



Our experience in RC indicates that having people able to think about us provides a security unmatched by anything else.

*Tim Jackins*

This April *Present Time* brings news of RC developments in Kenya and Uganda, Jewish Co-Counselors supporting the uprisings in Arab countries, the February International RC Conference on Care of the Environment, and how the RC Communities are responding to the crises in Japan. You'll also find an excellent discussion by women targeted by racism about how racism has affected their lives. Tim speaks to white people about racism. And there is much more.

Here are the deadlines for the July issue: Monday, May 16, for articles and poetry; Monday, May 23, for changes to the backpages lists.

Lisa Kauffman, editor

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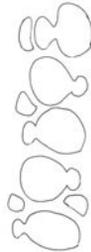
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# ADDICTIONS AND MEANINGFUL WORK

? YOU'RE OBVIOUSLY DEALING WITH SOMEONE IN A POSITION WHO NEEDS SOMETHING CHALLENGING AND THIS MEANS A LOT OF DISTRESS, A LOT OF FEAR, MEANINGFUL PHYSICAL WORK TO DO, COMPOUNDED AND IN PART CAUSED BY ALL THE POSITIVE THINGS HE'S INTERESTED IN AND THE POSITIVE THINGS HE'S TAKEN IN HIS LIFE TO MAKE A COMPLETE BREAK WITH THE YOUNG LIFE OF WHAT YOU DESCRIBE. AIMLESSNESS AND A LACK OF POLICY THAT IS TYPICAL WITH THESE SYMPTOMS AND ALLOWED HIM TO DRIFT IN DRUGS IN THE PARTS JUST THROUGH STIMULATION AND ARTS AND RECREATION DISTRESSES FROM THE ALCOHOL AND DRUGS AND SOON HE'LL HAVE MUCH BRAND DAMAGE. IS PERMANENT IS NOT KNOWN BUT ALL OF THESE SUBSTANCES INCLUDING ALCOHOL ARE EVER PRESENT.

DO NOT KNOW HOW TO FEEL YOU TO DO THIS. DO NOT KNOW THE SITUATION WHERE YOU ARE AND WOULD BE HARD TO TELL YOU HOW TO DO OTHER IN MY OWN TOWN BUT NOTHING IS THAN HIS IN MY OPINION WILL BE SUFACIAL TO KEEP HIS ATTENTION OUT.

AEH FROM A LETTER WRITTEN!

HERE IS NO PERSON THAT CAN RECOVER OF IS A MATTER OF CORRECT POLICY AND ENOUGH INPUT TO KNOW IT IS HARD AND A JOB BUT THE CRUCIAL NUMBERS OF TEENAGERS PARTICULARLY THIN ON MY OPINIONS THAT I HAVE WITH MIDDLE CLASS BACKGROUNDS HAVE MEANINGFUL WORK TO DO EVEN IF IT IS ONLY SPENDING A PIECE OF LAND AND TOLL ON OUR YOUNG PEOPLE WITH SOME PURPOSE IN MIND HE IDLENESS AND PREOCCUPATION WITH PERIPHERAL THINGS WHICH SEEM SO CHARACTERISTIC OF PEOPLE'S LIVES ARE SIMPLY NOT ENOUGH TO PULL HIM OUT OF THEM.

ARVEY JACKINS WAS THE FOUNDER AND A REFERENCE PERSON OF THE COMMUNITIES.



0308

## Listening to Men Targeted by Racism

Dottie Curry<sup>1</sup> is leading a fundamentals class, in Austin, Texas, USA, for people targeted by racism, and allies. We allies are all experienced Co-Counselors who have discharged on our racism. Each of us has brought a person targeted by racism to join the class. We are now nearing the completion of the second series of classes, and the effects of racism are becoming increasingly clear to all the participants.

I have become more aware of how racism has affected the men targeted by racism. The intensity of men's oppression is turned up<sup>2</sup> for them. I am also seeing the harshness of how they are impacted by the criminal justice system and their being forced to fight for their survival and then made to believe it is somehow their fault. I am learning that this lie can make it hard for them to support each other. As I listen to accounts of the injustices and feel the feelings that come up for me, I know that I can never again be silent about the oppression.

We white men need to build trusting relationships with men targeted by racism. Then it may be safe enough for them to tell us their real stories and discharge the hurts from racism. We will need sessions from our allies and each other, because it's hard for us to listen to these stories.

Selwyn Polit  
Austin, Texas, USA

<sup>1</sup> Dottie Curry, an African-heritage woman, is the Area Reference Person for North/Central Austin, Texas, USA, and the International Liberation Reference Person for Elders.

<sup>2</sup> Turned up means increased.

## Children, and Sleep

Dear Parents:

Sleep deprivation can seriously undermine one's ability to parent, think, stay healthy, exercise good judgment, and keep the family safe. (For instance, it's risky to drive after getting even one night of poor sleep. Reaction times and judgment are impaired.) It is important for parents to figure out how to make up a daily sleep deficit rather than try to function on chronic poor sleep.

Each individual has his or her own requirements for a good night's sleep. Some parents don't sleep well with a child in the bed with them, and others consider it heavenly. We in RC often assume that children are better off sleeping in the same bed, or the same room, as their parents, but a child can be quite restless in sleep. Sweet as it is to sleep together, one parent or both may not get a good night's sleep with a thrashing child in bed with them.

I think, on the whole, it's reassuring to children to sleep with their parents, but after observing many families' sleeping arrangements over decades, I'm convinced that having a child sleep separately from her parents after the first few months of life does *not* erode the parent-child closeness we all want with our children. I know many parents who listened to their children, wrestled and played with them, respected them, and put connection at the center of their parenting decisions, but did not keep the children in bed with them through infancy. Their children are as close to them as families that did have a family bed, and also listened and played well. For a whole decade I was strongly biased toward a family sleeping together, but it slowly became apparent that how parents are during waking time has far more influence on a child's sense of safety and connection than where the child sleeps, and with whom.

For some parents, the family bed feels like a non-negotiable "must" in parenting. Some parents can have a family bed, get good sleep, and stay close to one another. But if one parent can't sleep well, or both parents find they are not arranging other times or places to conduct the relaxed, caring, and sexual parts of their relationship, then having the whole family sleeping together may need to be questioned and changed. In all the juggling parents must do, it's easy to let the family



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bed become an excuse for not getting around to\* facing the hard things that partners must tackle in order to connect when life has been stressful. However much children love to sleep with their folks, making room for adult time together is a strong and legitimate reason for limiting children's nighttime access to their parents' beds.

I think that a healthy child who wakes many times in the night past the age of six months can well use some listening time. Her family is there. She's loved. She's capable of sleeping through the night without eating (unless she's had a traumatic beginning in life, in which case she may need some extra months of nourishment and reassurance to build her health and some reserves).

Parenting, playing, and showing our best to our children go so much better on a good night's sleep. So, a family bed is great if you can get a good night's sleep and stay connected with your partner. But choosing not to sleep with your children (and counseling them on their feelings about that) won't inevitably mean that you have broken their sense of safety in the world. They'll

still crawl in bed with you in the mornings! If sleeping separately, and all night long, makes you a saner parent during the day, go for it!

Whether he's accustomed to sleeping with you or sleeping in another room, your child will, at some point, need your help to face and discharge fears that wake him in the night. All children seem vulnerable to these fears, no matter with whom they do or don't sleep. Your physical presence alone can't take the place of a good, long cry in your arms when fears arise. Your nighttime listening will help your child sleep, safe and secure, without repeated middle-of-the-night reassurance. Children's confidence will grow if you help them with what wakes them.

And, as always, think for yourself!

*Patty Wipfler*  
International Liberation  
Reference Person for Parents  
Palo Alto, California, USA

\* Getting around to means actually.

## Fighting for Ourselves as Catholics

Dear Catholics:

Fighting for ourselves as Catholics (in RC and out) is a significant battle. We need to take it to its origins and take full-out stands against our earliest distresses. This is not the kind of clienting we do in one session, or a dozen. We need to prioritize it, and do it again and again, so that we can see how the recording to “erase” ourselves (as the highest good)—to not need, not want, not fight for ourselves—has been a part of our history.

I want to place this in a larger context: class society. Every liberation movement that has challenged class society has been first threatened and then co-opted. Our religion began as a full-out challenge to slave society. Then it was taken over and merged almost completely with the interests of the ruling forces. A theology that held out selflessness was useful to feudalism, especially if it endorsed giving up a fight in the present (for oneself, the right things) and offered instead something later (heaven) as the hopeful option.

A religion that tried to hold on to the highest ideals of human caring and “all for one” was manipulated and turned into a religion of resignation. Catholic reformers, saints, inspirational leaders of principle, across the centuries, tried valiantly to hold on to the human aspects of Catholicism, but the impetus of the recordings was tremendous. We Catholics need sessions in which we over and over again fight our earliest battles for ourselves, even though the feelings torture us by saying that we’re “selfish” and our hearts break as others fall, die, suffer, while we struggle for ourselves. Doing this can be particularly difficult when we understand that doing even *one* more thing for someone else who needs us can make a profound difference.

Caring deeply about human beings is a human impulse that we need not abandon, and I do not want to minimize the battle to retain it in a capitalist society that sells vain self-preoccupation to us as the highest good. Often we turn away from that in disgust and turn back to fighting the battles for others because that seems (and can be) the most human thing to do in the situation. However, sacrificing for others *must be a choice*. If it is not a choice, if it is only a rigid habit—a recording, an addiction, that leaves us out as human beings—it needs to be challenged.

*Choosing* to prioritize ourselves can feel like a torture chamber, but we must, *in Co-Counseling sessions*, consider putting others aside and face every ounce of heartbreak, loss, and oppression. And we must go back for those precious young people (us)



who gave up and put their own needs aside, when it was the only option they could think of at the time. We can wage full-out battles for ourselves with the same resource, commitment, and love we have marshaled in our fights for others.

Doing this is hard work in today’s society, because the society tries to confuse us. The contradiction to selflessness is not self absorption, nor isolation, nor protection. It must be sought out, in our sessions, in the memories of ourselves as the little ones who were left alone or without a voice, or seen as less than fully significant, fully human, fully wanted. It requires us becoming fierce fighters for our humanity. Tim<sup>1</sup> has modeled this for us and leads us on it resolutely, and we must take it up<sup>2</sup> as central to our liberation as Catholics. We can start by discharging on every image, prayer, family member, group, sermon, that gave us the message that we should leave out our own needs. Even if you never heard a prayer or went to church, your family still absorbed and modeled the recordings. They are still part of your Catholic struggle in a class society that wants you to “serve”—to sacrifice, to give up, to exhaust yourself (in some cases until death).

It is possible to take on<sup>3</sup> this battle. Not alone. It works best with others.

As we pull out of the selfless end of the pattern, it is easy to get lost in figuring out how to “take care of ourselves.” I got a bunch of Catholics laughing at the pretense of “taking care of ourselves” to contradict obligation patterns. The clearest picture I could offer was of disappearing Catholics:

□CB□BH□□□□□□□□

<sup>1</sup> Tim Jackins

<sup>2</sup> Take it up means undertake it.

<sup>3</sup> Take on means engage in.

**COUNSELING PRACTICE**

□□□CB□BH□

“I won’t organize workshops anymore because I am taking care of myself.” “I am dropping out of RC class because I have to take care of myself.” “I cannot lead because I have to take care of myself.” The isolation that steps in can leave people preoccupied with the appearance of a change, which is often just flipping to the other end of the pattern: “comfort,” and addictive pulls not to re-emerge.

So I think, as Catholics, we have to honestly work on both ends of the pattern: the addictive pull to give up on ourselves, and the pseudo-contradictions of “comfort.” This will mean working on early distress and understanding that it’s in the interest of class society to confuse us with both ends. What we want is our full human selves, connected with all other human beings.

You are invited to do this work— with me, us, everyone!

*Joanne Bray*  
*International Liberation*  
*Reference Person for Catholics*  
 Greenwich, Connecticut, USA  
 Reprinted from the RC e-mail discussion list for leaders of Catholics

**Handling Someone You “Can’t Stand”**

On someone you “can’t stand,”<sup>1</sup> try taking it into a Co-Counseling session and first just dramatize hugely and exaggeratedly how awful you feel about them for a few minutes. Then turn around and say the exact opposite for a long while. Make the distinction between the person and the patterns. You can say, “Hey, that pattern must bother them even more than it bothers me. I must help them with it.”

Then, in your contacts with them, go to a position of respect. Ignore their dramatizations at you and treat them seriously and with respect, no matter how they act. They will dramatize a lot to test you out, but they’ll eventually come around<sup>2</sup> and be your close friend. You don’t have to “counsel” them a lot or take them on<sup>3</sup> as a chore; just treat them with respect and it will make a huge difference.

*Harvey Jackins*  
 From a letter written in 1983

<sup>1</sup> “Can’t stand” means strongly dislike, can’t tolerate.  
<sup>2</sup> Come around means re-evaluate.  
<sup>3</sup> Take them on means take responsibility for helping them.

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**Sustaining All Life**

A small sample of the articles:

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“There are many things we need to do, but the situation isn’t desperate. We can be hopeful that human intelligence will prevail and end the irrational treatment of the environment.”  
 —Tim Jackins (page 6)



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## Easy Discharge on the Oppressor Role

Recently I saw some clients discharge easily on the oppressor role. The other people in the meeting also discharged easily, and it seemed easy for them to pay attention. I presented the following thinking right before the sessions:

Those of us in any oppressor role carry stereotypes about the oppressed folks. By stereotypes, I mean the rigid portrayals, images, beliefs, lies, misinformation, prejudices that we attach to the oppressed group. The overall *explicit* meaning of these stereotypes is that there is something strange, abnormal, wrong, fascinating, about them, the oppressed folks. There is also a confusing implication—that those of us in the oppressor role are “normal.” This limits what we can discharge about, because “normal” means “nothing wrong,” “no distress.” It’s like an extra “do not discharge” lid on top of our other recordings. I think this limits our re-emergence.

Back to the demonstrations:

It wasn’t clear to me at first how to counsel, but I made sure that the clients noticed the other people in the room, all in the same oppressor role.

I kept my tone friendly, light, relaxed, and cheerful and asked what was good about being somebody with the particular background that had that oppressor role attached to it, and what they liked about other folks with the same background.

Then I found myself asking what was “typical” of people with that background—again with friendly, light,



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relaxed cheerfulness. People mostly hit one topic right away and stuck to that and discharged easily.

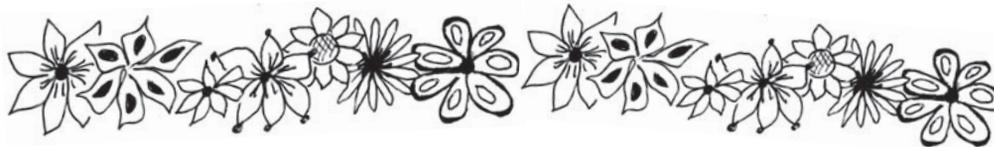
My guess is that the nearly universal habit of focusing on what is “wrong with” people targeted by a particular oppression is so rigid that a relaxed asking about what is “typical” about us—the people in the oppressor role—is a contradiction\* and allows people to discharge fairly easily distresses connected to the oppressor role.

Some clients were pulled to start talking about (their stereotypes of) the oppressed people, but a friendly re-asking about what was “typical” of the client’s own group took care of that.

I couldn’t help but notice how easily people could discharge, how they didn’t dive into feeling bad, and how surprised the look on their faces was.

*Bas Hurkmans*  
Amsterdam, The Netherlands

\* Contradiction to the distress



## Family-Work Leaders Come Together

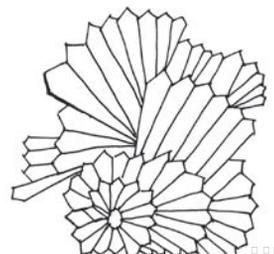
A Family-Work Leaders’ Conference for Central and North America took place in June 2010 near Houston, Texas, USA. It was led by Lorenzo Garcia and Joel Nogic,<sup>1</sup> and included a playday.<sup>2</sup> I asked the participants to send in their observations about the weekend.

<sup>1</sup> Lorenzo Garcia is the International Liberation Reference Person for Chicanos/as. Joel Nogic is the Regional Reference Person for Somerville and Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA, and nearby places.

<sup>2</sup> A playday is a several-hour workshop that includes time for children to do whatever safe activities they want to do, with the encouragement and appreciation of the adults present, and to discharge if they wish. It also includes discharge time for the adults.

After the playday I cried and cried about playing so well with the young person assigned to me. Huge old feelings surfaced about language oppression. I was discharging for several weeks after the workshop. What an opportunity to move myself forward!

*Anita Rocha*  
Seattle, Washington, USA



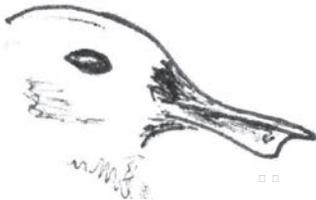
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# COUNSELING PRACTICE

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think well about the young people, see where they struggled, and figure out contradictions. As a middle-class parent it has been easy for me to get distracted by others' judgments about what my children look like or how they act in public. This has interfered with my being relaxed around my children, and I've sometimes counseled them from a place of fear rather than confidence. Noticing how well I could think about the young people as an ally reminded me that I can also think well about my own children. What a wonderful gift this new perspective is.



Christie Gosch  
Denver, Colorado, USA

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It was hopeful having so many people thinking about young people and giving them undivided attention. What a contradiction to so much in our lives! Patty Wipfler<sup>7</sup> once talked about how things could be: a struggling family could make a phone call and a team of five would arrive in complete support. Ahhhh!

I asked my ten-year-old son what his highlights were. Here's his response: "I liked shooting the zombies and almost getting tagged by them. I liked that the whole place was pillows and that people

<sup>7</sup> Patty Wipfler is the International Liberation Reference Person for Parents.

played with us and didn't say, 'Hold on a sec,<sup>8</sup> I need a break,' every five seconds."

K—  
USA



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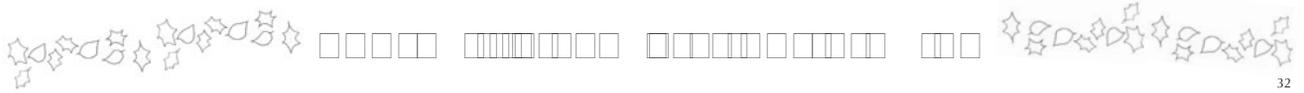
Here is a report from members of the "Elders and Family Work" topic group, led by Dottie Curry<sup>9</sup>:

- My goal is for us elders to know that we are welcome everywhere. We can do classes for allies; we can help with organizing.
- We can decide to be the link to a family before, during, and after a playday or workshop.
- We can organize a playday focusing on people who have grandchildren. There can be sessions for elders in which they push their limits.
- Grandparents and great grandparents are often oppressive; this is a reason to counsel elders.
- Elders need to support each other to hang in there with<sup>10</sup> family work.
- We can get involved in what happens before a playday.
- We can work on our own childhoods.
- We have to make the transition to new family-work leaders.
- We can help elders remember how they played when they were young and get them engaged. If disabled, they can be sideline instigators; they can be welcomers; they can discharge on where they might get hurt.
- We can encourage parents to share with grandparents about special time. We can give significant workshop jobs to elders, and counsel elders on age oppression, getting involved with family work, and not holding back.
- Elders have direct connections with young people—with grandchildren, nieces, nephews, and so on. They are not retired from life or from the general population. Discouraged feelings can come up for elders, but much is possible that is different from what elders traditionally do.

<sup>8</sup> Hold on a sec means wait a second.

<sup>9</sup> Dottie Curry is the International Liberation Reference Person for Elders.

<sup>10</sup> Hang in there with means continue with, not abandon.



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### Recognizing Distress

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### Complete Index to Present Time Available Online

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*The following ten articles are from a discussion, on the RC e-mail discussion list for leaders of women, about how racism has affected women targeted by racism.*

## Women Targeted by Racism

Dear Sisters,

**A**lysia Tate, the Regional Reference Person for Illinois, USA, initiated a discussion with me about making more space for women targeted by racism on the RC e-mail discussion list for leaders of women.

She consulted with other women targeted by racism. Then she and I worked out the questions below. We wanted only women targeted by racism to answer them, for at least a week. White women were asked to discharge on not responding, on not jumping in. (What do we white women need to work on to be thoughtful listeners?) They were also asked to consult with me if they wanted to put anything else on the list.

This has been a wonderful opportunity to challenge racism and internalized racism, which are primary divisions among women.

### QUESTIONS

*How has racism affected you as a woman (female) and in your relationships with white women (females)?*

*How has racism affected you as a female in fighting for yourself as a female along race and gender lines?*

Thank you, Alysia, for your leadership and commitment.



BLAKE HOUSE SEEDLINGS • NANCY LEMON

*Diane Balsler*  
International Liberation Reference Person for Women  
Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts, USA

## What's Working Is to Be Honest

I want the white women in my life to fully know both me and my struggles. I want to be able to show them where I need a hand.<sup>1</sup> One of the most important women in my life, my mother (who died two years ago), was a white woman. My father is black.

Racism, and how I have internalized it, push me either to

try to accommodate white women or to give up on them. Whether they are friends, Co-Counselors, or co-workers, I try to make our interactions convenient for them. That could mean not expecting them to come to my part of town for Co-Counseling sessions, bending my schedule to fit a time when they can get to a meeting, and so on. After a while I get resentful about it and just go away. I feel discouraged and lose hope

that things can change (that's the internalized racism).

When we disagree about something, it's hard for me to say what I think because I don't want to offend them. Usually they speak first. They explain why they are right and then ask, "What do you think?" I get scared to share a different opinion, afraid they may not like me anymore. (Often, if I'm not "nice," they don't like me much at all.)

<sup>1</sup> A hand means some help.

*continued . . .*

... continued

In my experience, a white woman's strengths (as well as her distresses) set the overall tone of our relationship. Because of the effects of racism, I go along with whatever way she assumes our relationship should go, even if it feels strange to me. This can include how much contact we have, listening to "helpful" suggestions about how to rewrite a report at work, and so on. It feels difficult to slow down and think about what I really want, and to tell her. She may pursue me only when she needs something, and be passive the rest of the time. In my professional life, a lot of

white women want to work with me because of my "diversity" and how great I will be for their organization or program. They don't call me and ask how I am doing with my organization or program, or how they can support me. In RC, I may get calls or e-mails only when a Co-Counselor can tell<sup>2</sup> that I could be useful to her.

What's working for me is to be honest in Co-Counseling sessions with my white sisters. I am learning to tell them when I am upset and

not worry so much whether or not it is my restimulation. I trust that with discharge we will figure that out. It is clear to me that getting in a fight with a white woman I love, and discharging our way toward a relationship that works for both of us, is better than being quiet or going away—because I do want to be closer to everybody. Some of my strongest allies against racism and my internalized racism have been white women.

*Alysia Tate*  
Chicago, Illinois, USA



<sup>2</sup> Tell means perceive.

## It's a Daily Battle

I am a Native Canadian and Southern (U.S.) black female. For many years I gave up\* being female. It began when we settled on our home reserve, after I was six. The girls on the reserve wouldn't let me play with them, and at school I didn't get chased by the boys. I played street games with the boys from the reserve—street hockey, lacrosse, kick the can, Indian rubber, and so on. From ages eight to eleven the girls consistently bullied me. They did it in pairs or groups. They even got help from older children and young adults. I was called names. Some were racial slurs; others were put-downs about my lack of femininity, making it clear that I was not feminine in any way, shape, or form.

All the way through to grade seven, I was the biggest girl in my class. I was the biggest young

\* Gave up means abandoned.

person until fifth or sixth grade. Then the boys started to catch up to me.

It is difficult for me to know that I am female before I am a person targeted by racism. I think that I appear to be a female, yet I am often addressed as sir or mister. Even with the hourglass figure I have had since age ten, I have been and continue to be mistaken for a male.

When I am noticed as a female, it takes a highly sexualized form. My body is made a focal point of male distress. Men target me as a slut, easy, highly sexual, because I am a black woman. They wipe their confusion all over me. Who would want to be female with that coming at you all the time?

In my relationship with white females, there is always a sense of one up, one down. White females have internalized superiority patterns, and I have internalized inferiority patterns. In terms of my appearance, I am brown skinned and have Afro hair, full lips, and a broader nose. I have always been full figured. My appearance does not conform to the aesthetic norms of the dominant mainstream society. This puts me one down, with white females one up. It is difficult to have a relationship with a female who is always "superior" to you—a female who often feels comfortable enough to let you know that she is



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superior. It is true that we both get hit by sexism, but white females have difficulty owning up to their oppressor patterns.

It's a daily battle. I have white women crowding in front of me in a line-up; pushing into my personal space as if I don't exist or they don't see me; being too attentive or not attentive at all; acting scared of me; pulling their purses in close; walking around me or crossing the street; serving

others instead of me; misunderstanding, based on assumptions they've made about me or a situation we've been in—the list goes on. It's been going on all my life, and for my ancestors before me. It feels hopeless and discouraging to *really exist* as a fully female Native and black female.

*Kerrie Johnston*  
North Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

## Internalized White Sexism Turns into Racism

**I** am a Japanese woman who migrated to Australia when I was a young adult.

According to racist messages, the status of us Japanese women has not reached Western standards. The message is that we are behind the times and should be ashamed. We are seen as powerless at the hands of our men.

Both white women and white men stereotype Asian women as submissive to men, passive, and with little power over their destiny. This image is nothing like what I know of my mother, aunts, and female peers. Even if there were some truth in the stereotype, white women's lack of humility would dissuade me from working with white women on such issues.

Sexism, of course, places obstacles in women's lives. However, we women are inherently intelligent and powerful. I am not confused about that. White women, on the other hand, even when they understand RC liberation theory, can seem unable to genuinely believe it about themselves. I even wonder if they genuinely like each other, or their men.

White women need to start respecting us women targeted by racism for our depth and strength. Perhaps because of white sexism, white women seem to fear what they cannot comprehend. They refuse to notice us, or they see our differences as incompetence rather than as assets.

Like many women targeted by racism, I use RC to overcome the effects of racism. However, white racism dictates that we women targeted by racism be victims. This sometimes gets in the way of our white female counsellors when we are fighting for ourselves. When our white allies are blind to our humanness

and cannot counsel us from a place of our power, our sessions (and our RC relationships with them) can become about their gratification, and their whiteness takes up all the space between us. When I am unable to contradict this, I feel hopeless and give up on them.\*

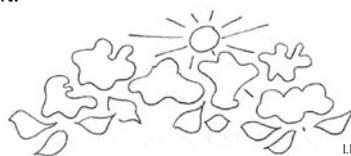
This is how internalised white sexism turns itself into racism, targets us, and sets women apart from each other.

*Rie Shiraishi*  
Sydney, New South Wales,  
Australia

\* Give up on them means quit hoping for anything from them.

## Prolonging Vibrant Good Health

The fact that aging and death are inherited misfunctions, and *may* have served a useful purpose for simpler forms of life, should be no reason for a thoughtful person not to take a firm stand for the possibility of prolonging good health, *vibrant good health*, indefinitely. To do otherwise would be, it seems to me, to distort all our other thinking in the area with heavy discouragement arising from our surrender on this point.



*Harvey Jackins*  
From *The List*, page 191

## What White Women Need to Work On

**A**s a female I've been systematically treated as if I am less than human, and then told again and again that the males of my group are the ones who are really oppressed.

The following are some ways I've experienced racism as a black woman (I am focusing here on racism, not on the resulting internalized racism):

- 1) I am "unmarriageable." Not only am I labeled unattractive and unworthy of male attention, I also do not have the same access as white women to the institution of marriage and its economic and social benefits.
- 2) Western clothing does not fit my body type—the top of my body is five sizes smaller than the bottom of my body.
- 3) Through intergenerational brutalization that began in slavery, I was trained to work myself to death for the sole benefit of others. This is exploited in most of my interactions with other humans (in paid work, RC work, and other situations).
- 4) I am often treated like a "bitch," a threatening presence that needs to be contained and/or "put in her place." This occurs most often when I don't display the internalized oppression that black women are expected to have—when I don't caretake, reassure, erase myself, hide my true thoughts, or act like I am less intelligent, powerful, or worthy than others.

White women often dominate my relationships with them by emotional manipulation—by their "needs" for reassurance, to be taken care of, to be protected. They seem to feel entitled to having these artificial needs met and have sometimes behaved viciously when I didn't agree to honor their "needs." All this is hidden under the guise of being the smaller, nicer, and less powerful one in the relationship.

I fight and win most things that I can stay hopeful enough to take on,<sup>1</sup> but I mostly fight alone. By fighting alone I mean that it is hard to find anyone willing or able to fight as hard as I do, and truly with me. I can plow forward, and others move along following my momentum, but that's not the same as

a true partnership in the fight—whether it's a fight for my re-emergence or a wide-world fight to end oppression. As I age, the isolation around fighting seems to get worse.

I'd like to pose an additional question:

*What do white women need to work on to liberate themselves from anti-black material<sup>2</sup> and partner with women of African heritage to end black women's oppression?*

All oppressor roles compromise integrity and distort the perception of reality. White women, for example, co-exist with distortions about exercising their power. They do exercise considerable power, but they do it indirectly. They also have patterns of dependency on men and are unable to see how choosing to depend on men impacts all women.

I think white women would benefit greatly from systematic discharge on the following:

- *The addictive need to feel protected.* Most of the white women where I work get males to escort them through the supposedly dangerous streets of my black neighborhood. We black women are not perceived as vulnerable to harm, nor are we given similar protection. White women's sense of being entitled to protection comes from the sell-outs<sup>3</sup> of white female identity: dependency, daintiness, the "need" for comfort and reassurance.
- *Access to and dependency on white male wealth.* Many white women pretend to be less powerful than they are. They do this in order to maintain access to white males and the world's resources that are currently hoarded by white males. The pretending seems to be present whether a particular white female has access to a particular white male's money or not. I suggest that white women work on all the places where they don't fight because if they did they could lose access to one or more men in their lives. I also recommend that they work on the reality of black women not having access to men. I find that white women tend to glaze over and move on rather than stay and look there. I think that

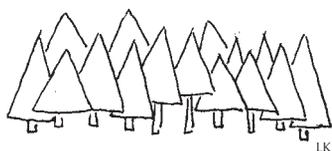
<sup>1</sup> Take on means confront and do something about.

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

<sup>3</sup> Sell-outs means betrayals.

they have something big to face about their own compromises, and the connection between their having men and black women not having men.

- *Preoccupation with thinness, as contemporary racism.* Our society's current preoccupation with thinness is racism. Fat oppression is the newest face of eugenics, with thin people as the perfect human specimens entitled to the world's resources. Fat people, and particularly fat women, are the new disgusting and diseased invaders who are threatening the well-being of society. Fat people are targeted with extermination-like recordings: either they get rid of their fat or they get pushed out of society. Although there is a thin veil of multi-racial inclusion and freedom of choice covering this modern version of eugenics, racially oppressed and recent immigrant groups are disproportionately targeted with fat oppression. Black women's bodies are at the center of our society's anti-fat leanings. Meanwhile, white women agree to be preoccupied with thinness (and access to societal power). By being preoccupied with access to societal power (comfort, protection, and access to male wealth), they have agreed to be racist.



- *Romanticizing and fetishizing black men.* White women need to work on their sexual attractions to black men and their irrational fears of black men. These are two sides of the same phenomenon, and both lead white women to stop thinking and to agree to anti-black-female positions and policies. Time and time again, when I have asked white women to look at some aspect of sexism that is experienced by black women, they are blinded by their fears of being racist toward black men. White women can also get lost in their romantic fantasies about black men. We are all trained to attach odd longings and hopefulness to black men, which is a very different set of recordings than those we are trained to attach to black women. If white women will drain their attractions to and fears of black men, they will be able to stay and look at the reality of the sexism experienced by black women.

I encourage more women targeted by racism to take up<sup>4</sup> this third question (modifying where necessary for their racial/ethnic group) and offer their thoughts, as counselor and leader, to white women.

Nikki Stewart  
Washington, D.C., USA

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<sup>4</sup> Take up means address.

## Racism from White Women Like Sexism from Men

The way racism affects me as a female is related to my mind. My mind is often convinced that I am not as smart as someone else. I can doubt my thinking when I am with white people who act confident and right. (I can do this around other groups, too, but my doubt is less overwhelming.)

Some white women seem convinced that my mind isn't as smart as theirs. Then if I'm able to get my mind to think a little and actually express some thoughts, things can get competitive or mean.

It's like what I occasionally experience on the basketball court during RC games. I'm a good athlete, and I play basketball well. When I play with a group of RCers, the men often start off gentle with me. When I dribble around them or beat them to the ball (which I assume humiliates them because I'm a "girl"), they get harder on me. It can even get a little dangerous. As we all know, being beat by a girl can feel humiliating to males.

What I'm saying is that the racism that I sometimes experience around white women is like the sexism I sometimes experience around men.

Sparky Griego  
Santa Fe, New Mexico, USA

## Extremely Difficult to Get Angry

I am a South Asian, Tamil, working-class, immigrant, wide-world-changing female and mother.

Racism affects me in many ways. One of the most profound is that I can easily fall into the servicing role with friends, co-workers, and Co-Counsellors. I didn't even notice this until I became aware of oppression theory in RC.

I can play the role of nice, accommodating, friendly, quiet Asian woman without realising I am doing so. In the process, my strengths—which include perceptive, clear thinking; abundance of physical and emotional strength; and loudness—get lost.

Many white women do not hear or trust my thinking. However, they consistently compliment me on my niceness, loveliness, hair, or some other superficial part of me. Many times at work I will say

something or make a suggestion that will not be heard at the time but will later be taken as a new idea or good solution. I am currently too timid and polite to interrupt this behaviour.

White women, especially at work, show me their upset about racism on a one-to-one basis, but in public they don't seem to notice it and stay silent.

I have tremendous fear that if I were really to show myself and my thinking, or be serious about myself and stand tall, I would not be liked, I would be abandoned, I could be "sent back." This has actually happened to people. It is a reality. As an immigrant, I have internalised messages that tell me to be grateful, silent, and accepting at all costs.

I find it extremely difficult to get angry and have rarely done so. The few times I have

shouted at my children, they have listened and laughed, or said afterward, "You never get angry; do you think you need a session, Mum?"

I have to repeatedly decide to stay in RC and discharge. Staying and noticing contradict my silence, and my acceptance of racism. I have started to make a daily decision not to be a victim to my distress and, whether or not I see racism in their faces, to trust my white Co-Counsellors.

So far it has worked when female Co-Counsellors identify racism or sexism and ask questions, when they show interest in their tone, and if they show that they are affected, too. Female Co-Counsellors' discharging when I am client helps me notice that racism and sexism are real and that I have allies in the fight.

It is useful for me to notice that women targeted by racism can be and are angry from a position of reclaiming power.

Having this space on the e-mail discussion list has given me a lot of room to think and discharge about racism and sexism. Each session I have had during these two weeks has been with a strong contradiction.\* I have cried more consistently than ever before. I want to try to get to some of the rage.

*Bernadette Chelvanayagam*  
Exeter, Devon, England

\* Contradiction to distress



EASTERN WASHINGTON, USA, FARM (WATERCOLOR) • KATIE KAUFFMAN

## A Refugee from My Own Self

There is a place where I don't want to communicate. I want to stay in my own private bubble and in that way control what happens to me. Letting the oppressors know how I have been hurt feels as if it lets them win. However, to refuse to show how I have been hurt sacrifices the possibility of creating the changes that would allow real connection. That is too big a sacrifice, so I will write—but I cannot do it without tears and shaking.

I have just been to a middle-class workshop. White English middle-class females are the ones I hate the most. (I think my silence is also about the degree of hate that I feel.)

The amount of hate leaves me feeling like a hateful person. This leaves the knot tight. There are many stories from my life that could make my position of hating seem reasonable and intelligible. These include being ignored; having what I say heard only when a white woman says it; being patronized (“you have done well”), implying what a surprise that is. However, in the end it's my problem that I feel a bundle of hate.

I hate feeling less than. I hate the fight to create a pseudo-solution that gives me the appearance of being bright, impressive, aware, and perceptive but is all to wall off feeling “structurally” inferior. If I display positive attributes, it is hard to believe in them when I think I have forced myself to be those things as protection, rather than just *being* those things.

I hate white people for being impressed, and I hate them for not being impressed. I hate them for thinking they are superior, and I hate my vulnerability to thinking they are superior.

At core, racism, sexism, and young people's oppression squeezed out the time and space I needed to discover and know who I am. It is as if I am a refugee from my own self, having gathered up as much as I could, and a fraction of who I am, to continue on.

Growing up in a colony forced me to use my brilliant mind to find justifications for the apparent superiority of the coloniser—in particular, the

superiority of little white mainly-English girls. I always liked to think I didn't believe in my “inferiority,” but the energy I put into presenting a self that was not inferior suggests that somewhere it sunk in. My defiance, and the desperation attached to that defiance, would also suggest that there was a constant battle to keep from being submerged by “structural” inferiority.

One clear and easy-to-remember example was when I was a seven-year-old struggling to find an explanation for the sexism and racism of a slightly older English boy from a colonising family. I had had most of the ideas, and done most of the work, for organising a

club that we would be part of. He named the club, made himself president, made one of his sisters vice-president, and gave his baby sister some other major role. It was so outrageous that I was frozen in shock. I went away to try to understand what was going on.<sup>1</sup> With no one to speak to, the explanation I came up with<sup>2</sup> was that as an English male, he could be asked to fight in a war and needed to have privileges in advance to compensate for that. His presidency remained intact, and I had “triumphed” by finding an explanation for that outrage. What a cruel use of my creativity.

Coming to England as a thirteen-year-old, I more consciously constructed that way of being. One thing I did was swiftly learn to speak the English of middle-class England clearly and well. While I did not believe that the girls in my school could not understand me, I knew they did not know how to organise their minds in order to understand me. Their blank, uncomprehending stares were massive clues to that. They stared at me not unkindly, but with nothing to say. I was always close to tears. When they asked, “How are you?” it was in the tone of a terrified person doing a duty, and that only permitted the swift answer, “I'm okay.”

My solution at the time was to always do well enough to keep them off my back but not so well as to be a star in what would then be their firmament.

*continued . . .*

***It hurts to be stolen from and then given something with which to survive. And then be expected to be grateful for the small portion of what was yours in the first place. I think the phrase is “add insult to injury.”***

<sup>1</sup> Going on means happening.

<sup>2</sup> Came up with means thought of.

## LIBERATION

... continued

Not being seen or understood because of oppression led me to feel unintelligible and to accept a level of isolation as normal.

As I write this, I wonder that I had any time or space to breathe. What I did do was enjoy the “mental gymnastics.” I knew they were in contrast to real thinking, which is something that you evolve at your own pace and according to your own agenda.

Being light skinned and middle class has meant that I have been targeted more by the patronising version of racism—patronage and being made use of. I have always sought to distinguish between being useful and being used, but I am not yet confident of my judgment there.

I have been surrounded by a type of kindness that white women, because of not having had to struggle for their very existence, can offer. When I was younger, it was clearly a kindness that was presumed to lead to being owned and controlled. Older, and as a worker, I was often the black person people would hire, as they could tolerate “my sort.” And when I did not behave as expected, white people, and white women in particular, would dramatise at me how betrayed they felt.

I learned that with racism I was fighting from a point behind the starting line. I always had to create a framework or context first, before the fight could be had. Without that context, the battle could more easily be judged “unreasonable.”

Where don't I fight? In the light of<sup>3</sup> the above, it's clearly where I am most likely to bring down more oppression.

It comes back to having to do so much thinking because I have internalised that I am “wrong.” Being female and targeted by racism, in and of itself, renders me wrong. To have to clear so much away before I even start leaves me tired and unable to relax.

I have put energy into reducing the number of places where I can be got at,<sup>4</sup> rather than just living my life. The curse of this position is that I don't really let myself have people, because I am putting so much energy into protecting myself from them.

Racism and sexism have made me try to always be one step ahead of the oppression and the oppressor. The big challenge is to turn and face them head-

<sup>3</sup> In light of means considering.

<sup>4</sup> Got at means attacked.

on,<sup>5</sup> to face the devastation that has been wreaked upon me and my people. I was at the funeral of the woman whose family took our family in<sup>6</sup> when we were first in England. She and her birth family had been colonisers in Guyana. They were kind to us, but always in the role of benefactors. My mother insisted we be better than they, in whatever way presented itself, as a buffer against our presumed inferiority. The woman died at ninety-two; my mother at seventy-six. My mother competed fiercely with her right to the end, to combat the enforced neediness.

We moved to England because of colonial and post-colonial greed. Our country was moving toward independence and a socialist government. That was “unacceptable,” so the country was destabilised and eventually destroyed in terms of becoming an independent country.

It hurts to be stolen from and then given something with which to survive. And then be expected to be grateful for the small portion of what was yours in the first place. I think the phrase is “add insult to injury.”

I like the fierceness, steely determination, and capacity to think “down to the wire”<sup>7</sup> that all this hurt has produced in me. I plan on regaining relaxation and a deep sense of ownership of all that is mine—particularly me.

Dorann van Heeswijk  
London, England

<sup>5</sup> Head-on means in direct opposition.

<sup>6</sup> Took our family in means took our family into their home.

<sup>7</sup> “Down to the wire” means up to the very last instant.



*It's here!*

### **Black Re-emergence No. 11!**

A small sample of the articles in this issue—

“There Were No Slaves,” by Barbara Love

“Discharging Rage and Terror,” by Laurenti Wright

“How RC Changed My Life—Letter from Prison,”

by Earl C. Amin

“Relationships Key in Community Building,”

by Bafana Matsebula

“Dealing with What May Be Racism,” by Rachel Noble

\$3.00, plus postage and handling

To order, see page 109 of this *Present Time*.

## How I Experience White Women's Racism

Thank you for this space to express myself. It feels terrifying, but here goes:

It has been my experience that some white women want a Lakota\* "in their cupboard" so they can count me as a "friend." This makes them feel like they are not racist. They often act like they doubt my intelligence, my "mental health," and my world view. They fear my outrage and urgency about the genocide of my people, yet they are fascinated with my passion and want me in their corner. Once there, I am expected to work on their agenda, because "they know best." They "go victim" and need constant reassurances of my loyalty to their agendas.

Some highly-educated white women write themselves government employment positions through government agencies that are funding streams. Some of these women in the non-profit realm use Indigenous populations to fund their programs. They value me as a client, or a volunteer workhorse. Some owning-class white women seek unpaid allies to help them protect Indigenous homelands that they themselves occupy.

Some white women foster-parent Indigenous children. They reinforce confusion and doubt about Indigenous identity, because they believe that "real Indians" are poor, dark, drunk, and traditional.

I worry that some white women do not believe in the goodness of my men. Some of them view my men as a fetish for their spiritual or sexual fantasies.

Where I live, many working- and owning-class white women confuse sexual liberation with liberation from sexism. Their hopelessness, and compliance with the rigid society and the expanding U.S. culture of sexual "raunch," feel impossible to break through, because they "know best" as community leaders. This restimulates my internalized genocide distress and triggers discouragement, frustration, and anxiety.

*Nancy Kile*  
Sturgis, South Dakota, USA

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\* The Lakota, a Native American tribe, are part of a confederation of seven related Sioux tribes and speak one of the three major dialects of the Sioux language. Originally living by the Great Lakes, they were forced by encroaching European Americans to migrate west to lands in both North and South Dakota (USA).

## The Devastating Effects of Assimilation

I am a mixed-race Chicana, fifty-two years old, raised Catholic. My mother was raised poor and rural in northern New Mexico (USA). She considers herself to be Hispanic. My father was raised poor, white, Midwestern (USA) rural.

Calling myself a Chicana has been controversial within my family. My mother does not connect to that identity and

has refused to adopt it. Once when I noted that we were of Mexican heritage, she went to some length to dispute it.

Although surrounded by white people while growing up, I spent much of my youth hanging out<sup>1</sup> exclusively with people targeted by racism, primarily Chicanos/as. I had much in common with those

friends, but the pull of assimilation and the internalized racism made the relationships difficult. My sisters and I were teased mercilessly for being "coyotes" (half wolf and half dog) and were constantly told and shown that we did not belong. We experienced the same mistreatment from both my mother's and my father's families.

*continued . . .*

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<sup>1</sup> In this context, hanging out means associating.

## LIBERATION

... continued

In discharging about contributing to this discussion, I find myself returning again and again to the devastating effects of assimilation. To begin to put it into words: A day does not go by that I don't consider how/if I am acting within assimilation patterns and to what extent they are reinforcing white middle-class notions/patterns or taking me further from my roots and an understanding of myself as a Chicana. This scrutiny encompasses every facet of my life, from the way I dress, to what I eat, to where I live, to how I speak, to what I choose to do with my life, to my choice of friends, to what I write about in my fiction. It is physically and emotionally draining, and largely invisible. Sometimes, most times, I cannot even tell that I am doing it. The fact that assimilation is encouraged and rewarded by capitalist society, and that I have been a recipient of that largesse, means I also fight feelings of being a *vendida* (sell-out<sup>2</sup>) of my own people.

<sup>2</sup> Sell-out means betrayer.

I remember how proud I was when I graduated with my master's degree, and yet how empty and lonely I felt. This confused me, because college is commonly held up to Chicanos/as as the way to get ahead. I feel constantly on guard and on display, like all my actions in some way contribute to either a positive or a negative view of Chicanas, and like I must do my part to ensure that we are looked upon in a favorable light. I feel an unrelenting obligation to make the world a better place for my people, without allowing myself to be part of the equation.

My first intimate look at a relationship between a white woman and an Hispanic woman was the relationship I saw between my mother and her mother-in-law, my paternal grandmother. On a trip to Minnesota (USA), where my grandmother lived, my mother accidentally slammed the car door on my grandmother's hand. In the midst of her pain, and my mother's rush to help

her, I detected a smoldering, unstated resentment at and hatred of my mother. I was thirteen; before that, I had never witnessed anything remotely similar. I felt hatred for my grandmother and protective of my mother. I also saw how much my mother tried to get along with my grandmother, how poorly she felt about herself, and how much of herself she had to give away in order to try to make things right. Looking back, I see how much that fit within the history of our family—my grandmother (my mother's mother) and my great-aunt were maids in white people's homes and in hotels.

I have had strong relationships with white women, both within and outside Co-Counseling. However, I think that our relationships thrive mainly because we agree that either I will remain passively quiet about racism or I will act in accordance with their preconceived and stereotypical notions of what it means to be Chicana/Latina/Hispana (many women don't know the difference). As long as our relationship is structured around their limitations, as long as it is bounded by their notions of what a safe relationship is, then all goes well (though obviously in a patterned way).

White women seem to derive much comfort from me as a light-skinned, assimilated, educated Chicana who doesn't show anger. As a result, I have felt despair that white women can truly be allies. They often seem to have slotted me into their notions of what a Chicana is or isn't. They seem to feel special and different for having made a friend of



ALISA LEMIRE BROOKS

me. I feel sometimes as if I am their trophy. If I challenge the status quo in any way, they go on the defensive and blame me, or quiet me so that they can avoid feeling discomfort. Either response breeds confusion and lack of trust.

As a Catholic Chicana, I sometimes struggle to know what I think. Sometimes white women act as if they want to know my thinking, which is generally a contradiction.<sup>3</sup> However, they often lose patience with the time it takes for me to put my thinking out. In the wide world, they treat me as if I'm stupid, a dupe who blindly follows what others command (Catholic oppression). In Co-Counseling, they try to turn me into a client, because I don't appear to think fast enough or act wittily enough to make them feel comfortable about where they themselves struggle to be seen and heard. Sometimes when I share something new that I have fought hard to learn, they treat it as if they had discovered it first and that therefore my thinking doesn't count. It's subtle and patterned, but definitely there.

White women's overwhelming patterned sense of rightness in the way they view the world permeates most of my relationships with them. My job is to get in line with that, to make them feel better about themselves, and to do so quickly or risk being left behind.

The current societal climate emphasizes the mistaken notion that we live in a post-racial

world. This misinformation reinforces apathy and complacency—I feel discouraged about being able to turn the tide on that.

Capitalist society conveys the message that the liberation of all people is less important than how beautiful and thin you are and how much money you make.

I fight feelings of unworthiness and insignificance, which make it seem as if fighting for myself is fruitless. My

struggles have been made to seem like my own personal failings rather than the result of oppressive conditions.

It feels both liberating and scary to show how much these issues continue to affect my movement in the world and the ways in which I view myself. It offers an invaluable opportunity to keep moving forward.

*Catalina Bartlett*  
Bloomington, Indiana, USA

More from this discussion by women targeted by racism, about how racism has affected their lives, will appear in the next *Sisters* magazine (the RC journal about women's liberation).

## Advice About Living

I don't think I have any new directions for you. Just live frugally, plan your life and stick to your plans, do a good job on your job, do a good job in your Co-Counseling, keep your environment beautiful, and make new friends all the time. I wish I had time to follow my own advice.

*Harvey Jackins*  
From a letter written in 1976



DERBYSHIRE, ENGLAND •  
ANICA GAVRILOVIC

## Present Time Cover Quotes

Did you save an upbeat quote  
A quickly scribbled ink-smear'd note  
Tucked away but not forgot?  
It was good; it hit the spot.\*  
We might use it for the cover,  
Choose it over any other.  
Send it here  
We'll smile and cheer.

\* It hit the spot means it was exactly right.

<sup>3</sup> Contradiction to distress

## Artists' Liberation

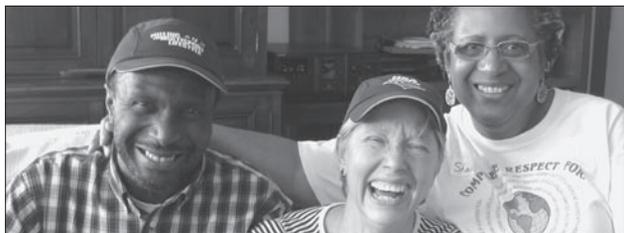
Artists challenge oppressive societies and often play key roles in revolutions. They create communities. They reflect what is true about the world. It's time to move artists' liberation forward!

Last summer I met in a daylong workshop with artist leaders in the Boston (USA) Regions.\* I was reminded of how important it is to organize collectively as artists. We each shared what was important to us as artists and the role that art played in our lives. Talking about ourselves, and openly caring about our work and one another as artists, contradicted the harsh isolation and invalidation of artists' oppression.

Artists' oppression is embedded in capitalism and class oppression. Scarcity and "better than/worse than" competition isolate us artists and leave us vulnerable. Many of us cope with being marginalized by seeing ourselves as special.

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



PAMELA OATIS

As with other sections of the working class, the system exploits and capitalizes on our labor. Like other sections of the middle class, we are set up to be separate from and feel superior to the working class. Art is often viewed as a white middle-class activity in which only a select few can participate. Without discharge and a clear perspective, our range of choices becomes narrower. We become more and more isolated. Many of us quit or restrict our practicing of art because we can't figure out how to make it work.

Oppression and internalized oppression tend to separate us from the larger, mainstream community. This allows us some space to create, and have our own minds, but the accompanying fears and rigidities can push us to be alone, defensive, and confused about the need to organize collectively.

Many of us Co-Counselors identify as artists and would like to organize our lives around making art. We can work on the early distresses that set us up for the later battles. We can decide what we want our lives to look like and the role we want art to play in them. We can build alliances. We can play a role in ending all oppression, while being creative and well connected to others.

*Emily Feinstein*

Brooklyn, New York, USA

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

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## Living Outside

KK

I am the Information Coordinator for RCers who live outside of their original cultures. I encourage anyone who lives or has lived outside of her or his original culture to contact me so that we can share our experiences.

As an Information Coordinator, I reply to people who initiate contact. I also call topic groups at workshops (and encourage others to do the same).

### MIGRANTS

Many people who live outside of their original cultures are migrants. Some have migrated within their own countries (for example, someone of African heritage moving from the rural U.S. South<sup>1</sup> to a large city in California, or someone from a Spanish-speaking urban neighborhood moving to a white suburb). Many migrants move to a new country—to escape repression,

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<sup>1</sup> The U.S. South is the states in the United States that seceded from the Union from 1860 to 1861, leading to the U.S. Civil War.

because their lives are at risk, to remain with their parents. Some migrants leave behind parents, siblings, spouses, partners, and children. Some migration is legal, and some is not.

Migrants are a large group. According to a United Nations estimate there are 214 million migrants worldwide, an increase of thirty-seven percent in two decades. Their numbers grew by forty-one percent in Europe and eighty percent in North America. Migrants sent

home \$317 billion (U.S.) in 2009. That is three times more than the world's total of foreign aid. In at least seven countries, money sent back home equals more than twenty-five percent of the gross domestic product. Because migration also affects future generations, its impact is even greater than the above numbers reveal.

### WHO AM I?

I'm a white suburban middle-class Catholic USer. I have lived off and on here in Asia since 1978, now having spent more than twenty-three years of my adult life here. I've been married to Mark Gau, a Taiwanese Chinese man, for twenty-eight years. My ancestors migrated from Ireland to Spain and then to the United States. When I was in college, my parents and two younger sisters lived for thirteen months in Germany, when my father got a job transfer there (it was his lifetime dream for us to live in another country). One sister lived for two years as an expatriate in Belgium. Two of my husband's brothers and their families have lived in other countries. Someone in our extended family was an illegal immigrant for over a decade. I am a consultant who works with multinational corporations on intercultural communication and relations.

I love that my experiences have made me bi-cultural. I look like a typical white middle-class USer, but I can communicate and build relationships in an Asian/Chinese way. I've not only learned to function in a different cultural environment; I've gained a lot of perspective on myself and my original culture.

My background would lead me to pretend that everything is okay and to expect life to be predictable. Hong Kong is a huge city, located in the midst of developing countries that are much poorer. Chinese culture

tends to be business focused and value close family and friendship networks. People show emotions even less than I was reared to show. In no way did my growing up prepare me for life in this new culture!

### DISTRESSES

I have found isolation to be a major distress for those of us who live outside of our original cultures ("I'm different," "I don't do things the way others do them"). Being connected and talking about our experiences are key to our re-emergence.

We learn to fit in (assimilate) and suppress and hide parts of ourselves that don't fit. We tend not to ask for help, because the people who grew up in the new culture likely will not want to hear about our problems fitting in, and people back "home" have difficulty relating to our struggles. This can add to our feelings of isolation. (I led a workshop on this topic, have interviewed some people about it, and have been counseling steadily on it. Please contact me if you would like to be interviewed.)

### WHAT DO WE NEED TO REMEMBER?

Here are some things that those of us who live outside of our original culture need to remember:

*That we belong.*

*To be proud of our original culture.*

*To be proud of our new culture (especially the "third culture" that we and our families are creating).*

*That feelings will come up about the new culture.*

*That appreciation is at the core of successful relationships. We need to learn as much as we can about the lives of people in the new culture, figure out how to support people, and work hard on our relationships with them.*

*To show our struggles. We can (thoughtfully) let people from the new culture see how they can support us.*

*continued . . .*



NANCY FAULSTICH

## LIBERATION

... continued

*To counsel with people who already know us* (perhaps on the phone). They can spot how the new culture restimulates our chronic distresses and help us discharge.

*To teach RC* (at least naturalized RC). If we hang out<sup>2</sup> enough with people, eventually they'll tell us what they feel.

*To find support*—in a formal RC support group or an informal group. I've found support at the American Chamber of Commerce, at dinner parties, and in roundtable discussion groups.

*That people might have feelings about us*—about how we do things; about our class background (both personally and in terms of the economic and political power of our country). We can counsel on this so that we can keep building relationships.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCHARGE

Here are some questions for discharge:

What is your relationship to your new culture? What is your commitment to it?

<sup>2</sup> Hang out means spend relaxed, unstructured time.

What is your relationship to your original culture? What is your commitment to it?

In what ways are you proud of your original people? What's difficult about being from that group? What do you love about your original culture? What don't you like about it?

What pushed you to migrate? What pulled you toward the new culture?

What do you love about the new culture? What don't you like about it?

What are your feelings about languages and your competence with them?

What are your feelings about class? What kind of economy did your original culture have?

What are your feelings about imperialism? Which of your cultures has colonized others, been imperialist—either politically or economically? Which has been colonized?

Starting with your earliest memory, when did you notice and interact with people from other cultures?

What is your migration story?

What is the migration story of your ancestors and other relatives?

What are the "weird," different, and difficult things you've had to do? In the early days they might involve learning how to shop for food, eat locally, take transportation, get housing, use a cash machine. In the long-term they might involve raising children, dealing with the medical system, getting work, celebrating holidays, making friends.

What are your feelings about becoming a permanent resident, changing your nationality, renouncing your prior citizenship, being a dual national?

What are your feelings about illegal immigration within your family and about countries trying to keep certain groups out?

### RACE

We can look at historical and present-day relationships of power in which one racial group is systematically denied opportunity and access to power—in our original culture, in our new culture, and globally.

When have you been the target of racism—in your original or your new culture? How have you internalized negative feelings about yourself, or others in your constituency, that perpetuate society's stereotypes? When have you targeted others?

### IMPERIALISM

Imperialism creates and maintains unequal political, economic, cultural, and land relationships. It is not necessarily direct formal control of one country by another. It can be economic exploitation.

Look at the economic power dynamic between your original culture and your new one. Some



ENGLAND • LYNDALE KATZ

countries both dominate and are dominated. Work on how your culture, your people, or you have been oppressed by or oppress others. Discharge any feelings of guilt.

Work on how you and your people are good.

Build many diverse relationships.

### DISCOURAGEMENT

We may feel discouraged and overwhelmed and like we don't

belong. Discouragement arises from early experiences. Remember and discharge about these.

### COMING HOME

Find a place where you feel at home, or people with whom you feel at home.

You might call tables, at RC workshops, for people who don't live in their original cultures. (I hope you will contact me with your directions, counseling topics, and insights.)

### A FINAL REMINDER

You are welcome. You belong. The International RC Community is glad you are here. Reach out and be involved with the RC Communities where you live. Connect with your beloved Co-Counselors. Assume that you belong and are wanted. (If anyone shows any other feeling to you, it is just distress!)

Maura Fallon  
GPO Box 712, Hong Kong  
e-mail:

maurafallon@falloninternational.net



INDIA • DIANE SHISK

## Short Talks by Tim Jackins, on CD

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

For a complete list of all the CDs produced up until now, see page 104 of this *Present Time*.

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

The entire 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, and 2010 4-CD sets are also available to anyone, for \$25 per set, while supplies last.

If you are a certified RC teacher, the upcoming four CDs per year are available on a subscription basis, one calendar year at a time (but mailed out quarterly as they are released), for \$25 a year.

*For ordering information,  
see page 109.*

## Harvey's Short Life Story

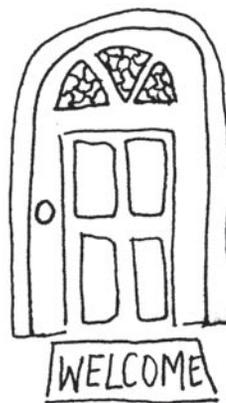
I grew up on a poverty-level farm in northern Idaho (USA). When the family split up when I was nine, I spent a year with my mother's relatives in Minnesota (USA) and then the next six years, the high school years, in eastern Montana (USA), in a small town or working as a cowboy or farm hand or migratory farm laborer. I got almost through the University of Washington by working for the War Department, the Army Corp of Engineers, as an

inspector and quit just short of a degree in chemistry in order to become an organizer. I organized for about thirteen years and then ran into\* the incident that started Re-evaluation Counseling. What's the story of your life?

*Harvey Jackins*

From a letter written in 1980

\* Ran into means experienced.



AM

## Racism and Anti-Jewish Oppression

Martin Luther King Day<sup>1</sup> is a day when we stop and commemorate the life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. For me it is always a time to stop and think about how we, as Jews, are doing in our work on racism and, in particular, in our relationships with people of African heritage.

Like many of you, I had huge sessions this week following the shooting of Congresswoman Giffords<sup>2</sup> and the sad passing of one of our great Jewish female leaders, Debbie Friedman.<sup>3</sup> I found myself sobbing and screaming, “They are *Jewish women activists!* And I am a *Jewish woman activist!*” and wanting to commit to discharging anything that has gotten in my way of remembering and acting on that.

This morning, after a week of sessions and now thinking about Martin Luther King, I’m remembering a moment when I was twenty. I had built a close relationship with a black leader in Los Angeles (California, USA). In addition to our leading a black-Jewish Seder together, I invited him to teach my seventh-grade synagogue class. I will never forget him standing before my students and telling them, with such force, “You *have* to be proud of who you are as a Jew. That’s the best way you can be an ally to my people.”

Two weeks ago I led an evening on race, class, and privilege for a group of twenty Jewish activists in their twenties and thirties who are part of a program to train the next generation of Jewish social justice activists. What struck me were two things: their dedication, as white Ashkenazi Jews, to understanding and working on racism; and their total lack of knowing (but their wanting to know) how anti-Jewish oppression had impacted them and therefore shaped the particular ways they carry racism.

I realized how much we in RC need to not only be doing our own discharging but also finding ways to share, with as many Jews and Jewish leaders as possible, what we are learning about racism and internalized anti-Jewish oppression.

Yesterday I had the privilege of spending a few hours talking to the dean of a U.S. rabbinical school. She and her colleagues are beginning to re-envision what rabbinical training is all about, what rabbis really need in order to work in the multi-cultural world of 2011. It was exciting to think

<sup>1</sup> A U.S. holiday honoring the late Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., a major leader of the U.S. Civil Rights Movement

<sup>2</sup> Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords, who was shot and critically injured while meeting with constituents outside a store in Arizona, USA

<sup>3</sup> Debbie Friedman was a U.S. composer and singer of songs with Jewish religious content. She died on January 9, 2011, from an illness.

with her about the need for rabbis to do ongoing work on racism, anti-Jewish oppression, and internalized anti-Jewish oppression.

So, forty-one years after my friend Lou told a roomful of Jewish seventh graders that the best way to be an ally to black people is to fully be a Jew (and to Lou, being a Jew was totally about claiming, and living openly and proudly, Jewish values and ethics), I am wanting to commemorate Martin Luther King, my friend Lou, and so many other important civil rights activists by asking us Jews to think about and discharge on these questions:

- Where have you struggled to be fully a Jew and, in particular, a visible Jewish activist? And how has this affected your work on racism and your commitment to black/Jewish relationships?
- Where have you noticed, in your life, undischarged internalized anti-Jewish oppression (being terrified, needing to lead all the time in order not to feel horrible, and so on) leading to racism?

Let us honor Martin Luther King by fighting to have our real selves—as revolutionary, activist Jews—out there, present and fully alive.

*Cherie Brown*

*International Liberation Reference Person for Jews*

Silver Spring, Maryland, USA

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



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## The Separation Can Be Overcome

Cherie,<sup>1</sup>

Thank you for the reminder to work on racism and to see Jewish liberation as central to my ability to do that.<sup>2</sup>

An African-born black boy, A—, goes to school with my son S—. Since kindergarten A— has bullied S— many times. They are now in second grade. It has been clear to me, and to S—, that A— feels bad and then targets S— and others with his feelings.

A— is tall, a year older than the other second graders, and a

<sup>1</sup> Cherie Brown, the International Liberation Reference Person for Jews

<sup>2</sup> See previous article.

good athlete who has a harder time with academic skills. S— is an average-sized white Jewish boy who is academically advanced and has a harder time with sports and competitive games. The oppressions line up to separate them and make it hard for them to reach out to each other, but in spite of that, they like each other.

Last week I called A—'s mother and was relieved to find that she shared my perspective about our boys. We made plans for them to play together outside of school, where some of the pressures that set them up against each other would be lower. She said that her son is trying to figure out what it means to be a black boy and what his options are

for how he acts. It was helpful for me to hear that and to remember that it's not just my family that is trying to support a son to figure out what it means to be a boy. The restimulation of anti-Jewish oppression has made it hard for me to fight the racism that clouds my vision and makes me see A— as "this black boy who is bullying my son." Discharging on it has really helped!

I am grateful to have the understanding that what separates these two boys is not personal and can be thought about and overcome.

X—  
USA

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

## Interrupting Sexism

Generally, if you can act confident when you are interrupting a man's sexism and not smile cheerfully, he will come around to taking you seriously. If he doesn't, just walk away. After thinking awhile, he will listen better next time.

I think you are correct that it is much easier for a man to interrupt sexism among other men than it is for a

woman to do it. This is part of the reason that men need to get on the stick\* and take a stand on these things.

Harvey Jackins  
From a letter written in 1980

\* Get on the stick means get to work.

### "Affection, Love, and Sex" Now on CD!

Harvey Jackins' classic talk, "Affection, Love, and Sex," is now available on CD (CD #1001) for \$10.00 (U.S.). The University of Maine (USA) student body warms to Harvey's lively, candid talk about what we're all looking for in relationships, and how to build relationships. The quality of this 1977 talk has been digitally enhanced, and you'll enjoy listening to it many times.

To order, see page 109.

### An Appreciation

Dear Nici,\*

Reading your article, "Thinking About Food" in the October 2010 *Present Time* made some of my thoughts come together as a whole when they had been scattered like a puzzle before. I think that the RC Communities need to give more space to this subject, and I want to thank you for sharing your thoughts.

With love,  
Kristian Widqvist  
Gothenburg, Sweden

\* Nici Dunkelman



## President Obama, and Contradicting Humiliation



I liked watching President Obama deliver his State of the Union Address in January, as he began his third year as president of the United States.

President Obama continues to be a contradiction<sup>1</sup> to me. His visibility as the leader of the United States continues to encourage and inspire me. There is a hopefulness that seems to have planted itself in me. On the day of his annual State of the Union message, I hurried home early to watch, raptly, from the moment he entered the Congress and began greeting people.

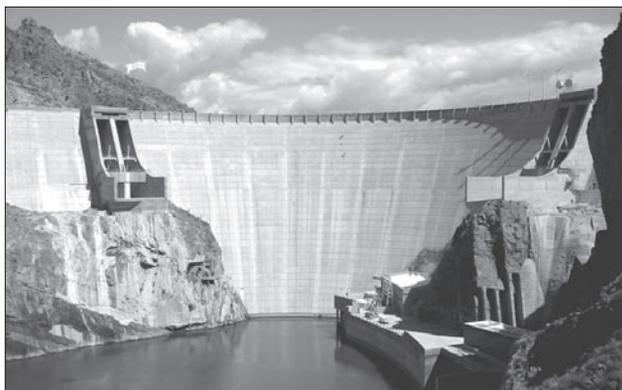
I listened to some of his address in a Co-Counselor's car on the way to our RC class and then joined the class in watching the rest of the speech. I am the only African-heritage person in our ongoing class of about fifteen people. I had a good session on racism. It was so helpful to notice that people still wanted to hear President Obama.

I like watching him be visible as our leader, and I like thinking that enough has shifted about racism that he is our leader. On the east coast of the United States, my eighty-eight-year-old mother, who proudly listens whenever he is on television, stayed up two hours past her bedtime to hear his every word. She tells me easily how "good it is that things are different now," referring to the struggles around racism that she and other African Americans of her generation had growing up.

I have used President Obama's presence and position in the world to discharge about racism, and the internal messages of racism, as I take a stand against them. With Tim's<sup>2</sup> encouragement to discharge on early defeats and fighting for ourselves, I have noticed the relationship between the early defeats and humiliation. Discharging on humiliation from incidents of racism has given me

<sup>1</sup> Contradiction to distress

<sup>2</sup> Tim Jackins'



ARIZONA, USA • LISA VOSS

easier access to working on racism. I can notice and feel that someone has treated me as less than human, and the humiliation of that. Then I can find my way to discharging the upset and the indignation of the mistreatment. Because of the humiliation, I may not readily tell my Co-Counselors of these incidents, so it is helpful for them to ask me sometimes in sessions how my life was impacted by racism today, this week, this month. This helps me to put some feelings in context and can give me space to notice or share upsets.

Recently I experienced some incidents of racism that felt humiliating to share. One such incident happened on a plane trip in the United States. The white female flight attendant suggested I say "please" in order to get a second bag of peanuts. Even though the humiliation was immediate, I quickly shut it down. I was reluctant to discharge on it with Co-Counselors, but on landing I did complain to the airline. The airline, though appalled at and apologetic for their employee's behavior toward me, wouldn't say it was racism—only that they intended to provide additional training about treating customers well.

Another example: I got in a taxicab at the airport after a blizzard, and the driver told me I had to give him a huge tip because it had been a difficult day driving and after all he had picked up my luggage and put it in his taxi. I talked to him about what was not okay about what he said to me.

A Co-Counselor I love noticed how good I am at a particular word game and told me with surprise how quick my mind was. I keep loving my Co-Counselors, showing how brilliant I am, and remembering to let go of any messages I hold on to about showing my mind and myself, and expect them to do the same.

Even though I start with the current incident, it has been useful to go back to where I can discharge the hurt of the early defeat, and the subsequent humiliation.

I am pleased to be discharging the humiliation attached to the hurts of racism, and other hurts. I find that doing so moves me to be more visible. That there is an African American family in the White House<sup>3</sup> certainly helps me be hopeful in working on the hurts of racism.

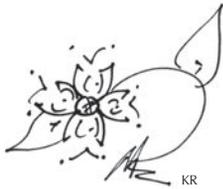
*Marion Ouphouet*  
Seattle, Washington, USA

<sup>3</sup> The White House is the residence of the acting president of the United States and his or her family.

## A Fundamentals Workshop in Uganda

We went to northern Uganda in January, ready to follow up on the RC teaching we had done there three years ago. We ended up doing a five-day fundamentals workshop in a classroom of the primary school that Abitimo Odongkara<sup>1</sup> runs in the town of Gulu. The timing, toward the end of the long school holiday, turned out to be<sup>2</sup> good for students and teachers, as well as mothers and unemployed people (of whom there are many).

Pamela Haines and Chuck Esser  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA



From Chuck's reports:

More and more of the people who were part of the course we did three years ago are hearing about the workshop and showing up.<sup>3</sup> There's a large age range. As usual, people here have many emergencies and arrive at all hours, or need to leave, but they really want to make this work.

Each day we've followed a schedule of early-morning open questions and mini-sessions, as people arrive, followed by a long class and long sessions. After lunch we do another long class and then have support groups, with tea at the end of the day and a meeting for support-group leaders. People are beginning to head for discharge rather than away from it. The leadership group

of about eight are leading support groups and do up-front presentations and demonstrations, although they are not much more experienced than the new folks.

One day we focused on parents and family work.<sup>4</sup> Everyone had a chance to do special time<sup>5</sup> together,

<sup>4</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-plus years.

<sup>5</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.



JAV • JULIE ANNE FORGIONE

which turned out to be a highlight. Most of the group went home and did some special time with a young person and came back the next morning excited and wanting to do it again for themselves. We have also been playing lots of children's games involving touching or movement. People laugh and laugh. Some of the teachers in the group have started offering games of their own.

On Thursday afternoon five of us went to the village, fifteen miles outside of Gulu, where Okello Richard has been teaching what he learned of RC three years ago. Pamela has been supporting him via e-mail, and Abitimo went out to visit him before we came. He and three others from his group have biked in to the workshop every day.

The group has been meeting once a month to counsel and once a month to help each other with cooperative farming and other activities. When asked what they had learned from RC, most of them said that they had learned to listen and not give advice, to have confidence that if they listened well the client would come up with<sup>6</sup> his or her own answers. Many of their questions centered on what to do when they or their clients had violent feelings and felt like they wanted to hurt someone.

People can still confuse leading with lecturing. We had a good class on leadership, and people were expanding their idea of leadership to include leading as a client, leading when one is not up front, and leading by counseling people.

All thirty-plus participants in the workshop, and the twenty people in the village, want to continue with RC.

<sup>6</sup> Come up with means think of.

<sup>1</sup> Abitimo Odongkara is the Area Reference Person for West Uganda.

<sup>2</sup> Turned out to be means resulted in being.

<sup>3</sup> Showing up means appearing.

## Re-evaluation Counseling in Northern Uganda

Three years ago I was trained in Re-evaluation Counseling, in Gulu, Uganda, by Chuck Esser and Pamela Haines.<sup>1</sup> After they left, I decided to let other people know what Re-evaluation Counseling was all about. I started with ten people, close friends. They accepted the ideas and decided I should teach them. I called other friends from outside the village, told them I'd been trained as a counselor, and invited them to come for a meeting. Afterward additional people got interested and joined us.



MARTI HAYMAKER

I've been telling them that Re-evaluation Counseling is about counseling their friends, in sessions and other activities, but not giving them solutions to their problems. Also that it's about sharing what they themselves have gone through in the past weeks and years. I told them that they could learn how to relate more successfully to the community around them, too. Some agreed to do the work. Others didn't stay—they had thought it was something they could do to earn money.

We are now a committed group of twenty people, ages sixteen to thirty. Mostly we meet during holidays, since many members are in school. When we meet, we always do little sessions—three or four people in a group. We are all able to express our feelings, tell our stories, and share the bad and good experiences we have gone through.

The participants have learned a lot. Some were unable to tell their stories. They felt shy. Now I can hear them telling their stories. Some have learned how to be good counselors—they don't interrupt; they just listen. They are also learning how to relate better to the community around them and to be friendly with everyone. A boy who was always drunk is improving. They have learned that being in a group is good—one cannot fall into problems so easily when one is in a group. And staying for the whole day minimizes the

chances of going out and doing wrong things.

This year the few members who are staying at home, including me, will continue meeting while others are at school. I want to bring in more people. I would especially like to bring in parents—Re-evaluation Counseling would help them love their children and avoid causing them to get in trouble. I also want members from distant places to start classes where they are. Some have been traveling forty kilometers, using their bicycles.

The workshop this week helped a lot. It increased my knowledge of Re-evaluation Counseling. I know better now how to help people discharge distress.

Having Chuck and Pamela and others from the workshop come out to our village encouraged our members and assured them that Re-evaluation Counseling is a real process that should be taken seriously. It gave them confidence.

Re-evaluation Counseling has helped me personally. I have made friends. I have become a good teacher and counselor. I can solve my problems. Before I was introduced to Re-evaluation Counseling, I was lonely. I didn't discuss things with friends. I couldn't talk in public. I thought I was the only person in the world with such big problems. I was sometimes rude and insulting. It was hard for me to discharge distresses. Something changed—it was about loving one another.

The following are some problems we've been dealing with: transport for those who come from far away; parents seeing Co-Counseling as a waste of time; and people thinking that if they come to a group, they should leave with something tangible. We don't have a fixed place to meet, so we keep on meeting in different places. Members sometimes don't turn out,<sup>2</sup> which delays our doing certain things. We lack enough materials to keep my teaching always in line with Re-evaluation Counseling.

<sup>1</sup> Chuck Esser and Pamela Haines are RC leaders in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA.

<sup>2</sup> Turn out means come.

Three people from the group in the village attended the workshop. They learned a lot, and I think it will help us. We all have different ears. They now know what Re-evaluation Counseling is all about, and that they are loved by some people.

If the groups in different locations can meet regularly, members will be exposed to different people and see what we can do as a larger group. We should always be communicating and helping each other. Some things you can't handle by yourself; you need assistance from others. I may know things you don't know, and you may know things I don't know, so we should help each other.

*Okello Richard Amunike*  
Langol, Uganda

*From Pamela Haines' notes on the visit to the village:*

*It was amazing to me, as a resident of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA, to find ourselves way out in the countryside, fifteen bone-jarring miles from the town of Gulu, giving an introduction to Re-evaluation Counseling to twenty youth under a mango tree. We asked the members to share their hopes for our time together. It was clear that they already understood and had practiced the basics of RC. They spoke of the joy of learning how to help people, of discovering that they could counsel the other sex, and older people. They spoke of helping someone discharge and become happier; of finding that nothing is too hard if one can laugh about it; of just getting relief. Despite having no materials, and the thinnest of e-mail connections with me, Okello Richard had taught them well.*



"ORFEOS STREET" • KATERINA STAVROPOULOU-VLACHOU

## Listening to Blame and Criticism

I know it is hard to listen to blame and criticism. I think that you would do well to tell them that you will listen to it privately and that you do not want them doing it in the meetings because it lowers the tone of the meetings.

Listening to it privately is really one of the easiest and most effective things you can do. I always try to get people to throw all their garbage at me in private, while I smile warmly. And after they have gone over it a few times and want to stop, I keep asking questions or otherwise insisting that they say it some more, and say it some more—until the sound of it finally penetrates and they hear the garbage that they have been saying. Then I try to find something to get them started discharging. They come out of it my lovers for life, and it is much easier than going on enduring the blame, or counter-attacking.

*Harvey Jackins*  
From a letter written in 1980

## The International Conference on Care of the Environment

Thirty-one RC leaders in the care of the environment met for four days in February, led by Wytse Visser, the International Commonality Reference Person for Care of the Environment.

We met in the farming countryside two hours east of Amsterdam, in the Netherlands. The conference center was surrounded by flat green meadows. Manure was being spread on the meadows, so the outside was filled with “dairy air.” In the fields of corn stubble, sprouts of the cover crop were showing. In places there was standing water. The wind howled around the corners of the building and rattled the roof tiles over our heads. Clouds scuttled by as in a painting by a Dutch master. It felt invigorating to walk outside. To my surprise and delight I saw three deer and an owl.

All of us participants were environmental activists and RC leaders in the care of the environment. We had a lot in common. We all wanted a good balance for the earth, for people, for plants and animals. We were a mix of ages from young adult to senior. We were three people targeted by racism and the rest white people. Our class backgrounds were raised-poor and working-class (almost half the group), middle-, and owning-class. We were eighteen women and thirteen men, from twelve countries (Australia, Basque Country, Canada, England, Finland, Fryslân, Germany, Japan, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, and the United States), and native speakers of at least eight languages.

We focused on the liberation of activists, language liberation for the benefit of all of us, and how capitalism and classism interact to harm people and the environment. We took the first steps toward creating a draft policy on care of the environment. We got to read a draft of *Sustaining All Life*, the exciting upcoming RC journal on care of the environment.

We had time in small groups to consider our next steps for ourselves, our Areas and Regions, and the whole world. Wytse outlined what she saw as our three main goals for the next period. One was to discharge greed. Another was to discharge old discouragement and defeat. A third was to work on our connection with other people and with nature.

Discharging greed may include remembering that we want to be close to people. A possible direction is to imagine giving up our position (privilege, possessions) and think about what we could have in return: connections with people and nature.



A. Laurel Green  
Brattleboro, Vermont, USA  
Reprinted from the RC e-mail discussion  
lists for RC Community members and for  
leaders in the care of the environment

## ● ● ● Close Relationships and Care of the Environment ● ● ●

I have just returned from the conference in the Netherlands for RCers leading in the care of the environment. The emphasis was on building close relationships with ourselves, one another, and the environment. When any of these relationships is broken by our distress, we cannot function well as activists. Wytske<sup>1</sup> stressed that close relationships are at the center of caring for the environment. They are natural and easy. Only patterns (our own and society's) have broken them and caused us to become isolated from our natural connections.

These relationships include *our relationship with ourselves*. In the introductions we stated why we were worth fighting for. We cannot lead effectively without caring for our bodies and our minds, and reclaiming our power.

*Close relationships with other leaders*: Participants traveled from as far away as Australia and Japan. Our work will now go forward on a different basis, as we have personal relationships with the others at the conference. We cannot do the work in isolation. We need to build effective support for ourselves. Wytske added to an old RC maxim: to decide,

*build our support*, act, discharge. She talked about activists who burn out<sup>2</sup> because they do not build support for themselves.

*Close relationships with people who speak different languages from us*: Ten countries were represented that included several more cultural and language backgrounds. Some people did not speak English, the main language used at the conference. Wytske spoke primarily in Frisian, her native tongue, and that was translated into English. When she spoke in English, it was translated into one of the other native tongues represented, even if only one person spoke that language. The translation slowed down the workshop in a positive way, giving more time for processing.

*Close relationships with people targeted by racism*: A panel of three people targeted by racism was powerful. We white people recognized that building relationships with people targeted by racism was a necessity in our work of caring for the environment. If we don't build these relationships, we reinforce the isolation already present and do not learn how to live in the world.

*Close relationships with people of different classes*: Wytske spoke about how much of the world lives on the equivalent of one or two U.S. dollars a day, and the need to discharge our greed. A demonstration with an owning-class person included bringing into the demonstration a raised-poor/working-class person to be close to her.

*Close relationships with people of different ages*: The participants ranged from young adults to elders but did not include young people. In the context of fighting for ourselves, Wytske said it was good to see young people sticking to what they wanted. We need to include this group in our work.

Wytske stressed looking into the eyes of our Co-Counselors and discharging what comes up. For a demonstration of this she brought together two men who did not share a common language. I tried the approach in several mini-sessions, and both I and my Co-Counselors discharged well.

Thanks Wytske for bringing us to another level in our care-of-the-environment work. I look forward to a continuing relationship with you and the other conference participants.

*Andy Smith*

Devon, Pennsylvania, USA  
Reprinted from the e-mail discussion  
list for RC Community members



ISLE OF SKYE, ENGLAND • TAMMY DAY

<sup>1</sup> Wytske Visser, the International Commonality Reference Person for Care of the Environment, and the leader of the conference

<sup>2</sup> Burn out means become exhausted and discouraged.

● ● ● ● Thank You, Wytke! ● ● ● ●

Hello Wytke,<sup>1</sup>

I want to appreciate you for your leadership in the care of the environment. The conference<sup>2</sup> was the most inspiring, profound, and loving event I had ever had the privilege of attending. I felt so much connection to people, and through that connection to people, connection with the natural world came easily. Of course we are one! It made me think many times of my grandmother.

Thank you for the attention to language. I realised that I know many Maori words and some that I struggle to translate into English. I must have learnt the words very young. I had wonderful Co-Counselling sessions that led to big discharge on assimilation.

Thank you, too, for thinking so carefully about us people targeted by racism. Our support group was wonderful, and after the panel I noticed it was much easier for the white people to not be so awkward, and afraid to come after us.<sup>3</sup> I was less afraid to reach for them, too!

Thank you for sharing your profound intelligence. The way you word things is so clear and moving and always with passion. I had never had so much attention for what someone was saying. I wanted to hear every word.

I loved, too, how playful everyone was. At the culture sharing and on the last day I could see the child in everyone, and it gave me so much joy. At the train station, five of us were on the train to Amsterdam (the Netherlands). While the train was waiting to go, J— and L—, who were still waiting for their train to Berlin (Germany), were on the platform outside our window playing with us—waving handkerchiefs, pulling faces,<sup>4</sup> miming. When the train pulled away, they ran alongside our window, going faster, faster, until they were sprinting. Everyone in our carriage was laughing.

Now I am looking forward to figuring out and putting into action ideas I have for working on care of the environment, in RC and the wide world. One thing is definitely to encourage people targeted by racism to go to care-of-the-environment events.

*Ka Pai*<sup>5</sup> (Thank you) Wytke; you have made a big difference in my life.

*Arohanui* (Great love),

*Katrina Fricker*  
London, England

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<sup>1</sup> Wytke Visser, the International Commonality Reference Person for Care of the Environment

<sup>2</sup> An International conference for RC leaders in the care of the environment, held near Amsterdam, the Netherlands, in February 2011. See articles on pages 40 and 41.

<sup>3</sup> Come after us means reach out to us, pursue connection with us.

<sup>4</sup> Pulling faces means making funny facial expressions.

<sup>5</sup> Thank you in Maori. (The author is Maori.)

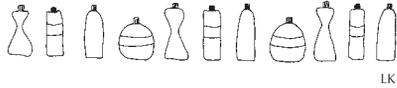


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## Care of the Environment, and Ending Racism

Please see the correspondence below about a care-of-the-environment group here in the Midwest USA, concerns from me and some of the other Regional Reference Persons about whether the group was tackling racism, and Wytske's<sup>1</sup> thoughtful and helpful response. For the first time I feel like I have some understanding of how care-of-the-environment and ending-racism work are beginning to intersect in RC.

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



LK

Dear Alysia, John,<sup>2</sup> and LG,<sup>3</sup>

You may know that at a recent Midwest teachers' and leaders' workshop, a few of us from different Areas<sup>4</sup> and Regions<sup>5</sup> met in a care-of-the-environment topic group and decided to have regular phone conference calls for discharging together. Since then we've had a conference call about once a month, in which we've traded time<sup>6</sup> and I've counseled everyone. The participants are Barbara Federlin, Judy Flegel, Madeleine Para, Kate Stout, David Wolf, and I.

Now we'd like to get together to connect and discharge in person, maybe for a day this spring in Madison

(Wisconsin, USA). I wanted to ask if you had any thoughts about our getting together and if there was anything you'd like to see happen if and when we do.

Any input would be appreciated.

Brian Lavendel  
Madison, Wisconsin, USA



AM

Dear Brian,

Thanks so much for writing and for thinking about this. John, LG, and I have conferred and have some thoughts. I am copying Wytske, as I think it is important for her to hear our perspective on this issue. (She may, of course, have many more thoughts of her own for us.)

First, we are so pleased that you are moving this work forward. We think what you are proposing is a daylong workshop, which we would love.

I do think (and John and LG agree) that one of the things that needs to be tackled in care-of-the-environment work is ending racism. From what I can tell,<sup>7</sup> this has been an issue internationally (both inside and outside of RC). Since you are proposing an all-white gathering, I thought it was worth mentioning. I am curious what you each would have to discharge to be able to think about building and expanding the work among people targeted by racism, what relationships you would need to fight for, what communities you'd be more engaged with, what leaders (inside RC and outside) you would need to get close to, and so on. I know, for instance, that large groups of African-heritage

people in Chicago (Illinois, USA) and Milwaukee (Wisconsin, USA) are doing groundbreaking work on environmental issues, and I suspect this is true in Minnesota (USA) as well. I think care of the environment is a critical issue in communities targeted by racism, but my experience is that we who are targeted by racism are often asked to jump into the work by white people who are not really engaged in our communities or the issues we are already dealing with.

People have occasionally lectured me or expressed a lot of disappointment that I am not involved in care-of-the-environment work. It is as if the rest of the work I do in RC is not as important as "saving the planet." The tone is a dismissive one, and is probably rooted in the early disappointments and discouragements white people have about being separated from people targeted by racism. White people are heartbroken about this, and they need to grieve a lot and take steps to fight for connection in their present-day lives rather than act like people targeted by racism owe them something or should just agree with or follow them unthinkingly. To me, the challenge is, how can white people learn how to follow us people targeted by racism on environmental issues and support our leadership? Or how can they get close enough to us that they can actually listen to us think about these issues? As with most of our current RC goals, Goal 3<sup>8</sup> is about assisting each other to

*continued . . .*

<sup>1</sup> Wytske Visser, the International Commonality Reference Person for Care of the Environment

<sup>2</sup> John Sellen, the Regional Reference Person for Manitoba, Canada, and Minnesota, North Dakota, and South Dakota, USA

<sup>3</sup> LG Shanklin-Flowers, the Regional Reference Person for Wisconsin, USA

<sup>4</sup> An Area is a local RC Community.

<sup>5</sup> A Region is a subdivision of the International Re-evaluation Counseling Community, usually consisting of several Areas.

<sup>6</sup> Traded time means taken turns being listened to by the group.

<sup>7</sup> Tell means perceive.

<sup>8</sup> Goal 3 of the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities, as adopted by the 2001 World Conference of the RC Communities and reaffirmed by subsequent World Conferences: that the members of the Re-evaluation Counseling Community put increased attention on discharging the distresses that have led to the continued degradation of the environment of the world and to discouragement about taking the actions necessary for its restoration.

... continued

discharge and think—not about telling each other what to do.

Of course, classism is part of this as well. (I think you have a mostly middle- and owning-class group.)

So, there is lots to discharge, and hopefully some of this can be added to the mix. You are welcome to share this e-mail with your group, if that would be helpful.

Lastly, John, LG, and I would love to get a report back on how this goes, as we think about moving the work forward in our Regions. Thank you again for your leadership on this.

Alysia Tate



Dear Alysia, Brian, and others,

It is heartwarming to see how much everyone cares. I also like how thoughtful you all want to be. It's good to hear that you approve of Brian moving this work forward. Let me try to say a few words and explain in what way ending racism is included in care-of-the-environment work.

I am aware of the early hurts of activists that can make them decide to never again trust another human being and instead feel connected to nature and animals. Building close relationships with people is an important part of the work we need to do.

Some activists also believe that they are beyond all oppression because they fight for the earth. The ones who struggle here were hurt the most, often already before they were born. They fight for many good causes but are not that effective because the distress drives others away from them. We care-of-the-environment leaders in RC have done a lot of work on this and still have a lot ahead of us. Being an

activist does not make anyone a better person. And activists are just as scared as non-activists. They have their own load of distresses. They often have a pattern of sacrificing and fighting for many good things except their own liberation. Most of us have a sort of difficulty there. We need other minds to remind us that things will probably move faster if we fight for ourselves, too, and that we are worth fighting for.

At the RC care-of-the-environment conference in the Netherlands, one of our goals was to make ending racism more visible in RC care-of-the-environment work. We did important work on that, and, as far as I can tell, everyone at the conference was touched by understanding better the effects of racism. In all the work I lead on care of the environment, I include working on the effects of and ending racism. I know that Brian includes it in his leadership as well.

So far it has been a huge amount of work to build care-of-the-environment work in RC, but thanks to that work, there is now a growing worldwide network of care-of-the-environment leaders in the First World. As a raised-poor leader, it was confusing to me that when leadership developed, most of it was white middle and owning class. We have moved on. At the conference almost half of the leaders were raised working class. Ten percent were people targeted by racism.



JOELLE HOCHMAN

My goal for the next conference is to have there RC leaders from the Second and Third Worlds and a much bigger group of people targeted by racism. People (most of them targeted by racism) all over the world in many communities do what is in their power for a good balance with their environment. Everyone cares deeply. I am sorry that you and other people targeted by racism are lectured about not being involved, and I do apologize for the dismissive tone. To me it seems important that we white people ask and listen and learn, that we discharge and discharge and try our best. And we will make some mistakes, which I hope will help us learn more so that we keep moving in the best possible way.

Maybe this can be a little helpful in our understanding each other well and moving the work forward.

Wyske Visser

Ljouwert, Fryslân, The Netherlands



*Wyske, I so appreciate your sharing this perspective. As the work develops, I would love to see more of this kind of discussion in Present Time. Unless you have objections, I would like to share your thoughts with others in my Community, as well as with Barbara Love<sup>9</sup> and Tim<sup>10</sup> and Diane.<sup>11</sup> It is hugely helpful and hopeful to hear how you are taking on<sup>12</sup> racism and classism in care-of-the-environment work. It helps me in thinking about how to own this work for myself.*

Alysia Tate

<sup>9</sup> Barbara Love is the International Liberation Reference Person for People of African Heritage.

<sup>10</sup> Tim Jackins, the International Reference Person for the RC Communities

<sup>11</sup> Diane Shisk, the Alternate International Reference Person for the RC Communities

<sup>12</sup> Taking on means confronting and doing something about.

*The following seven articles are from a discussion, on the e-mail discussion list for RC Community members involved in eliminating racism, about building diverse RC Communities.*

## How Do You Build a Diverse Community?

In my Area\* we have a lot of enthusiastic Co-Counselors who are eager to introduce their friends to RC. I hear from a steady stream of people looking for fundamentals classes. This is great. However, the majority of these people are white. If we continue offering everyone interested in RC a place in a fundamentals class, our Area will become increasingly white, which I assume will make it less and less inviting to people targeted by racism.

We've considered requiring that all new fundamentals classes be at least half people targeted by racism, but the Areas I have heard about that have done this have not found it very successful. It doesn't shift the underlying racism holding white people back from making friends with people targeted by racism.

It's also been suggested to me, by an African-heritage leader in my Area, that with requirements of that kind, white people teaching RC will simply get tighter and weirder than they already are around people targeted by racism.

We do steady work on racism in our Area classes and events. People attend eliminating-white-racism workshops annually, some more frequently, yet this struggle persists.

I'm interested in hearing how you're addressing the RC Community's goal of making RC widely available, in relation to its goal of ending racism and making our Communities diverse places. How have you addressed new people coming into classes in relation to these goals? What experiments in this direction are you currently involved in, even if you don't know yet whether or not they'll succeed? What appears to be making a difference in your Area?

Steve Thompson  
Area Reference Person for the  
Madison Area in Seattle, Washington, USA

\* An Area is a local RC Community.

## Classes that Work Well for Everyone

We've never had the fifty-percent quota (of people targeted by racism in a class). Instead we've had a different guideline—that classes work well for people targeted by racism and Native oppression. In practice, this has so far meant that our fundamentals classes are less than fifty percent white/European heritage. Still, the focus isn't the percentage; it is a group that will work well for everyone.

Each class looks different. Each teacher gets to discharge and think, with the support

of other leaders in the Area, about how to make her or his class work well. At this point we have a waiting list of folks who want to take fundamentals, but that is not a bad problem, and I imagine we will get faster and faster at bringing people in.

White/European-heritage people have needed to discharge on feeling like the Community is not about them or that they are not valued. But really, things move well for

*continued . . .*

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everyone. We still have lots more discharging to do—especially to think well about people who are from poor families or are currently poor.

One week every other month all our Area classes break for ending-racism groups. Everyone who is European heritage and not targeted by racism works on the oppressor end of racism, with other white/European-heritage people. We also have Asian and Chicano/Chicana/Latino/Latina ending-racism groups.

We don't have African-heritage, Indigenous-heritage, or mixed-heritage groups at this time.

People being in weekly classes has been important in terms of people thinking about each other and everyone having a regular group to get closer to.

Chris Selig  
San Francisco, California, USA

## Co-Counseling Is Not the Problem

When I started teaching RC, I got permission from Harvey<sup>1</sup> to teach outside of an organized Area—because I was young, new to the RC Community, and was not thriving in the existing organized Area. I also knew that my constituency, Native folks, would not stay connected if the existing classes were all that was available.

My experience is that the present-day RC Communities, at least in the United States, are rigid in who they allow to become teachers and support group leaders. Non-white

folks are the ones who actually have the life-long friendships with other non-white folks and could bring them into Re-evaluation Counseling. How do we back<sup>2</sup> non-white people to lead? Part of racism is the need to control, to be in charge, to protect one's resource. My guess is that white folks have something to discharge there.

I don't mean to embarrass anyone, but sometimes straight-out facts help clarify the picture. I know an immigrant woman who had been Co-Counseling for over ten years. She had organized

herself, and then her family of four, to move through three countries (two continents). However, when I suggested that she be an organizer for a workshop, the white leaders responded by questioning her ability.

I am currently teaching an ongoing-fundamentals class to six Indigenous women, from four continents. Four of the women have been in the class for at least two years. They also have been to a couple of Area and Regional workshops. They are put off<sup>3</sup> by the patterns of racism that run.<sup>4</sup> I have to beg them to attend. However, they are here every single week for class—every single week—and they have sessions with each other during the week. It's clearly not Co-Counseling that is the problem.

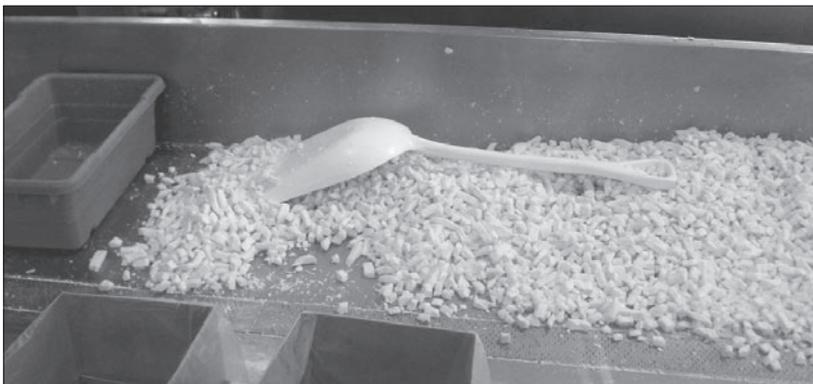
I got a call earlier this week from an African American man who was in my class over ten years ago. He and another

<sup>1</sup> Harvey Jackins

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

<sup>3</sup> Put off means repelled.

<sup>4</sup> Run means are acted out.



FRESH CHEESE CURDS, SEATTLE, WASHINGTON, USA • AMANDA MARTINEZ



African American man, who had been in the same class, have since met periodically to Co-Counsel with each other. They “might” consider joining a class.

To get these folks participating in the Area and Region, I sometimes go to Area and Regional workshops with them.

I have invited other classes from the Area and Region to visit our class, to give the class members an opportunity to build Co-Counseling relationships with white people outside of the class, in a setting that feels safe. However, the class members

still only Co-Counsel with the white folks who were in our previous ongoing class, so this hasn’t necessarily worked.

I have had my Area Reference Person (ARP), my Regional Reference Person (RRP), and parent leaders come teach my class.

The local RRP’s and ARP’s have been helpful in allowing non-white folks to gather and have Co-Counseling relationships across Regional and Area boundaries. For example, when a Native support group is called, it is for all Native Co-Counselors in the Minneapolis/St. Paul (USA) geographical area.

I am currently attempting to gather all the African-heritage folks together for a one-time support group. It is important that Indigenous and African-heritage Co-Counselors know who is available to counsel with.

There is much for white allies to discharge. My suggestion is, and has been, for them to work on their earliest memory of acting as oppressor in any way.

*Marcie Rendon  
International Liberation Reference  
Person for Native Americans  
Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA*



CAPE ANN, MASSACHUSETTS, USA • STEVE BANBURY

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You can order back issues as regular literature items (see pages 102 and 109).



## Challenging Rigid Routines and Assumptions

Since I started teaching RC a couple of years ago, most of my students have been from backgrounds different from both the surrounding community (Japanese) and me (white English Protestant). It has been a leap in the dark: I've tried things and then learned why they needed revising or sometimes throwing out.

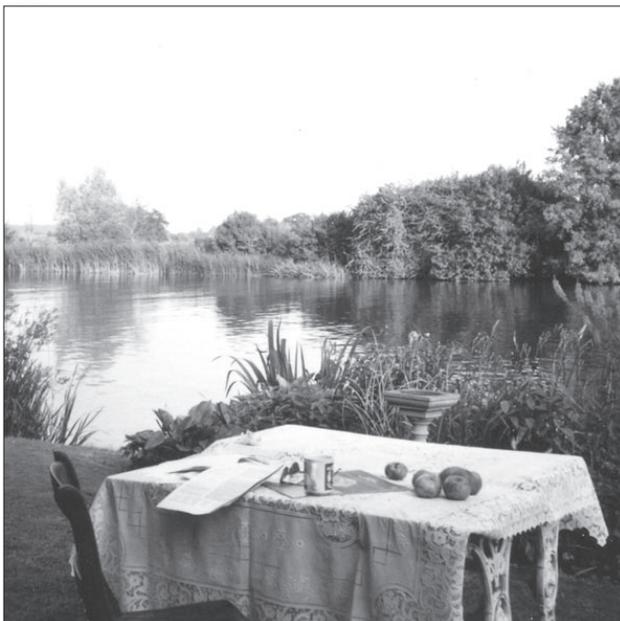
### FEELING UNCERTAIN AND CONFUSED

There's part of me that longs for someone to post "The Answer" right now, so that I won't have to feel uncertain or confused or afraid or uncomfortable anymore. It looks to me as though a lot of us put off<sup>1</sup> trying things until some unspecified date in the future when (we hope) we will be less confused, rather than realising that the confused feelings are an inevitable part of the material<sup>2</sup> we have to face.

We often want things to look nice and neat and calm, but I reckon they're going to get a lot messier from here on. After I started writing this a day ago, another unforeseen and tricky situation came up, and I don't know whether or not I responded in the most useful way. I nearly abandoned this posting because I feel like I have to know all the answers in order to say anything. I think we have to refuse to believe these kinds of feelings. Otherwise we will back-pedal as soon as things look confusing.

<sup>1</sup> Put off means postpone.

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



PANGBOURNE, BERKSHIRE, ENGLAND • ROSLYN CASSIDY

### THROW OUT OPPRESSIVE IDEAS OF SUCCESS

If we've decided in advance what we want our students' Co-Counselling or lives to look like by the end of the class series, we've dictated the terms of the relationship, giving them less space. Things almost certainly won't turn out<sup>3</sup> the way we hope, and we can get frustrated and show that we're disappointed or worried.

When few people in the existing Community understand the oppressions targeting particular students, the way that these students behave is often interpreted as their patterns (and so their individual problems) rather than as an effect of internalised oppression. Because the patterns look different to the majority patterns, they're seen by them as weirder and worse, and the students are thought to be less successful at learning Co-Counselling. We do need to choose students who are ready to learn, but if the potential for success is judged against criteria that we (the dominant group) have set in advance, we will almost inevitably replicate our existing Community.

### MAKING AN EXTRA EFFORT

I underestimated how hard it would be for many of my students to believe they were wanted in our Community. I naively assumed that if I just dealt with the language barrier, of course they would come along. I'm having to work on my frustration at how they're "rejecting my great ideas" and how it's taking far longer than I feel it should. (Students joining the Community rapidly has been seen as proof of success, by me and those around me.)

I think we need to think hard about how much to go after<sup>4</sup> each person, bearing in mind the particular barriers that he or she faces, and not assume that everyone should require the same amount of effort. For instance, I was told that I shouldn't have travelled with a student and her daughter to a playday,<sup>5</sup> because "no one else does this" so I must have been acting on my caretaking pattern. The student faced multiple layers of isolation (parents' oppression, a language

<sup>3</sup> Turn out means end up happening.

<sup>4</sup> Go after means pursue.

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

barrier, few contacts outside her family, internalised anti-Jewish oppression), and she says she wouldn't have gone without the extra support. On the other hand, I do have caretaking patterns to discharge, as well as resentment ("no one ever made that much effort for me"). I think many of us do, and without working on these distresses, we won't be able to figure out how to make the extra effort to welcome people for whom Community events look off-putting.<sup>6</sup>

### RELATIONSHIPS AND COMMITMENT

The prevailing model of Co-Counselling in my Community goes something like this: Turn up<sup>7</sup> at a prearranged time—"great to see you"—start the timer—"beep beep"—finish the session or class—"bye, see you next week." It made sense to me when I learned it, because it fit right in with the ways of relating I grew up with, but it doesn't work at all well for most of my students. This is partly because of different understandings of the nature of relationships and the use of time. It's also because many of them face genuinely hard situations without the support networks they would have in their countries of origin. If I do a session or a class and then run, there's no way they will trust that I truly care about them. At the same time, it can be easy to get hooked by desperation

patterns, and I'm not helping if I try to fix things. I can't yet think consistently well about this, which can make it look safer to stick with teaching people who don't raise so many tricky questions.

### ALLIES

I'm sure that we all like the idea of diverse Communities, and maybe we go to support groups or workshops to work on achieving them, but that's not enough to make us allies. I would define as allies people who can see why having a certain person or group of people in the Community, and their lives, is important to their own re-emergence, however difficult it feels. And if we never get to meet a particular group of people, it's unlikely we will be able to realise that we need them.

Judging how many allies are enough, and at what point it makes sense to bring people from new groups into the Community, has probably been the most difficult issue for me. I'm not at all sure I've got it right, or that it will work out this time around, but I suppose that's the nature of experiments.

I'd love to hear how others are experimenting.

*Emma Parker*  
Tokyo, Japan

<sup>6</sup> Off-putting means repellent, disconcerting.

<sup>7</sup> Turn up means arrive.

## Dos Publicaciones *Two Publications*

### *El Varón, la Traducción en Español de The Human Male*

Recientemente Rational Island Publishers ha impreso una publicación que nos gustaría consideraran ustedes leer: *El Varón*, la traducción en español de *The Human Male*, la cual contiene información importante acerca del entendimiento y la perspectiva de RC sobre ser un hombre.

*(Rational Island Publishers has recently printed a publication that we would like you to consider reading: El Varón, the Spanish translation of The Human Male, which contains important information about RC's understanding and perspective on being a man.)*

Tim Jackins

### *The Human Situation, Reformatted*

Rational Island Publishers has recently printed a publication that we would like you to consider reading: the reformatted and reprinted edition of *The Human Situation*. It contains twenty-five articles, by Harvey Jackins, that form a significant portion of the foundation of the theory and practices of Re-evaluation Counseling. For many years it has been an important source of information for everyone learning RC.

*Tim Jackins*



## Creating a Diverse Community

One of the best things about living in New York City (New York, USA) is that not only has the city been a multicultural, multilingual city for hundreds of years, but many activists, artists, and educators make their way here and often want to stay. So the context of where we're building RC has been important in developing a diverse Community. Pacing—figuring out small but significant steps that can build on each other—has also been important. Here's a summary of the steps we've taken over the last several years:

I started my Area, many years ago, with no people targeted by racism. Then someone joined the Area who had been considered white in her native country but was not considered white here. I led a people-targeted-by-racism support group until she could find a significant home with people targeted by racism. It consisted of only two other people, one of whom she had brought into RC. Eventually she started to lead the group.

At some point I divided the Area into three. The people

targeted by racism stayed with me. It took at least ten years for my Area to include more people targeted by racism. The way they joined us was through the original Co-Counselors targeted by racism, who recruited their friends. And when Co-Counselors targeted by racism moved to New York, they joined the Area because they had met these Co-Counselors at workshops and liked them. Slowly people knew that our Area would be a good place for people targeted by racism.

I counseled the white people regularly on racism, with the goal of their being led by the people targeted by racism. I worked with the people targeted by racism on becoming stronger counselors, with the goal of their leading me and the Area—a goal they supported. I put most of my resource into the people targeted by racism. And I put enough resource into the white Co-Counselors that they slowly understood the personal benefits of the goal.

At some point there were enough leaders targeted by racism that early terror came

up for them and they wanted to pull back from leading the Area. The perspective I offered, which they trusted enough, was that they now had what they wanted and there was no turning back. They continued to move forward as a small yet powerful group of African-heritage and Latino/a people. I think part of their success was that they were all raised poor and working class yet had figured out a middle-class educational route that had put them in contact with many working-, middle-, and owning-class people, who were primarily but not only white. Because they had been successful in school, they'd had certain privileges of education, despite the brutality of racism.

We held classes for a while that were intentionally segregated in order to build relationships and safety among people targeted by racism and among white people. About three years ago, the leaders targeted by racism all wanted to lead classes with white Co-Counselors in them. Some of them also started leading and assisting in family work,<sup>1</sup> which included leading white children and their families. That was



SUE EDWARDS

<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-plus years.



challenging for everyone and significantly moved the work on racism and internalized racism forward.

The insidious nature of unaware racism in our Area has been challenging for all of us. Some years have been more difficult than others. We recently experienced a tragedy—a Co-Counselor targeted by racism, who had deep connections with people in our Area, was murdered. His death was a catalyst that continues to move everyone toward each other. We seem to better understand the preciousness of our relationships, we can tell<sup>2</sup> better that we matter to each other, and the leadership—white, African heritage, Latino/a—is finding a deeper base of unity.

Finally, it was clear to me, and the leaders targeted by racism, that we needed to focus on anti-Jewish oppression, because I’m the Area Reference Person and I’m Jewish and because the new Jewish Co-Counselors in our Area were on the periphery where their early material<sup>3</sup> and anti-Jewish internalized oppression were not understood. One African-heritage leader told me it was important for the people targeted by racism to work on the oppressor end of things related to Jews, so that they

<sup>2</sup> In this context, tell means notice.  
<sup>3</sup> Material means distress.

were not only working on the effects of being targeted by oppression.

We white people in the Area are understanding more deeply how racism impacts people targeted by racism. At the recent Mid-Atlantic (USA) Family Work Conference, Fela Barclift<sup>4</sup> did a wonderful job of explaining how African-heritage people, as a result of slavery, have learned down the generations not to ask for or accept help. And at a Women Eliminating Sexism Workshop, Barbara Love<sup>5</sup> demonstrated that women targeted by racism need to take up the space to show and speak about how racism impacts their lives.

I personally realize both how much and how little I understand about the impact of racism on people’s lives. In a recent teachers’ and assistants’ class (five people targeted by racism and seven white people) I counseled everyone on racism for five minutes in front of the group. The sessions of the people targeted by racism were obviously about the impact of racism on their lives. At first it was less clear to me, and to the people targeted by racism, that the white Co-Counselors were

<sup>4</sup> Fela Barclift is the Area Reference Person for the Brooklyn Bedford-Stuyvesant, New York, USA, RC Community and is an African-heritage woman.

<sup>5</sup> Barbara Love is the International Liberation Reference Person for African-Heritage People.

working where they needed to on racism. However, I realized that the numbing process that starts early for most of us white people, and the resulting disconnection from our minds and hearts, are intertwined with all of our early hurts and put us in a position to function on top of tremendous feelings of being broken hearted. That was what the white people were working on—on ways they felt broken hearted about people in their families—and it seemed to have nothing to do with racism. I’ve since talked about this with African-heritage Co-Counselors, who’ve appreciated understanding better what they’re looking at when white Co-Counselors work on racism.

I feel indebted to the RC Community for prioritizing the elimination of racism. I can continue to learn from and be challenged by people targeted by racism, and white people, and become more human and more clear headed about us human beings, who we truly are, and what we can accomplish together.

Caryn Davis  
 (with input from  
 Tokumbo Bodunde,  
 Berta Ramos-Ramirez,  
 Moira Wilkinson,  
 Cesar Rodarte, and  
 Michelle Thompson)  
 Staten Island, New York, USA

## Working Together to End Racism

A pamphlet introducing RC from the perspective of ending racism

\$2.00 (U.S.), plus postage and handling

Ordering information on page 109



KK



LK

## Moving Toward a Big Vision

I am a white owning-class Jewish guy in Nashville, Tennessee, USA. I know a lot about fear (heh, heh), and I decided a long time ago that I needed to continue to act. More recently I've realized that I need to keep discharging my fear.

In the last eight years I have introduced RC to about twenty-five people, about two thirds of whom are people targeted by racism and about half of whom are black—getting them to a fundamentals class taught by a woman targeted by racism or by me, or teaching them one-on-one.

I lead a men's support group composed of five men, two of whom are African heritage. I have had a policy for the last year that we only recruit men targeted by racism into the group. Recently I have amended the policy to be that if the white men want to teach RC one-on-one, they have to prioritize men targeted by racism. The two African-heritage men, if they choose to teach one-on-one, can teach whomever makes the most sense for moving their own liberation forward.

Meanwhile it seems appropriate that our group stay at five—until it is more tightly knit and we discharge what's in the way of our being aware of our own material.<sup>1</sup>

My goal was to set a big vision—a large and active Community with people targeted by racism at the center—and to state it often, allow for discharge, and then move slowly while each of us does the work to get to where it can happen.

My understanding is that we are in a white system, a system that breeds segregation and racist patterns, and that if we don't have a specific plan of action for outreach and working on our chronics,<sup>2</sup> then the racism will lead.

I have also learned that as a white person I can't be afraid of my racist patterns. As I keep discharging them, I need to simultaneously engage with people targeted by racism, knowing that the patterns still persist.

*Matthew Leber*  
Nashville, Tennessee, USA

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<sup>1</sup> Material means distress patterns.

<sup>2</sup> Chronic patterns

## Building Attention for People Targeted by Racism

I don't know if what I'm doing as Area Reference Person (in an almost entirely white Community) will work, but the following is what I'm trying.

We take some time to work on racism in my teachers' and leaders' class every time we meet, which is twice a month (as little as six minutes, in three-minute-each mini-sessions; as much as twenty minutes, with everybody getting a short turn in front of the group).

I offer two prompts: refusing to lead a segregated life (which I got from Harvey<sup>1</sup>) and/or what we're

hating most about racism. The goal is to cast the subject in a way that helps us remember that ending racism is not an abstract moral "should" but something that involves the quality of our own lives and relationships. Working on it every time is a reminder that it is a project that we as a group are taking seriously and doing together.

The practice has spread to other Area classes, support groups, and workshops. I'm discovering that my fundamentals class is ready and eager to attend to racism as well, and one of the teachers in the Area is preparing to teach fundamentals with oppression and liberation as the theme. I

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<sup>1</sup> Harvey Jackins

think we can be more intentional and powerful in the way we communicate Co-Counseling theory, right from the beginning.

I also lead a “listening group” for mostly women targeted by racism—a naturalized RC support group to which I invite women I’ve met through work and in the wider community. I get discouraged sometimes because turnout<sup>2</sup> can be low, but I’m also impressed with how much people claim the group as their own and even invite their friends. It’s clear to me that some of my close African American friends would only be comfortable learning Co-Counseling in a context in which they’re the majority, so I just decide to keep inviting, to be available at a regular time once a month, and to not give up even if nobody shows.<sup>3</sup>

My goal is for our Area teachers and leaders to be relaxed, and discharged, and attentive enough that they expand and deepen their friendships with people targeted by racism and identify individuals from that group who might value and stick with Co-Counseling.

A white woman in my teachers’ and leaders’ class has become increasingly intentional and bold in making warm personal contact with people targeted by racism on public transportation

and in markets and hospital waiting rooms. She’s friends with several bus drivers and has successfully talked about racism with strangers. One woman she met is now her friend for tea and movies. I don’t know how this will eventually impact our Community makeup,<sup>4</sup> but I see it as part of the work.

It’s an ongoing battle to take a stand against the desperation, guilt, and urgency that so easily get wound up with working on racism.

Our Community continues to be mostly white, but I think we’re steadily building the attention and making the space in our lives for friendships that could allow people targeted by racism to find a place in Co-Counseling. I’m not apologetic about teaching new white people. That just allows for a larger group to be getting the skills and understandings and to be working on this project. I don’t know how we’ll incorporate the people targeted by racism we know, or how my little support group will evolve, but I’m trusting that the work we’ve done and the relationships we’ve built will make it possible to find an elegant way forward when the time comes.

*Pamela Haines*  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA

<sup>4</sup> Makeup means composition.

<sup>2</sup> Turnout means attendance.

<sup>3</sup> In this context, shows means comes.

## Seeing That Everything Works Right

Many people when they leave an Area Reference Person job get lost for a while, and I think it is simply because we don’t have a correct enough understanding about leadership.

At a workshop last month I think we came to a better formulation, which is that becoming a leader really consists of making a commitment (to oneself, one’s fellow leaders, the Community, or whomever) to “from this moment on see that everything works right to the extent that my resources permit.”

In this wider context, who has a particular title or takes on a particular job becomes relatively unimportant. We will take on these roles as is convenient, but all of us at all times will be watching to see that the whole situation is taken care of.

Knowing that we can count on each other this way will take a good deal of the load off anyone in a particular role.

*Harvey Jackins*  
From a letter written in 1980



## A Challenge to Co-Counselors



LK

I want to put out a challenge to all Co-Counselors. I know you are busy. Your plates are full of “to do.” Your time is important. But I know you are concerned about injustice and oppression and you want to be helpful and reach out to people who are suffering. I want to ask you to think and discharge about people who are targeted by our society for destruction.

As you may know, I have been going into prisons in this country since 1974. For the past twenty-five years I have been doing a program especially for Native American prisoners in New England, USA (although it is open to all). It serves seven prisons, in Massachusetts and New Hampshire. My wife and I and my brother and his partner lead circles there. (For many years I also served the prisons of Connecticut, but at eighty-one that is too much of a haul<sup>1</sup> for me.)

It is wonderful work, the most inspiring of my life. Imagine going to a place where everyone is waiting for you, is so happy you came, and where many tell you that you have saved their lives—and they mean it quite literally. I go away feeling good about myself—knowing that I was in the right place, doing a needed thing, and having watched men struggle and grow and find themselves. They are so grateful and respectful and protective of us; we feel safer with them than anywhere on the street. And years later I may hear from one who got out and is doing well and wants to let us know that he couldn’t have made it<sup>2</sup> by himself.

These men, targeted by society, were once babies who only wanted to learn about the world and be close to people and have fun. They didn’t just decide at some point that they wanted to become a drug addict, thief, violent criminal, sex offender, or killer. Their stories will break your heart. They never had a chance. And on top of the abuse and neglect they are hammered by an unjust justice system and uncaring correctional systems. I tell you, they are worth saving! They are worth giving your heart and mind to. You can see real human beings returned to their families, often in better shape than many people on the outside. You can see them able, with a more secure human understanding, to help others, which is their professed desire: to pay back for the help they’ve been given.

<sup>1</sup> Haul means distance to travel.

<sup>2</sup> Made it means succeeded.

As Co-Counselors you are in a great position to do immense good for the individuals you may meet in prisons. If you are an RC teacher, you can offer a fundamentals class, which can become ongoing (the class members will always show up<sup>3</sup>; you have the best thing going in their week!). Have a Co-Counseling session and check with your Area Reference Person and Regional Reference Person about it. Or teach any other thing you know a little about—art, writing, history, a business or trade, a hobby—it doesn’t matter; you can slip in good information about life, human nature, feelings, discharge, and give encouragement and hope. You can listen to these people, you can be the one person in the institution who understands them and treats them like human beings.

Probably you have plenty of feelings about this proposition. They may have prevented you from considering this before. You are welcome to contact me for a phone session, to discharge and ask the questions this notion may have stirred up. (To be sure I get it, please send your e-mail to both of the addresses below.)

Other Co-Counselors out there who go into prisons could tell you the same. Perhaps we could set up a support group for allies to people targeted for destruction. Consider this: the United States has more people incarcerated than any other country—over two million—and U.S. courts give longer sentences than any others I have heard of. (I have been in prisons in Sweden where the administrations want to help the inmates change, where the goal is not punishment but healing.)

I had a dream last night: First I was a young man in prison and I escaped in an exciting drama. Then I went to work, rose in the world, and made so much money that I came back and bought the prison. But unlike other privatized prisons, mine was about programs to help the prisoners find their way—through Co-Counseling, discharge, compassion, and understanding—to the lives denied to them by an oppressive society.

*Medicine Story Manitonquat*  
Greenville, New Hampshire, USA  
<medicinstory@yahoo.com>  
<medicinstory@gmail.com>

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

## Now We Know We Are Not Alone

Now we know we are not alone  
Now we can feel a togetherness  
Now we know that the illusion of aloneness  
Is just a painful memory  
Of a time back then  
When we were new and tiny  
When our hungry lips and eyes  
Reached out with expectation  
Drooped in disappointment  
Our caretakers not unkind  
But distracted beyond measure  
Life's hardships colonising their minds

Now we know we are not alone  
We can face down the haunting isolation  
Toss discouragement to the wind  
We can invite, we can gather  
We can welcome  
Saddened but not defeated  
By small rejections  
Little mistakes  
Inevitable loss  
We can call for each other  
Knock on closed doors  
Move forward arm in arm  
Focus our hungry spirits  
On the joyful task  
Of building our new world

*Micheline Mason*  
London, England



## The 2009 *Guidelines for the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities*

### Revised and updated to

- \* address new conditions in society
- \* address new developments in RC theory, practice, and organization
- \* clarify content that was confusing or incomplete

### Also rewritten and re-organized

- \* with easier-to-read language
- \* a clearer design

*\$3.00 (U.S.), plus postage and handling*  
*To order, see page 109.*



LISA BEDINGER

## Teaching RC for College Credit

Dear Colleagues,

I teach courses about gender, race, and class in relation to "Sociology of Learning," "Women and Work," and "Feminist Research." The first day of each class I teach listening skills and throughout the quarter other RC tools and theory.

The course I most love teaching and that offers students the most opportunity for discharge is "Re-evaluation Counseling," a lower-division for-credit class. It focuses on diversity. Here is my catalog description:

"Re-evaluation Counseling: Introduces the fundamentals of Re-evaluation Counseling (Co-Counseling) and focuses on those aspects of the theory and practice that facilitate living in a diverse world."

I have discharged in Co-Counseling sessions prior to asking college administrators to approve my teaching RC for credit. I've always made my requests in person so that I can

discuss their questions and relate the class to their interests.

Most students who take RC on university campuses do not go on to become active RC Community members. Nevertheless, many RC leaders—teachers; support group leaders; Area, Regional, and Liberation Reference Persons—have taken their first RC classes for course credit in their colleges and universities.

I'm still figuring out how to facilitate the students' transition from for-credit university classes to RC classes in the RC Community. This past year I instituted a "class reunion," which was partially successful. I held it in my home, not far from campus. The students got to catch up\* with one another with long "news and goods," share how they had used RC since we were last together, discharge in long mini-sessions, and ask questions. They got to meet an RC teacher who was

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\* Catch up means get up-to-date.

accepting new students in her Santa Cruz (California, USA) ongoing class and, schedules permitting, arrange with her to join it. One person who did so is now assisting in the Santa Cruz young adult RC class.

If you would like a copy of my "Re-evaluation Counseling" syllabus, please let me know and I'll e-mail it to you.

With love and appreciation,

*Pam Roby*  
*International Liberation*  
*Reference Person for College*  
*and University Faculty*  
Santa Cruz, California, USA  
E-mail: roby@ucsc.edu  
Reprinted from the RC e-mail  
discussion list for leaders of  
college and university faculty



NANCY LEMON

## Sharing the Gift of RC Literature

Some time ago I e-mailed David Ruebain, who wrote an article, "Disability Oppression and Anti-Jewish Oppression," in the July 2009 *Present Time*. I asked him how he thought I might introduce it to a close Jewish friend of mine who has used a wheelchair since a car accident twenty years ago. He encouraged me to trust in the relationship and be willing to listen well.

Recently this friend came to stay with me for a couple of days. We were hanging out<sup>1</sup> before sleeping, and I offered to read the article to her. We chatted and thought about it, paragraph by paragraph, including her talking about her experiences as somebody not born with disabilities but becoming disabled later and the terms "disabled person"

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<sup>1</sup> Hanging out means spending relaxed, unstructured time.

versus "person with disability" and how they are used in different ways in different English-speaking cultures.

A week later she told me that a friend of hers could be interested in something like RC. I said, "Why don't I do an hour-long introduction for you both and you can try it out together?" She set that up a week later. We all discharged and got closer, and the two of them decided to go to an introduction-to-RC evening in our Area.<sup>2</sup>

Yay to the thinking we share through RC literature!

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

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

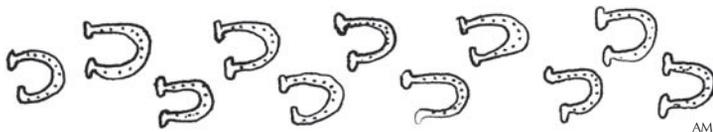
## A Family Workshop in Kenya

A family workshop<sup>1</sup> was held in Kiserian, Nairobi, Kenya, in February 2011. It was led by Chuck Esser.<sup>2</sup> Kenya has been experiencing challenges in government since the presidential elections in 2007. A lot of blood is shed before anyone gives up a seat—because of the concepts that someone holds a seat for life, that no one else can lead until that person dies, and that upon death the position has to be inherited by a family member.

As an RC Community we have been using RC to discharge distresses related to these challenges. The workshop, and “special time,”<sup>3</sup> gave us a glimpse of the reality we are fighting for. We can model leading in Africa using the philosophy of special time, in which young people take charge and are reminded of their value.

We used RC to re-examine our roles as leaders, parents, teachers, brothers, and sisters. Many youth here have inherited parental roles due to an early death in the family or to nieces and nephews being cared for within extended families.

Usually a child is totally disregarded. The adults carry on<sup>4</sup> a conversation as if he or she were not there. Doing special time had an impact on both the adults and the children. The children felt well taken care of. And by giving them the upper hand, allowing them to be fully in charge and paying attention to them, the adults were able to discharge on their oppressor roles and the importance of special time.



Wanjiku Kironyo  
Area Reference Person for Nairobi, Kenya,  
and Apprentice Regional Reference  
Person for Kenya and Surrounds  
Nairobi, Kenya

<sup>1</sup> A family workshop is an RC gathering 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-plus years.

<sup>2</sup> Chuck Esser is the International Commonality Reference Person for Family Work.

<sup>3</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>3</sup> Carry on means conduct.

## Objectives Achieved

The objectives of the recent family workshop in Kenya<sup>1</sup> were as follows:

1. To meet the young people’s needs first,
2. To give the adults enough attention that they could heal some early hurts,
3. To provide a model of what is possible in relationships with young people,
4. To take part<sup>2</sup> in “special time”<sup>3</sup>—young people doing their favorite things, or trying new things, with the aware attention of an adult.

It was the first family workshop in Kenya. Those attending were mostly from Kenya—primarily Nairobi. Also attending were Bafana Matsebula from Swaziland, Abitimo Odongkara from Uganda, and Chuck Esser from the United States. The parents and other adults played games chosen by the young people, including football, hide and seek, and racing. The young people took the lead, and the adults followed what they suggested and gave them the best of their attention.

We achieved our objectives and learnt much. We understood that it makes sense to spend time with our children and have fun with them.

<sup>1</sup> See previous article.

<sup>2</sup> Take part means participate.

<sup>3</sup> See footnote 3 in previous article.

Victor Kebane  
Nairobi, Kenya

## The Most Enjoyable Activity

Upon receiving the invitation to the family workshop,<sup>1</sup> I felt honored. I looked forward to the event, knowing the time was coming to reconnect and share. Meeting my fellow RCers who were ready to listen to me, and adding my RC knowledge, were great expectations. They kept me anxious for the day.

As the days passed, indeed it wasn't a dream anymore. Being one of the participants at the workshop, I got all the attention I needed in sessions and support groups. The listening and caring RCers let me be open and share my distress, with healthy discharge.

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<sup>1</sup> See first article on previous page.

I can't forget to highlight my special time<sup>2</sup> with the young person. Having the child be in charge and take me around the farm made me admire being a father. It made me learn more about the child and feel humbled. It made me ask myself many questions, some of which were unanswered. I wondered if parents felt the same when sharing time with their children. Indeed, it was beautiful and the most enjoyable activity of the workshop.

*Daniel Wambua Kyuna*  
Nairobi, Kenya

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<sup>2</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.



JO PERRY

## Learning from Special Time

The workshop in Kiserian (Nairobi, Kenya)<sup>1</sup> was one of the most powerful I have ever attended. It focused on children and how they are supposed to be treated during their special time.<sup>2</sup> As a father, I had a lot to learn, and the lessons improved my parenting. You have to follow what your child wants and express interest in the whole exercise. It triggered my thoughts and helped me realize my mistakes in dealing with my three young daughters.

Thumbs up<sup>3</sup> to all the participants and especially the children for their time and cooperation throughout the whole workshop. They made it the success it was.

*Daniel Wainaina*  
Nairobi, Kenya

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<sup>1</sup> See first article on previous page.

<sup>2</sup> See footnote 2 in previous article.

<sup>3</sup> Thumbs up means congratulations.

## Special Time Builds Healthy Relationships

**K**iserian was the best choice of venue for the family workshop,<sup>1</sup> since it is located outside the city, where calm and serenity prevail.

I learnt how parents can build healthy relationships with their young ones by listening to them and having some special time<sup>2</sup> with them.

In my special time, I learnt that our young ones constantly crave our attention but that rarely do we yield to their demands. This may have serious repercussions—low self-esteem and a feeling of not being wanted or appreciated.

I was overwhelmed by my special-time experience; we both equally enjoyed it. We did things that are otherwise regarded in the society as taboo for a grown-up, like tyre racing.<sup>3</sup>

*Joseph Gathuru*  
Nairobi, Kenya

<sup>3</sup> Tyre racing is car racing.

<sup>1</sup> See first article on page 57.

<sup>2</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.



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## Children and Adults in Harmony with Each Other

**I**t was a pleasure to be part of the family workshop in Kiserian\*—a situation in which both the young and the parents could express their feelings.

At certain times in life, parents reverse their thoughts about their children and find a reason to sit down with them and listen to them, though these are normally rare occasions. Every human being has the ability to

differentiate right from wrong and always has a conscience.

I would encourage more of these workshops so that the adults, the young adults, and the children can be in harmony with each other and without the feeling of being left out.

*Maureen Akinyi*  
Nairobi, Kenya

## Good Results Eventually

It's been my experience many times to not realize the profound significance of something I've done until long after I've done it. In general, if you do your best, it turns out to be\* very good sooner or later.

*Harvey Jackins*  
From a letter written in 1981

\* Turns out to be means results in being.

\* See first article on page 57.



ALAN SPRUNG



## Start with Making Friends

I am glad you are growing and your power is surging. I'm sorry that things are still slow for young people's activity. It sounds, from out here, that the first, most difficult step is not being taken—that is, for you, and the other young people who will support you, to simply make large numbers of friends. You need to start the activities that will lead naturally into the essential activities of counseling, even though to start with they may appear to be bull sessions,<sup>1</sup> having dinner together, taking turns being listened to, and so on.

<sup>1</sup> Bull sessions means meaningless conversations.

When you have lots of friends, and you are listening to them well and some of them are learning to listen to each other, then the question of a class will arise naturally.

If one isn't already in the habit of making lots of friends, that's a tough step to take, but there's no substitute for it. I am pretty<sup>2</sup> sure that some persistent activity in that direction, giving you enough contacts, will lead to what you want.

*Harvey Jackins*

From a letter written in 1980

<sup>2</sup> Pretty means quite.

## Inspired by the *Guidelines*

Our Community has just received bundles of the new *Guidelines for the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities*—a significantly reworded, re-organised, and revised version, in a larger format.

Every four years, when the International RC Community has its World Conference, the *Guidelines* are revised and an updated version is printed. For the 2009 edition, much thought was put into making the language clearer and easier to read. However, even without that, I have been inspired by the *Guidelines* since I was first introduced to them a few years after I started Co-Counselling. I have found them, like other aspects of our organisation, quietly yet profoundly revolutionary. Something I find particularly inspiring is that each Guideline is followed by an explanation—an explicit and well-thought-out reason for having that Guideline.

The *Guidelines* outline, in a transparent way, the structure, functioning, and goals of the RC Communities. They make fascinating reading, because the way that the RC Communities are organised is so thoughtful, and so unusual in our current societies.

*Karen Rosauer*

St. Kilda Ease, Victoria, Australia  
Reprinted from the newsletter of the  
Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, RC Community



JO ANNE GARRETT

# Appreciating PRESENT TIME

Dear Tim,\*

Tons of thanks for the January issue of PRESENT TIME. PRESENT TIME has always been the most beautiful reality and useful contradiction to my distresses. This issue, too, is close to heart. I have heard that people hug teddy bears and sleep, but I am doing it with PRESENT TIME. Your talk, "Overcoming Early Defeats and Discouragement," was lovely. There were tears throughout while reading it and smiles of hope often. Thank you, Tim. I am glad that you are in my life. I am privileged that I have PRESENT TIME in my life.

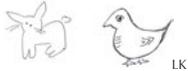


RC

S.J. Shashikala  
Ramanchandrapuram, Bangalore, India

\* Tim Jackins

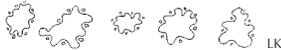
I appreciate that these Rational Island publications are available to all of us. It is important that we have this access to so much good, clear thinking.



LK

Rachel Winters  
Chapel Hill, North Carolina, USA

PRESENT TIME feels like nourishment to read, and I am grateful for it. With appreciation for every letter, syllable, word, page, you shepherd into our lives.



LK

Joanne Bray  
Greenwich, Connecticut, USA

I found the July PRESENT TIME very valuable and look forward to seeing the next one.



AEB

Julian Weissglass  
Santa Barbara, California, USA

PRESENT TIME is inspiring and clear.



LK

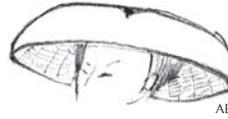
Jan Wulling  
Eugene, Oregon, USA

Thanks for all the great literature, all the time. . . . my class and I are loving it.



SW

Alysia Tate  
Chicago, Illinois, USA



AB

PRESENT TIME looks and reads great.



AEB

Bas Hurkmans

Westerpark, Amsterdam, The Netherlands



KK

PRESENT TIME is beautiful, as usual. So much good thinking and useful information.



KK

Pam Maccabee  
Glastonbury, Connecticut, USA

Thanks for the excellence of PRESENT TIME. I more and more am thrilled, look forward to, run to my post box, when it comes out. I very much appreciate Tim Jackins' key articles and love the quote on the front. I can see the depth of so many people's thinking and the movement forward. PRESENT TIME encourages that movement.



AEB

Diane Balsler  
Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts, USA

I am a huge fan of PRESENT TIME.



KK

Amy Strano  
Woodside, New York, USA

Thanks for keeping this inspiring, insightful, and important publication coming out every three months.



LK

Dale Evarts  
Durham, North Carolina, USA

I appreciate always the careful and attractive assemblage of wisdom, experience, insight, beauty, and fun that all at Rational Island Publishers share with me regularly.



LK

Russell Hayes  
Lexington, Kentucky, USA



RANDI FREUNDLICH

## Jews in Alliance with Arab Liberation

As Jews, let's not go silent while there is a growing people's liberation movement, and accompanying unrest, in Egypt. While fears rise in Israel about what might happen next and how it could negatively affect Israel, let's speak up together with *rational* voices.

I encourage discharging and thinking together, as Jews and allies, about what is happening, what policies to put forward, and how to reach out to others.

As I watched the unfolding events in Egypt, I couldn't help but think about the clear understandings Harvey<sup>1</sup> put into our RC Jewish liberation draft policy statements (which I encourage everyone to read again), about how Israel is set up as a "buffer state" in a region of Arab countries with autocratic rulers and how the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is used to divert the attention of oppressed Arab peoples away from the oppressive situations in their own countries.

Now that an important and growing Arab movement is rising up against the autocratic rulers, I think we need to celebrate this positive advance in Arab liberation. What if we, as Jews, were at the *forefront* of support? We'd say, "We support you and stand with you. We want to stand together for the liberation of the Arab peoples and for their living side by side in the region with a strong, progressive Israel."

Let's not wait quietly in isolation, and fear of what might happen next and how it might affect Israel. Instead let's be proactive and reach out to our Arab and, in particular, Palestinian brothers and sisters, and to Israeli Jewish loves, and ask what this time is like for them. This morning I called Lotahn,<sup>2</sup> in Israel, to ask what he was thinking and what he was hearing from his friends and allies. He said he was going to reach out to Palestinians he knew and ask what this time was like for them.

This is a time to discharge fear, and to reach for close contact with Arabs and Israelis with whom we have relationships. We also get to discharge on the years of missed opportunities to move forward on resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We need to think afresh in this moment and seize the new opportunities this current situation presents.

Most important, how can we reach for policies that do not again have Israel and the United States being seen as opposed to a strong and important Arab people's liberation movement? We need to put our full weight behind the new and growing Arab liberation voice, while maintaining that an alliance between this Arab liberation movement, progressive Israeli forces, and Israeli liberation is not only possible but a necessity.

I would love to hear from our Arab brothers and sisters, and from Israelis. We need to stay close and in solidarity.



Cherie Brown  
International Liberation  
Reference Person for Jews  
Silver Spring, Maryland, USA  
Reprinted from the RC e-mail  
discussion list for leaders of Jews

<sup>1</sup> Harvey Jackins

<sup>2</sup> Lotahn Raz, an RC leader in Haifa, Israel



thought might be missed. After half an hour the segment ended and I got another mini-session—this time on how enraged I felt about racism and imperialism. When I listened later to a recording of the program, I was surprised at how gentle I sounded and how much sense I made. I also thought of several things I wished I had said, or said differently.

Meanwhile the staff and I continued working on the solidarity statement. Ultimately it included most of what I wanted.

One of my favorite parts is about hope. The uprising is hopeful because

it breaks with the scapegoating used by imperialism and dictators to deflect popular unhappiness away from their own misdeeds and toward Israel's oppression of the Palestinians.

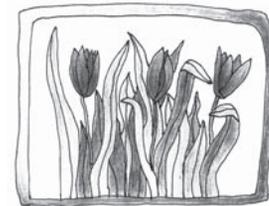
If you would like to see the whole statement, you can e-mail me for the link.

I certainly was completely incompetent and inadequate<sup>3</sup> to face

<sup>3</sup> The author is referring to a counseling direction, against pretense, that Harvey Jackins sometimes offered to people: "I am obviously completely incompetent and completely inadequate to handle the challenges which reality places before me. However, (fortunately or unfortunately), I happen to be the best person available."

the challenges that reality had placed before me. However, fortunately or unfortunately, I happened to be the best person available. I am happy about how I rose to the challenges, used RC tools, showed myself and my thinking, stayed connected with many people, and stood uncompromisingly for Jewish and Arab liberation. What's next?

*Glen Hauer*  
Berkeley, California, USA



KK

## "Walking on Both Legs"

For some years, I have been active in political and women's work outside of RC. Taking RC to my wide-world-change work has strengthened both that work and my RC work.

I was elected to the board of the Ethnic Minority Women's Council, the umbrella organisation for ethnic minority women's organisations. It was creating my own network, the Multiethnic Women's Network Against Racism and Sexism, that made it possible for me to be elected.

We have board members from Iraq, Tanzania, Burundi, Somalia, Kazakhstan, Slovenia, and Denmark.

We had been struggling with internalised sexism and racism, so I offered to do a one-day women's workshop for the new board (elected in September this year) on how our work, our cooperation, and our relationships were affected by this and what we could do about it. They all accepted.

A few weeks ago I led the workshop. Ten of us attended. Two of us were white.

The workshop went well. I talked about oppression and internalised oppression and how sexism and racism operate when we are together. I also explained about distresses, healing with discharge, the importance of listening (without interruption or comments), and confidentiality.

Then each woman got a turn to talk about the following: the qualities and values she brought from her background, two or three important events in her life and what she had learned from them, how she had been affected by sexism in

her country and in Denmark, what was hard and what she was proud of and pleased about in her life, and, for the women targeted by racism, how they were affected by being the targets of racism in Denmark. All were relieved to talk about racism; it is a confusing concept in Denmark.

*continued . . .*



TERESA D'AMATO

## WIDE WORLD CHANGING

... continued

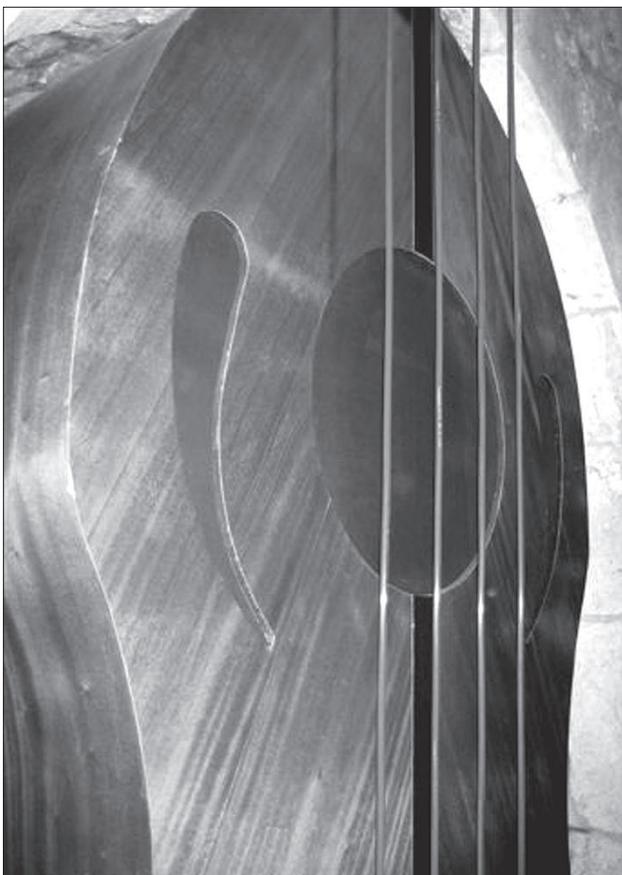
The turns were moving. Everyone learned a lot about racism and sexism. They had been told that there is no sexism and racism in Denmark, but their experiences showed that to be a lie. It became clear that we are all affected by sexism and that racism interferes with both our inter-country relationships and those between the white women and the women targeted by racism. The reality of and the extent of our diversity became clearer. Many myths were exposed about women from the various countries. In Denmark, ethnic minority women are viewed and treated as one group, which, of course, they are not.

The women targeted by racism were strongly pulled to adopt the victim position. Several used the space (not often available) to express how hard the conditions are. There was great respect from all and for all. It became clearer that each woman could contribute enormously to our group. We ended with excellent appreciations from all to all.

Before the workshop, the other white woman had proposed that we get an external consultant to give us a hand<sup>1</sup> in early spring. After the workshop she said that that would be completely unnecessary because they had

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<sup>1</sup> A hand means some help.



LYNDALL KATZ

me. We've decided that I will lead a follow up-workshop in March of 2011.

One result of the workshop is that my network (Multiethnic Women's Network Against Sexism and Racism) is expanding. Every woman targeted by racism I meet wants to join. We are now twenty women (up from twelve in October). I feel increasingly confident about inviting people and sharing what I know.

My network is basically a support group. We are together socially for a while and then divide the time.<sup>2</sup> I have explained that we need such a group to be effective. Out there we have our attention on changing the world, but we need attention for ourselves as well, and attention together with and from other women.

Both my RC work and my wide-world-change work have been empowered by my "walking on both legs"—working both inside and outside of RC. It is gratifying!

Susanne Langer  
Copenhagen, Denmark  
Reprinted from the RC e-mail discussion  
list for leaders of wide world change

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<sup>2</sup> Divide the time means take turns being listened to by the group.

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## Some Basics of RC Family Work (CD 20)

An overview of RC family work,\* given by Tim Jackins at the African Pre-World Conference in July 2009. An excellent introduction for people new to family work and a fresh review for experienced Co-Counselors.

(This CD is part of the RC Teacher Update series.)

\$10 (U.S.), plus postage and handling

To order, see page 109.

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\* 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-plus years.



## Italian Women Take Charge

I'd like to share with you all how powerful it was to be part of one of the most important demonstrations ever organized by Italian women.

"It's only the beginning." So ran the titles in Italian newspapers this morning, with photo after photo of piazza<sup>1</sup> after piazza, throughout Italy, packed with hundreds of thousands of delighted Italians, finally taking a stand and making it clear that they were no longer going to tolerate being shamed, disgraced, debased, and disrespected by their corrupt, oppressive Prime Minister.<sup>2</sup> Not only did people gather in two hundred and forty cities in Italy, but also in capitol cities throughout Europe and the world. What a success! What a day of reclaiming power for everyone!

Who were the organizers? Two women, Francesa and Cristina Comencini, daughters of a well-known film director and film directors in their own right. Their idea spread quickly through women's political groups; through environmental groups; among women, of all ages and from all walks of life,<sup>3</sup> who had hung in<sup>4</sup> desperately in small groups, discouraged and feeling disempowered by the ever-increasing, insulting abuse and objectification of women.

I was born in Dublin, Ireland, in the 1940s into a well-off<sup>5</sup> Protestant family. I picked up<sup>6</sup> the rules of not mixing with or marrying Catholics. We had to keep to ourselves, reveal

as little about ourselves as possible, look perfect, and act like we were superior beings. Our schools, clubs, and friends were Protestant. Not belonging to or being part of Irish society left deep hurts.

I brought the resulting patterns with me when I moved here to Italy forty-three years ago. Irish liberation work has freed things up enormously. My weekly phone sessions with another Irish Protestant inch me on. Still, the old chronics<sup>7</sup> can make it hard for me to feel or act on any sense of belonging.

I went to the demonstration with my closest woman friend, who is also a safe Co-Counsellor for me. On getting there, we saw not only many women, all wearing white scarves and looking like waves moving on a sea of people, but also many men. The sheer physical contact—body to body, eyes to eyes, faces so close and pleased with themselves—was a huge contradiction<sup>8</sup> to even the

tightest of isolation patterns. The number of people all wanting the same thing was a contradiction for my friend, who, perhaps like many people on the planet, had been made to feel like the only one with any political principles, morals, or ideals.

We occupied one of the largest piazzas in Milano—filling the entire pedestrian area, extending down many large streets, and overflowing into the Piazza Duomo. The main speakers were women, and the cheering crowd was more than enthusiastic. The three male speakers got lots of encouragement as well. It was an orderly, benign, mixed-class crowd, with the clear intention of recovering women's dignity.

Look what we can do when the time is ripe for change! I also hope that RC will be helpful to many people in the changing times to come.

June Mackay  
Carezzano, Italy

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

<sup>7</sup> Chronic patterns

<sup>8</sup> Contradiction to distress

<sup>1</sup> A piazza is an open square.

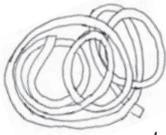
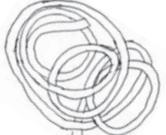
<sup>2</sup> Silvio Berlusconi, who is accused of behaviors with young women that humiliate women as a whole and degrade female dignity, and is under investigation for allegedly paying for sex with a seventeen-year-old girl

<sup>3</sup> Walks of life means backgrounds.

<sup>4</sup> Hung in means persisted.

<sup>5</sup> Well-off means wealthy.

<sup>6</sup> Picked up means adopted.

**STOP!**

**GO! NOW!**  
to the lists in the back of this *Present Time*.

**LOOK!** at these lists.  
(It won't take more than ten minutes.)

**LET US KNOW!**  
if you find any inaccuracies.

**SEND!**  
e-mail corrections to <publications@rc.org> or mail them to  
Rational Island Publishers, 719 2nd Avenue North, Seattle,  
Washington 98109, USA.

**MUCH APPRECIATION!**

*Rational Island Publishers*

## “Today’s Thought”

Dear RC users of electronic media,

The RC web site includes a page on which each day there is a different RC thought about the world—usually from Harvey Jackins or me. Many people have requested assistance in making this page the home page of their Internet browser. If you do that, “Today’s Thought” about reality will be the first thing that appears on your screen when you log on to the Internet.

There are many different types of web browsers. We have written out below, for the three most common types, how to make “Today’s Thought” the home page. Try these instructions and see if having an RC thought as your starting point helps you to hold perspective.

With love and appreciation,  
*Tim Jackins*

### For Safari

- 1) Open Safari.
- 2) Open <<http://www.rc.org/thoughts/index.html>>.
- 3) Choose PREFERENCES from the Safari menu and click GENERAL.
- 4) At the “Home Page” setting, click SET TO CURRENT PAGE.

### For Mozilla Firefox

- 1) Open Mozilla Firefox.
- 2) Open <<http://www.rc.org/thoughts/index.html>>.
- 3) Choose PREFERENCES from the Firefox menu and click GENERAL.
- 4) At the “Home Page” setting, click SET TO CURRENT PAGE.

### For Internet Explorer

- 1) Open Internet Explorer.
- 2) Open <<http://www.rc.org/thoughts/index.html>>.
- 3) Click TOOLS on the Menu bar, then choose INTERNET OPTIONS. Internet Options dialog box appears.
- 4) Click the GENERAL tab.
- 5) Click the USE CURRENT button in the “Home Page” section.
- 6) Click OK in the Internet Options dialog box.



BETH CRUISE

## What's New on the RC Web Site?



BETH CRUISE

- **New Audio**—An Introductory Lecture by Harvey Jackins

The first audio recording available for listening on the RC web site is of Harvey Jackins giving an introductory lecture about RC, in 1986 (86 minutes). You can find it under "About RC" on the RC home page: <[www.rc.org](http://www.rc.org)>.

- **The 2009 Guidelines**

The full text of the 2009 *Guidelines for the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities* can now be found and searched electronically on the RC web site at <[http://www.rc.org/publications/guidelines\\_2009/index.html](http://www.rc.org/publications/guidelines_2009/index.html)>. The *Guidelines* can be searched by table of contents, by section, and by topic.

- **Past Issues of Present Time**

Volunteers are continuing their work to post past issues of *Present Time* on the RC web site. Find them by going to the RC home page <[www.rc.org](http://www.rc.org)> and clicking on *Present Time* (under Publications).

### Web Special

A bundle of twelve CDs of talks given by Tim Jackins at workshops he led in 2006, 2007, and 2008—four CDs for each year.

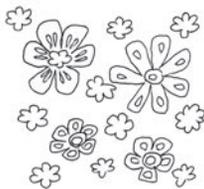
(Part of the RC Teacher Update series.)

See page 104 for the titles of the talks.

\$40 (U.S.), plus postage and handling

Available only on the RC web site

<<http://www.rc.org>>.



LK

## People Caring, After the Quake

I'm back in Christchurch (New Zealand). My sister Ali and I drove down from Nelson on Sunday, with our car loaded with food and water for people here. My house is still okay—amazingly, after two major earthquakes and over four thousand aftershocks.

We have been clearing silt, which is all over the property. Two women I don't know did a lot of the clearing while I was away. They came by with shovels and a wheel barrow and just set to work. My neighbour asked for their names so that I could ring<sup>1</sup> and thank them, but they said they didn't need thanks and were just happy to help. People are doing things like that all over the city.

For lots of people, water, power, and phones still aren't working. There is no sewerage system in large areas. The inner city, where the main damage was, is cordoned off and people are still searching the rubble for bodies. It's hard to grasp that this is going on<sup>2</sup> in my city.

The kindness of people has been wonderful to see. There are signs up saying, "We have water here—help yourselves," or "You can wash your clothes here if your power is off." A Student Volunteer Army is working to clear silt, cart water, do whatever people need. The

Farmy Army, a group of farmers who have come into town with their farm machinery, is helping to clear roads and sections. Another group is flying in hot meals from a nearby town, for people without power.

Last night we had an RC support group, and ten of us were able to get together. It was great to see each other and to discharge, hug, sing, and just be together. We'll continue to do that regularly. My sister is also an RC teacher, so we have been swapping time<sup>3</sup> as we go.

The aftershocks continue. The experts say we could still have more—of 5+ or even 6 magnitude. Many people have left Christchurch, but for many more of us this is our home and we want to be part of rebuilding the city.

We need to grieve for the people we have lost and for our familiar buildings. At present I focus on what is still here: my friends and family, my RC Community, my workmates. Also, the environment. We still have our rivers, our beaches, our parks. The Port Hills—they haven't gone. In fact, I read that since the last quake they are now higher by several centimetres!

*Diane Shannon*  
Regional Reference Person for New Zealand  
Christchurch, Aotearoa/New Zealand

<sup>1</sup> Ring means telephone.

<sup>2</sup> Going on means happening.

<sup>3</sup> Swapping time means taking turns listening to each other.



TOGO • MARION OUPHOUET

## Speak with Confidence, not Alarm

Your contributions to *Wide World Changing*<sup>1</sup> are regretfully rejected. You have slipped again into the old chronic<sup>2</sup> of the "pointing out," "viewing with alarm," "somebody ought to" type of thing. If you will read over what you have written and think of its effect upon people, I think you will realize that it would tend to dismay and disarm people rather than arouse them to action.

The truth of what we say always depends, in part, on the effect of it on the people who hear it said, and we need to learn to speak always from a position of confidence, reflecting the benign reality, rather than our panic over patterns.

*Harvey Jackins*  
From a letter written in 1980

<sup>1</sup> The RC journal for people interested in social change

<sup>2</sup> Chronic pattern

*The following eleven articles, excerpted from some of the RC e-mail discussion lists, are about the recent protests in Wisconsin, USA, and several other U.S. states.*



## Protests in Wisconsin

### FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 18

I am proud to tell you what has been happening for the past week in Madison, Wisconsin, USA. It's been a great example of middle- and working-class people standing together, with a sense of their collective power. I think Harvey<sup>1</sup> is smiling.

Last Thursday the news was released that our newly-Republican-controlled legislature and governor would be voting on a budget bill. The governor said that to eliminate the deficit, all unions of public employees, except firefighters and police, had to be prevented from negotiating anything other than their salaries. Historically, our state has been a strong union state, and our population doesn't like being told what to do. Teachers and other workers were scared and outraged. I started discharging and talking with my husband, who teaches six- and seven-year-olds and is a union representative for his building. I'd had the privilege of being at the RC Middle-Class Leaders' Conference with Seán Ruth<sup>2</sup> in October, at which Seán had encouraged us to keep thinking as if it could matter to all of us.

On Tuesday, rallies were held at our capitol building, organized mainly by the unions for teachers and public workers and attended during the lunch hour and after school by thousands of other (mostly middle-class) workers. The next day teachers called in sick citywide and the schools had to be closed because there weren't enough teachers. Wednesday's rally

<sup>1</sup> Harvey Jackins

<sup>2</sup> Seán Ruth is the International Liberation Reference Person for Middle-Class People.

then brought out teachers, university students, parents, and children. Massive groups of high school students walked to a rally, closing one of the main arteries into the city. They chanted, "We support our teachers!"

More and more people keep coming from around the state. Schools were closed again for a third day, not just in Madison but in many communities around the state. Yesterday's crowds were estimated to be at least twenty-five thousand—young and old, holding signs, pushing strollers, listening to speeches, and chanting to young adults' drumming. When the bill came up for discussion, it turned out that<sup>3</sup> fourteen Democratic senators had escaped to another state to prevent the vote.

We'll see what happens next with the law, the budget deficit, and the economic situation, but as Harvey used to say, it's the infrastructure of organizing and the relationships we build along the way that are the real gain.

### SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 20

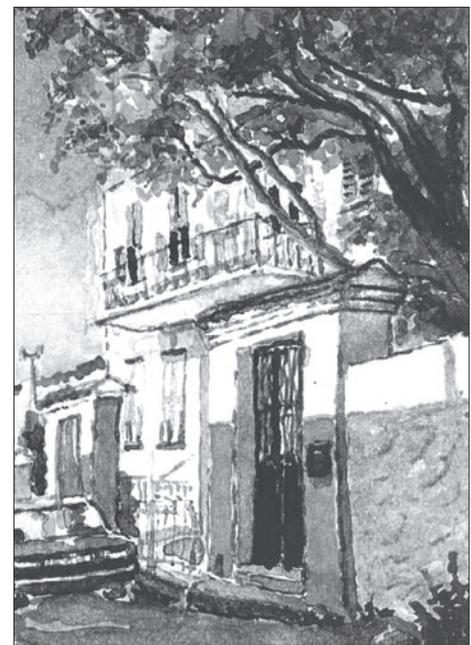
As you may have heard, the protests in Wisconsin have continued and grown. Today I heard an estimate of seventy thousand people. "The union united will never be divided," and "Tell me what democracy looks like. This is what democracy looks like!" were some of the many chants. Trade workers from throughout the state showed up with signs for their local unions, each group seeming like one proud piece of a large and important fabric.

<sup>3</sup> It turned out that means as it happened.

Wisconsin is in the north and center of the United States. It is mostly rural, with small farm towns like the one I grew up in. Many of us who live here have feelings of insignificance and isolation. We also have a history of needing to work together to survive, so cooperation seems sensible. That said, standing together with so many people who were feeling and acting like a unit on behalf of everyone's interests was a new picture of reality to keep in my mind forever. And then to chant, "The world is watching"—well, let's say that our attention wasn't on our humility and insignificance patterns!

When Harvey talked about getting ready for the collapsing society, I thought that I would have to be much bigger, clearer, and more influential than I was, with much more of a sense of my power. I can confidently say to you, since it has happened to

*continued . . .*



ONE OF THE MICHALOGLEIKA HOUSES • KATERINA STAVROPOULOU-VLACHOU



JO PERRY



... continued

me, that it shows up at your door and you do what you can do, which is more interesting than not doing. Or, even more surprisingly, you find that you already did it. For years I encouraged my husband to be active in his union, and it turned out that his school influenced others to walk out. There are likely many stories like mine, of one thing leading to another. Now, seventy thousand. Here. Amazing.

Later

During one of the rallies, two Madison RCers found me and my brother, also a Co-Counselor, and told us that one of them was to be interviewed in an hour by the *New York Times*. Would we like to give her time?<sup>4</sup> Yes we would! Picture us in a narrow hallway on the top floor of the capitol giving her thirty-five minutes of counseling, interrupted only once by four police officers politely stepping over us. Then we gave the other RCer five minutes, since she'd just been interviewed by someone making a film. The world really does want to hear what we have to say. And we have good things to say.

**FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 25**

In the RC Community we are using our sessions and classes to discharge the feelings that are coming up for us. We started our

<sup>4</sup> Give her time means listen to her.

fundamentals class tonight by describing some of the favorite signs we had seen. I think we need more discharge and thinking time than we've taken, to be able to act clearly and relaxedly and, especially, put out our vision. How do we do that in the middle of this? Do we prioritize non-RC relationships for a while, since there's so much of an open chance to listen and share? How do we take time for both discharge and relationships and also work and stay informed? How do we lead RC Communities when there are big common restimulations and remarkable opportunities? I am curious now about how RC Communities in other parts of the world have handled crises. What have you learned?

Maybe this weekend we can do a listening project,<sup>5</sup> since crowds are expected to swell to a hundred thousand. A number of topics interest me, like "Where to Go from Here?" or "How Do You Think You Can Keep from Getting Discouraged?" or "What Are the Best Ways You Know of to Talk to People Who Disagree with You?"

What do you think? What would you ask? What have you asked if you've done it before? I'd love to hear your thinking.

Not everyone in Wisconsin is supportive. Along with commercials on television for the unions, there are others for the governor, sponsored by the Americans for Prosperity (privatize everything and eliminate government). There are a lot of people to win as allies, and we need to be more strategic and thoughtful than we have been.

<sup>5</sup> In an RC listening project several Co-Counselors go to a public place and offer to listen to passersby about some important issue, such as racism or a current war. They may hold signs that invite people to share their thinking about that issue.

**MONDAY, MARCH 7**

The perspectives we are exposed to in RC are so helpful in understanding and making use of what is happening here in Wisconsin. Mary Hodgson<sup>6</sup> has been pointing out the increasing feeling of powerlessness across society. Barbara Love<sup>7</sup> has been encouraging us to visit and revisit the hopefulness in the fact that we in the United States now have an African American president. Harvey's<sup>8</sup> pamphlet *Logical Thinking About a Future Society* offers principles for organizing people. It's so clear to me as I talk with friends and neighbors that what we in RC have most to offer is our perspective.

The protests in Madison are ranging from a thousand to thirty-five thousand people every day. It is clearer and clearer how important this is to the labor movement, to people's sense of power, and to our being able to envision a society that's fair and just, without accepting the pretense that we already have it.

The rallies are unifying people. Groups are gathering as identities—the Arts March, the Immigrant Workers for Labor Rights Rally. Nurses are sponsoring a big "funeral" parade to address the budget cuts for poor people. On Sunday, U.S. Mail carriers from all over the Midwest got together and marched. Twenty-two hundred farmers are signed up to come to the capitol with their tractors.

In our front yard we have a bed sheet attached to poles stuck in the snow with great big letters on it saying, "KILL THE BILL." Every time we're outside, people smile and yell to us. This morning our neighbor

<sup>6</sup> Mary Hodgson is an RC leader in Seattle, Washington, USA.

<sup>7</sup> Barbara Love is the International Liberation Reference Person for People of African Heritage.

<sup>8</sup> Harvey Jackins'

shouted, "Solidarity!" as he walked to his car.

We are gaining a sense of solidarity within our RC Community. In a conference call open to any RCer in Madison, seven of us took a helpful five minutes apiece to discharge before Saturday's rally. Sometimes we see each other at the rallies, but mostly we're lost in the crowds. One thing that has impressed me during these weeks has been seeing many people who are no longer active in the RC Community. I'd forgotten about some of them, but here they are now!

We RCers are taking this opportunity to propose ideas, step in when things are hurtful or irrational, encourage leadership, strategize with others, and build relationships—along with listening. It's such a chance to try things.

#### THURSDAY, MARCH 10

Tonight has been eventful. The senate Republicans figured out how to vote away collective bargaining, apart from the budget bill, and did it in minutes, without the missing Democratic senators and just after the capitol closed. News traveled fast. Many of us got e-mails and messages within the hour, from many sources, saying to drop everything and go to the capitol. It

*It's so clear to me as I talk with friends and neighbors that what we in RC have most to offer is our perspective.*

reminded me of a castle guard sounding the trumpet and everyone rushing to help.

All of this happened right before we RCers were to meet to discharge on current events and taking our power. To prepare for the meeting, I had written an e-mail articulating why I thought this was an historic moment to practice "decide, act, discharge." Here's part of what I said:

"I'm thinking of this protesting period in Madison as the chance we've been waiting for to take leadership in whatever ways we can. It mostly won't look like being at the head of things. It may be backing<sup>9</sup> someone, initiating or deepening relationships with people, going out of our comfort zone in new ways and seeing what happens, or speaking out. It's also about taking the time to discharge on our ideas, significance,

<sup>9</sup> Backing means supporting.

inhibitions, and successes. It's about us thinking, 'What do we want to do?' and then trying it. And then discharging about it.

"It's also, of course, a scary time for those of us who will be directly affected by the bill and the budget. Wheee! And possibly discouraging. Also wheee! Time to clean out the closets. We get to look at the early feelings, openly and together."

Tonight, with even more feelings "up," we were all set to get together, but we also had a strong pull to be at the center of the action at the capitol. Many times these days the question is how best to use our time. More strategy? More discharge? More connection? More bold action? More rest? We decided to meet and consider together what to do. We agreed that after some discharge some of us would go together to the capitol, some would stay and discharge more, and some would go home to rest and take care of responsibilities. It was so easy! After mini-sessions I gave a pep talk,<sup>10</sup> telling everyone about the amazing e-mails I'd received from many of you on this discussion list, and encouraging each of us to stretch ourselves.

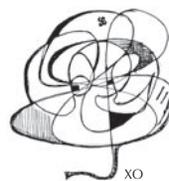
Holly Jorgenson  
Madison, Wisconsin, USA

<sup>10</sup> A pep talk is energizing encouragement.

## U.S. Domination

As I've written my posts about Wisconsin's amazing people's uprising, I have wondered in the back of my mind what it's like for those of you who are non-USers to see so many posts by USers about things that are happening in the United States. I want to be thoughtful of you who are so often dominated by U.S. news, actions, and language.

I would appreciate thoughts from you who are from outside the United States, or whose first language is not English, about how best to think about this. I'll wait with my next post.



Holly Jorgenson  
Madison, Wisconsin, USA





## Writing in Turns

Hello RCers,

My name is Jasmine Maduro. My first language is Papiamentu. I live in Curaçao.

Thank you Holly<sup>1</sup> for bringing this up. I am so glad, because I had trouble reading everything so I stopped reading the postings at all. When I noticed, I did one session and came up with<sup>2</sup> an idea. I liked what happened on the women's list recently, when Diane Balser<sup>3</sup> asked women to write in turns, when women oppressed by racism wrote before white women, and so on.

Jasmine Maduro  
Sun Valley, Curaçao

<sup>1</sup> Holly Jorgenson. See article, "U.S. Domination," on previous page.

<sup>2</sup> Came up with means thought of.

<sup>3</sup> Diane Balser is the International Liberation Reference Person for Women.

### La Humanidad de las y los Estadounidenses

Querida Holly,\*

Como una mexicana quien está casada con un estadounidense y ha vivido en los Estados Unidos por los últimos tres años, aprecio mucho tus correos. Es inspirador ver la otra cara de los Estados Unidos, la cara de gente luchando para cambiar las cosas que no tienen sentido. Cuando desahogo sobre el imperialismo estadounidense, usualmente tengo que notar lo aterrador que es el conformismo de los estadounidenses y cómo están de acuerdo con las políticas opresivas imperialistas de su país en relación al resto del mundo. La lucha en Wisconsin es una gran contradicción a esto. Me recuerda la humanidad de los estadounidenses y me permite más fácilmente sentirme conectada y cercana a mi familia estadounidense. Es un recordatorio de que los estadounidenses entienden la opresión y quieren combatirla, como el resto del mundo. Eso es esperanzador.

Emiko Saldivar  
Santa Barbara, California, EEUU

\* Holly Jorgenson. Mira el artículo, "U.S. Domination," en la página previa.

English translation of the preceding article:

### *The Humanness of USers*

Dear Holly,\*

*As a Mexican who is married to a USer and has lived in the United States for the last three years, I really appreciate your postings. It is inspiring to see the other face of the United States, the face of people struggling and fighting to change the things that do not make sense. When I discharge about U.S. imperialism, I usually have to look at how scary the thought is that USers agree or are compliant with their country's oppressive imperialist policies toward the rest of the world. The struggle of Wisconsin is a great contradiction to that. It reminds me of the humanness of USers and makes it easier to feel connected and close to my U.S. family. It is a reminder that USers understand oppression and want to fight it, like the rest of the world. That is hopeful.*

Emiko Saldivar  
Santa Barbara, California, USA

\* Holly Jorgenson. See article, "U.S. Domination," on previous page.



KATIE KAUFFMAN

## Focusing on the Benign Reality

I'm a resident of Madison, Wisconsin, USA, and this is an incredible time. I've spent parts of two days at the capitol. I am not a public servant myself. The injustice motivated me to take action. I also found myself getting angry and discouraged. In my RC class last night we focused on the benign reality.\* I am having regular sessions on it, too. This has helped me stay out of frustration and discouragement and stay in hope and enthusiasm, not to mention clearer thinking.

I am grateful for having been in RC for two-and-a-half years. This week I'm also thankful for having a better understanding of patterns of oppression than I had before. I'm working on sharing my perspectives with the wide world and doing so with love—understanding that everyone is good.

*Jay Edgar*  
Madison, Wisconsin, USA

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\* The actual reality, which is benign, as opposed to the pseudo-reality of distress patterns and the conditions they have created

## An RC Gathering on Current Events

Here in Madison, Wisconsin, USA, people are reacting to the news of Governor Walker's budget address yesterday afternoon. The proposed budget featured devastating cuts that would touch almost everyone in the state. Our fourteen Democratic senators are still out of state.<sup>1</sup> Protesters still have a presence in the capitol, despite restrictions. Several hundred continue to sleep there each night.

Tonight Holly<sup>2</sup> led a gathering for the Madison RC Community about the current events happening here. Thirteen of us came (on short notice.) We started by each sharing a "current events" new and good. We could have done that for the whole evening. It was encouraging and energizing.

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<sup>1</sup> The senators had left the state to prevent the senate from voting on the budget bill.

<sup>2</sup> Holly Jorgenson, the Area Reference Person for East Madison, Wisconsin, USA

Holly offered us the perspective that what we were doing was important, that we were all doing more than we could tell.<sup>3</sup> She reminded us that the world was watching Madison, and that the world RC Community was watching the Madison RC Community. She said that one important role we could play was to "inoculate people against discouragement." Another was to back<sup>4</sup> a leader's thinking, even when we disagreed with him or her. She gave the example of a discussion she'd had with her brother Reid, who had been staying overnight, for six nights in a row, in the capitol. She had asked him why he thought it was necessary to stay overnight and had accepted his answer, but hadn't agreed that it was important. After yesterday's address by the governor, members

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<sup>3</sup> Tell means notice, perceive.

<sup>4</sup> Back means support.

of the Assembly came to thank the protesters for their presence each night in the capitol and told them how important it was.

We had lots of time for discharge and then took turns answering the question, "What do you think you/we should do next—as a Community, small group, or individual?" We talked about our ideas, which included a variety of large and small projects. Holly encouraged us to have sessions on what it was like to listen, especially to people with whom we disagreed, and to make the decision to listen. We're working toward being more of a "unit" as we think about and act on behalf of liberation for all.

The energy, ideas, and support in the room were incredible. We decided to meet again next week.

*Marian Fredal*  
Area Reference Person for  
West Madison, Wisconsin, USA  
Madison, Wisconsin, USA



## Keep Our Vision of Ourselves Clear

The working class in RC has talked for a long time about the working class being the only necessary class and the power inherent in the working class. I know it is hard (it is even for me, as a leader of working-class people) to keep this reality clearly in mind.

A bill that would cut the collective bargaining rights, and various benefits, of state workers in Wisconsin, USA, has resulted in protests by thousands of state workers. The Democratic state senators did not show up\* as ordered for a vote on the bill. I find it hard to believe they would have taken such a drastic step without the massive demonstrations by workers. Senators, because of the nature of the class system, rarely take that kind of risk on their own initiative.

The idea of the power of the working class is actively suppressed in our societies. Heavy propaganda promotes a very different picture of what power is and who has it. With the class oppression we have all internalized, it is difficult for us to see the reality of the power and goodness of working-class people—or of any individual, for that matter.

Now would be a good time to have Co-Counseling sessions on memories of when we acted on our power and it worked, or when other individuals or groups used their power effectively. I do not think we do this enough. The trade unionists in RC have set a good example for us—thanks to the International Liberation Reference Person for Trade Unionists, Joanie Parker—by always making time, every time they meet, to share success stories. It is so important to keep our vision of ourselves clear. Things often look hopeless right up until the moment when they take a dramatic turn in the opposite direction—an example of how persistent and confusing patterns can be. As I have been saying lately, “Hope is a discipline.”

Solidarity forever,

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



\* Show up means appear.

## The “Old Nuts”

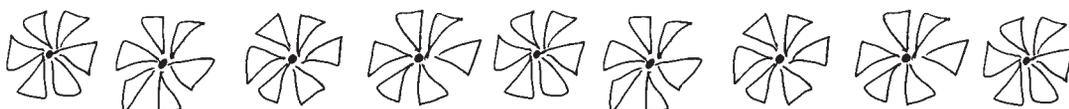
The leaders of capitalism are not, of course, going to do anything very good.

But you’re looking in the wrong direction. The real leaders of the people are coming up. And among them is someone named — (the person he is writing to). There are a lot of us, and not just in RC, who are seeing the world straight and will straighten it out.

And though the old nuts\* are dangerous, they’re not that dangerous. We will have them all cleaned up before they know it.

Harvey Jackins  
From a letter written in 1980

\* Nuts means irrational people. It is a term that, with our increased understanding of “mental health” oppression, we no longer use in RC.



## Fighting Discouragement

The anti-union legislation being proposed by Republicans in Wisconsin and other parts of the United States is also being proposed here in Tennessee (USA). Several bills are on the table<sup>1</sup> that would significantly weaken the teachers' union and eliminate collective bargaining for teachers. My husband and I are teachers, so we are paying close attention.

Today I learned that Tennessee is a "right to work" state, which means that if teachers strike, they will be arrested (an interesting way of defining "right to work"!).

Luckily, I just got back from our Regional RC Teachers' and Leaders' Workshop led by Tim<sup>2</sup> in

Atlanta, Georgia (USA). We spent the weekend discharging on discouragement. Tim talked about going back and looking at where we felt defeated as young people—especially the places where we don't want to look. We need to go back and fight for ourselves in those places. He said that all discouragement is patterned—it is just the distress left on us because we never had a chance to discharge old defeats. He also said that we need to take this on<sup>3</sup> collectively. We need other people to remind us to do it, because it will be difficult to remember to do it by ourselves. Our minds will want to work on something else.

*Betsy Hobkirk*  
Knoxville, Tennessee, USA

<sup>1</sup> On the table means under consideration.

<sup>2</sup> Tim Jackins

<sup>3</sup> Take this on means undertake this.

Once social change begins, it cannot be reversed. You cannot un-educate the person who has learned to read. You cannot humiliate the person who feels pride. You cannot oppress the people who are not afraid anymore. We have seen the future, and the future is ours.

*Cesar Chavez*



PAT GREGORY

## Bringing RC to a Rally

We are a married couple living in Vermont, one of the smallest and least populated states of the United States. This past week we learned that MoveOn.org, a progressive online organization in the United States, was urging people to hold rallies on Saturday, February 26, in each U.S. state capitol, in solidarity with the protesters in Madison, Wisconsin, USA. Although we had not previously done more with MoveOn.org than sign an occasional petition, it seemed that no one else was stepping forward

to organize and lead a rally in our state so we decided to do that work ourselves.

In two short days we obtained a permit from our state government to hold a rally on the outside steps of the capitol building. We put out press releases, found volunteers for many specific tasks, and arranged for speakers.

We also worked hard to change the tone of the rally from the tone that MoveOn.org had emphasized in its publicity. It had named the

campaign "Save the American Dream." The words "American Dream" imply, among other things, that because of the "benefits" of capitalism, anyone in the United States can become a part of the middle class and can own a house and many other material things. In his opening remarks at the rally, Steve explained that the "American Dream" was not sustainable for our planet. He also said that people had a need for connection and community—a need that was not met by pursuing the "American Dream." He suggested

*continued . . .*

... continued



that it was time to look beyond our national borders and envision a “World Dream” that would work for everyone on the planet. The crowd cheered.

MoveOn.org’s publicity had encouraged rally participants (who were likely to be liberals and members of the Democratic party) to think of themselves as correct, and conservative Republicans as wrong. In our communications we specifically challenged that idea and encouraged participants to value and communicate with people who held different views.

Laurel led the participants in a mini-session. She began by appreciating that people had gotten so near to the capitol building, and inviting them to return on a day when the legislators would be present in order to share their thinking on the issues that were most important to them. She then asked each person to find a partner and to take turns speaking and listening—to practice what he or she wanted to say to our political leaders. There was a roar of sound as approximately two hundred and fifty people took their

turns. To bring everyone back together, she led a common chant with a little change: “Tell me what democracy sounds like!”

The people answered, “This is what democracy sounds like!”

Steve ended the rally by speaking to the crowd about hope and determination in moving forward.

With appreciation for how RC helps us regain our leadership,

*Steve Crofter and A. Laurel Green*  
Brattleboro, Vermont, USA



YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK, CALIFORNIA, USA • LYNNE SHIVERS

## No Need to Be “Impressive”

Our middle-class support group met this evening. I suggested that we take time to discharge about the recent news from the Middle East and the U.S. Midwest—of middle-class and working-class people standing together, as workers and citizens, for change. Everyone had good sessions—about the insecurities at their own jobs, choices they’d made in the past to give up working for change and focus on personal security, the struggle to claim their own voices in conflicts and feeling “crazy” when they stood up for themselves (this was a group of all women), and feeling both hopeful and scared by what was happening.

I took half of my time to let myself show how inadequate I was feeling leading the group—about having a topic but not having a big, inspiring theory presentation to go with it. Before folks arrived I had been listening to a recording of Seán Ruth\* talking at the RC Middle-Class Leaders’ Conference last fall about letting go of the notion that we had to have something brilliant and impressive to say. Maybe that’s why it occurred to me to let my feelings of inadequacy show.

*Nancy Wygant*  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA

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

## Inspired and Discharging in Maine

I live in Maine (USA) but grew up outside of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. I work as an elected business manager for a labor union. On the heels of the events in Egypt and now elsewhere in the Middle East, there seems to be an outburst of people standing up for themselves all over the world.

On Thursday my parents phoned me and left a message. They were inside the Wisconsin Statehouse with the demonstrators! As I listened to my mother's gleeful words, "We've never seen anything like this!" (my parents had participated in a lot of demonstrations over the years), I was able to cry hard at the contradiction<sup>1</sup> of so many people standing up and my connection to it.

Mom had held up the phone so I could hear the singing and chanting, and had read me signs that she was seeing on the walls. She called again later and left another message with a song she particularly loved. I have listened to the messages again and been able to cry more.

One of the district representatives of my union has been forwarding wonderful videos of the rallies in

Wisconsin and, more recently, in other states around the country. I am able to cry hard watching them and am thinking about which ones to possibly share with my local union. Some representatives on our executive board do not yet see public workers as being in the same boat<sup>2</sup> as our members, or they believe we should focus our work exclusively on our own local union. I am having sessions on my feelings about our differing opinions and how best to share my thinking and continue to inspire theirs.

To have these kinds of sessions is so helpful in this work in which we necessarily take on<sup>3</sup> so many things that can feel like losing battles.

We will have a rally at our statehouse in Maine on Thursday, to support our own public workers as our governor releases his budget-cutting plans. I am looking forward, after all these sessions, to standing proudly with my union brothers and sisters, and our allies, in the wonderful Maine winter air.

*Cynthia Phinney*  
Livermore Falls, Maine, USA

<sup>1</sup> Contradiction to distress

<sup>2</sup> In the same boat means having the same concerns.

<sup>3</sup> Take on means undertake.



### One-to-One Organizing

Congratulations on your initiative in the trade union field. That's just splendid. The only suggestion I would make is that you work out ways to make close personal contacts—through informal meetings, dinners together, support groups (that aren't called support groups, as well as ones that are), and so on. Then, once you have your own contacts, encourage them to make other close, personal contacts.

Support groups and leaders' groups, taken together, enable one to spread one's influence quite quickly in the personal way that is necessary.

The one-to-one approach is necessary, but is not as limiting as people tend to think, because it can cascade into teaching your contacts to make the one-to-one contacts as well.

*Harvey Jackins*  
From a letter written in 1983



ALISON EHARA-BROWN

## Be an Ally to a Teacher

*I am preparing to lead a Teachers and Allies Workshop for my RC Community. There will be thirteen of us—five teachers, seven allies, and me. That's a fantastic number for our Community. Below is (excerpted) the letter I sent out to the Community.*

Dear Educational Changers and Allies,

Classroom teachers need even more ongoing, committed support these days. The oppression of teachers is coming down harder and harder on them. The work of being a teacher is continuous—almost 24/7.<sup>1</sup> Teachers face all forms of oppression, with little break. It is not fair to expect them to fix in the classroom all of society's ills.

A lot of allies are needed—allies who can stand outside of the oppression, interrupt it, and counsel teachers about their daily challenges.

Everyone in the RC Community can be an ally to one or more teachers. It is in our best interest to see to it<sup>2</sup> that teachers function well. Our children deserve it, the teachers deserve it, parents deserve it, and the administrators and all other school personnel deserve it.

This work will have a far-reaching effect (including the personal benefit of being pushed to discharge all our early school hurts and reclaim our intelligence). Having a committed, ongoing teachers' and allies' group in every Community is the way for educational change to move forward.

<sup>1</sup> Twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week

<sup>2</sup> See to it means make sure.

I encourage all teachers to think about whom they would like as their allies and to bring them along on their liberation journey. And the rest of the Community must ask, "Is there any reason why I should not support a classroom teacher?" Of course, the answer is no.

Marilyn Robb  
International Liberation Reference  
Person for Educational Change  
Tacarigua, Trinidad and Tobago



WASHINGTON, USA • DIANE SHISK

*Marilyn, I love your letter.*

*Even though I'm not working in a school anymore, there is a teacher who sometimes calls me for discharge time, often when he finds himself dealing with racism in the school. I mostly just applaud and encourage his courage and his smart responses to what is going on.<sup>3</sup> It's a pleasure for me.*

*A woman targeted by racism who is becoming a teacher told me that a Co-Counseling friend of hers loaned her a copy of Classroom.<sup>4</sup> She found it tremendously encouraging. I once got a teacher who knew nothing about RC to go to an introductory lecture by giving her a copy of Classroom and asking her to let me know what she thought of the ideas. She became a dedicated Co-Counselor (after she yelled at me for not sharing the ideas with her sooner). We should be sure that the recent issues of Classroom get into every teacher's hands.*

Russ Vernon-Jones  
Amherst, Massachusetts, USA

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

<sup>3</sup> Going on means happening.

<sup>4</sup> Classroom is the RC journal about learning and educational change.

.....  
**If you move . . .**

and don't tell us in advance of your address change, the post office returns your copy of *Present Time* to us with postage due. (It does not forward bulk-rate mail.) We then have to pay a much higher rate to mail you a second copy. This need not happen if you will kindly let us know of your address change well in advance.

Thank you,  
Rational Island Publishers

.....

## Listening Leads to Re-evaluation

What I have found useful with listening projects<sup>1</sup> is to remember that what people say is not the key thing. How minds respond after having had the chance to be listened to is what is interesting and important.

When thoughts stay in our minds, they can seem so logical and rational, but after we have written them down, or let them come out by speaking, our minds (often a while later and at most unexpected moments) can find the gaps and get clearer about what is and isn't making sense.

It is easier to keep smiling while paying attention to someone who is talking rigidly when we know that the person's mind will move on later. It's like with a session—we don't have to take it too seriously.

Things we have said that were not that good often keep echoing through our thoughts and leave us feeling a bit uncomfortable. That's great! It means we are learning something. Often when I'm about to send out an e-mail, it will seem like a good idea to send it, but sometime later I can tell<sup>2</sup> that part of it was not right. When I have doubts, I wait for a day or so to send it.

Wytske Visser  
Ljouwert, Fryslân, The Netherlands

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

<sup>2</sup> Tell means notice.



LK

## A Working-Class Blog

I have just started a new blog<sup>1</sup> called *Working Class Weekly*.

It is one of my responses to a challenge by Harvey Jackins to all RC wide-world changers: “to be able to explain in simple, clear, concise language, that anyone can understand, why capitalism won't work.”

From my experience (of sixty years) I think that now is the time when people are most likely to be receptive to good ideas, if they can be stated in a simple and inclusive way.

The blog is so far focused mainly but not exclusively on my responses to the news in the mainstream U.S. media.

I Google<sup>2</sup> titles for things I write so as to avoid confusion, competition, or

copyright infringement. No one else seems to be doing anything with the simple title of *Working Class Weekly*, so I am the number-two Google hit<sup>3</sup> under that search. I hope to get close to the top of a working-class search. So far I'm not on the first three page

<sup>3</sup> Number-two Google hit means the second thing listed in the results when people search the Internet.

views, but looking at them gives me some ideas.

Doing this has been good for discharging fear, and my friends have gotten some laughs out of it.

Has anyone else had any experience or success with Harvey's challenge?

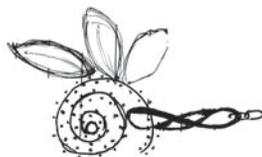
Factory Worker  
USA



ALAN SPRUNG

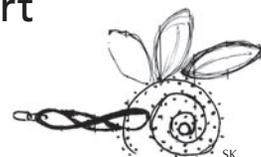
<sup>1</sup> A blog is a web log, a site on the Internet consisting of a personal journal, with reflections, comments, and often hyperlinks provided by the writer.

<sup>2</sup> Google means search the Internet for.



## A Society in Which No One Is Hurt

From a January 2011 letter by Julian Weissglass,  
the International Commonality Reference Person  
for Wide World Change, to his constituency



Dear Wide World Changers,

It is an exciting time to be alive and leading in RC. I have been inspired by what Co-Counselors are doing—from what I read about in *Present Time* and on the e-mail discussion lists and from what I learn from the people coming to my workshops.

### OUR LEADERSHIP

The crisis facing humanity is real. Life is becoming harder and harsher for more and more people. The for-profit society is becoming increasingly unworkable, and we get to do something about it. We have this opportunity not because we are better or smarter than anyone else but because

- \* Somehow we found RC (or RC found us) and we have stayed with it,
- \* We have the knowledge and tools that can help humanity think better about the necessary transformation,
- \* We are a global community of people with diverse experiences, strengths, and perspectives, working together.

Many of us are already playing influential roles in many organizations—and there is more to be done. The challenge is to discharge any distresses that inhibit



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our leadership, in particular those distresses that cause us to be urgent or passive. If we are urgent or angry, or fail to act because of despair or discouragement, we will not be as effective as we can be. Acting on urgency may be better than being passive, but it is even better to find the right (distress-free) course to being the influential person that we can be.

### YOU'RE REALLY A REVOLUTIONARY

At workshops I have led recently, I have put considerable attention on how the class society affects our leadership and relationships. I have stressed discharging any distresses that interfere with our commitment to establishing a society in which humans do not hurt humans. In my opinion, this must be a classless society. I have asked people, and I am asking you, to consider the implication of Harvey's<sup>1</sup> statement: "*The revolution is surely needed more than it ever was before—so if you are in RC hoping only that you'll feel a little better, I'm sorry, but you're really a revolutionary.*" (*An Unbounded Future*, page 16)

I would like every Co-Counselor to take this statement seriously and discharge on it. It will be helpful to discharge the distresses connected to the word "revolutionary." What feelings does the word bring up in you? How do you feel about people or movements in the past that have identified as revolutionary? What did you hear growing up about revolutions and revolutionaries? How were your thinking and feelings about the injustices that you saw in society or your family treated by the adults around you? How do you feel about speaking out for the complete transformation of our society to one in which no one is hurt?

I was raised upwardly-mobile middle class. In order to think of myself as a revolutionary, I must discharge the feelings installed on me to make me conform, not upset people, accept the status quo, and "succeed" in the society as it exists. I was given the message that I was not supposed to think for myself and that love and approval were dependent on my fitting in. Because the adults were afraid that I would not succeed in the class society, they criticized my "revolutionary" ideas.

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<sup>1</sup> Harvey Jackins'

## DISAGREEMENTS ARE DIFFERENT THAN ATTACKS

It is inevitable that there will be disagreements between people—both in our RC Communities and in the wide world. And there will be attacks. It is important to distinguish between disagreements and attacks. Attacks are designed to get attention, interfere with progress, or disrupt a community. Disagreements are when people have different thinking about a subject.

When we were young and disagreed, we often did not have the opportunity to express our disagreements. If we haven't discharged enough on these earlier experiences, it is likely we will not handle present-time disagreements very well. We may get upset when people disagree with us; we may *feel* attacked. When we disagree with someone else, we may be tense or angry. These undischarged feelings often interfere with the good functioning of our Communities, and we sometimes lose people because of them. For example, if you disagree with a leader who has not discharged adequately on disagreements, she or he may confuse the disagreement with an attack and the only thing he or she may figure out to do is shut you up.<sup>2</sup> Then you get discouraged, and your leadership in RC is affected. You may even leave RC.

When we lead in the wide world, it's likely that we will encounter disagreements both about RC and about the political or social situation we are trying to improve. We will have to be able to listen to people's disagreements with us.

It will help to have Co-Counseling sessions on our "early disagreement memories." Tell your counselor all the things you disagreed with, starting from when you were an infant. Take the opportunity to be loud when expressing your disagreements. I have noticed that since discharging on my early disagreement memories, I am better able to listen to family members who disagree with me.

## WAR AND WIDE WORLD CHANGE

I have been asked why, in my role as International Commonality Reference Person for Wide World Change, I put so much attention on healing from war. There are several reasons:

- \* Our goal in RC is for all humans to reclaim their intelligence. It is not enough for one of us to be the only intelligent person. The distress people carry about war is a major obstacle to their



ALISA LEMIRE BROOKS

thinking intelligently about the transformation of society.

- \* Often when progress is being made toward a more just society, the ruling classes start a war to restimulate people's fears and distract people from their concerns about social and economic justice. It is as if humanity is in a swamp and people are trying to help each other get out. Those who get out a little bit pull others out. Then the ruling classes start a war. War keeps sucking us back in the swamp, into accepting the class society.
- \* It will be easier to build unity around ending war than around ending the class society. Even the people who help start wars often do it in the name of peace.
- \* As long as we have a for-profit society, the people who run corporations will be strongly tempted to start a war in order to make the enormous profits that are possible during war.

## ARABS, MUSLIMS, AND JEWS

Arabs, Muslims, and Jews are overlapping groups of people. There are Muslim, Christian, and Jewish Arabs. I saw a fascinating movie called *Forget Baghdad* about four Iraqi Jews who immigrated to Israel and identified as Arab Israeli Jews. There are Muslims who are not Arabs. For example, Iran, Afghanistan, and Turkey are not Arab countries (although many Arabs live there) and Indonesia has the largest Muslim population in the world. Within each group there are people who have varied or no religious beliefs or practices. And, of course, there are people of mixed heritage.

Arabs, Muslims, and Jews have each made great contributions to humanity in many different areas—art, music, philosophy, science, mathematics, dance, religion, and learning how to be human with others. At various times and places they have lived together in peace and contributed to each other's cultures, and at times each group has done harm to people in the other groups.

Because the cultures of Arabs, Muslims, and Jews are different from European Christian cultures,

*continued . . .*

<sup>2</sup> Shut you up means silence you.

## WIDE WORLD CHANGING

... continued

people from these groups can be readily identified in European Christian societies. The oppressive class society uses the differences to keep people fearful of one another. All three groups have been blamed for the problems that society is facing. This distracts people from the oppressiveness of the class society. In addition, the divisions created by society between these groups are used to justify huge expenditures for weapons and to make war.

We have put considerable attention in RC on discharging anti-Jewish oppression but not as much on discharging anti-Muslim oppression and anti-Arab racism. At a time when attacks on Muslims and Arabs are increasing in many places, it is important that we do so. You can begin this work even if you

are confused about it. Discharge will bring greater clarity and more intelligent action. Intelligent action will include learning more about and building alliances with Muslim and Arab people. If you don't discharge, you will stay confused. You can start by telling your counselor anything you ever heard about each group. Start with the earliest memories. If you can't remember anything early, talk about what you read or saw in the media last week.

In order to end humans hurting humans and transform the oppressive society, it will be necessary to bring more Arabs and Muslims into the RC Community and to build strong alliances with and between Arabs, Muslims, and Jews.

## A "Good Ideas Association"

It's good to hear from you and to hear all the news about your struggles. Yes, I do think objective conditions are ripe. And I don't think that more hardship or suffering is necessarily going to lead in a good direction. It can demoralize people as well as occasionally inspire them to do something. I think things are plenty hard now.

What we need are some optimistic policies. I think we do need a leadership organization—this is what I am talking about when I say a "Good Ideas Association." I think it needs to begin with discussion groups, in which people get acquainted with each other and gradually talk, exchange ideas, and formulate a program.

*Harvey Jackins*

From a letter written in 1980



## The 2013 Pre-World Conferences and World Conference

*Here are the dates for the Pre-World and  
World Conferences, coming up in 2013:*

**January 18 to 21**

West Coast North America Pre-World Conference

**February 7 to 10**

South Asia Pre-World Conference

**February 28 to March 3**

Australia/New Zealand Pre-World Conference

**March 21 to 24**

Latin America Pre-World Conference

**April 4 to 7**

Central North America Pre-World Conference

**May 2 to 5**

Africa Pre-World Conference

**May 31 to June 3**

Eastern/Southern/Central Europe and  
Middle East Pre-World Conference

**June 6 to 9**

Western/Northern Europe Pre-World Conference

**June 20 to 23**

East Coast North America Pre-World Conference

**July 11 to 14**

East Asia Pre-World Conference

**August 7 to 11**

World Conference

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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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