us to open the door to our RC lore, and Harvey's<sup>4</sup> remarks titled, "The Best Thinking of Many People." Such songs... such poetry...such articles. Such food.*

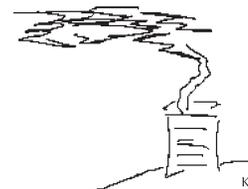
*Pam Maccabee*  
Glastonbury, Connecticut, USA

<sup>1</sup> Gee is a word that expresses enthusiasm.

<sup>2</sup> Tim Jackins'

<sup>3</sup> Katie Kauffman's

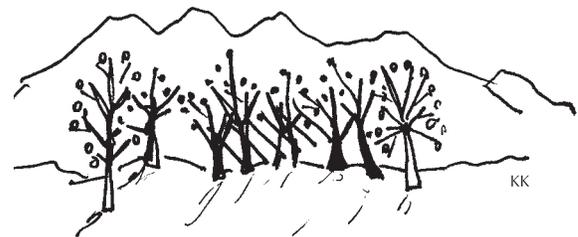
<sup>4</sup> Harvey Jackins'



KS

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# Re-evaluation Counseling

Re-evaluation Counseling is a process whereby people of all ages and of all backgrounds can learn how to exchange effective help with each other in order to free themselves from the effects of past distress experiences.

Re-evaluation Counseling theory provides a model of what a human being can be like in the area of his/her interaction with other human beings and his/her environment. The theory assumes that everyone is born with tremendous intellectual potential, natural zest, and lovingness, but that these qualities have become blocked and obscured in adults as the result of accumulated distress experiences (fear, hurt, loss, pain, anger, embarrassment, etc.) which begin early in our lives.

Any young person would recover from such distress spontaneously by use of the natural process of emotional discharge (crying, trembling, raging, laughing, etc.). However, this natural process is usually interfered with by well-meaning people ("Don't cry," "Be a big boy," etc.) who erroneously equate the emotional discharge (the healing of the hurt) with the hurt itself.

When adequate emotional discharge can take place, the person is freed from the rigid pattern of behavior and feeling left by the hurt. The basic loving, cooperative, intelligent, and zestful nature is then free to operate. Such a person will tend to be more effective in looking out for his or her own interests and the interests of others, and will be more capable of acting successfully against injustice.

In recovering and using the natural discharge process, two people take turns counseling and being counseled. The one acting as the counselor listens, draws the other out, and permits, encourages, and assists emotional discharge. The one acting as client talks and discharges and re-evaluates. With experience and increased confidence and trust in each other, the process works better and better.

For more information, you can go to the web site: <http://www.rc.org/>.



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