



Co-directors' Column

We were treated to New Year's of world

What a wonderful age to live in. How exciting it was to see the clock roll over into a new millennium. Many of us had the chance due to technology to see celebrations as they happened around the world. As I watched, I could not help but think that within a period of 24 hours, all of my cousins from many countries gave me a gift of their music, dance, language and ways of celebrating. At times, I would feel the tears slowly making their way down my face, and at other times my mind would question when we will learn to truly embrace each other with all of our diversity.

Our greatest hope is that from viewing the worldwide celebrations, we learned that we must continue to work not so much harder, but smarter. The field is wide open, and the focus must be clear: teaching humankind to internalize oneness.

Each person must feel it is his or her responsibility to take action and not remain silent while others are being hurt mentally, physically or spiritually.

It is up to each of us. It is not just big things but the many little things. Can you think of some of the little things you can bring to the Center this year?

Missing Pieces, White Allies

Three years ago at the annual Juneteenth Celebration we featured the work of the research committee. The task assigned to them was to research the many European Americans who served as allies for people of color in the struggle for freedom from slavery, Jim Crow laws, segregation, etc. The project was not completed so we are taking it to our readers.

It has always been our feeling that part of the healing is to know that we were never alone, that there were always white people who stood by our side. As I listened to the task force that started the work on white allies, I could feel the joy. The European American doing the research felt a sense of empowerment

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Internalize Oneness

Another facet of Dialogue

**By Cherry Steinwender
and David Potter**

After the Dialogue: Racism winter session in 1999 we began to work together to find a way for white males to become more active as allies in the struggle against racism. Because one of us lives in Houston and the other in New Mexico we agreed that writing about our long distance collaboration would be the best form of activism at the beginning.

A certain welcome tension built as we continued our one-on-one dialogue, strategizing on views, cultural contributions, and practices. By acknowledging rather than denying privileges, a view supported in Dialogue: Racism, we shared the notion that many well-intentioned privileged persons might welcome an anti-racist activity that they could carry out largely on their own without relying on continuous leadership from non-white persons. So it was up to David, and other privileged white males, to come up with a useful heartfelt activity that might be

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Morris Dees to speak on 'Teaching Tolerance'

Civil Rights lawyer Morris Dees will speak at the Rice University President's Lecture Series Jan. 26, 2000 in the Grand Hall, Rice Memorial Center, at 8 p.m.

The closest entrance is No. 13 off Rice Blvd. There is a small parking lot for visitors across from the Rice Memorial

Center. However, there is ample parking at Rice Stadium. You can take the shuttle from there to the Rice Memorial Center.

The event is free and open to the public. For additional information contact Sue Deigaard at 713-348-6093. Seating is on a first-come basis and will begin at 7 p.m.

Another facet of Dialogue

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effective as a social action against racism. Otherwise our solution would have been too dependent on specific guidance from Cherry, the non-white person.

The following report of such an activity, which we now call Dialogue Peer Privileges, is submitted for evaluation and much needed feedback from readers. If it is supported as a useful anti-racist activity, we will submit a proposal to the Center for offering group training in initiating, and reporting on, this one-on-one person centered dialogue. Please note the similarities to Dialogue: Racism, especially in the safe, non-confrontational style and the focus on oppression and privilege that is maintained by the initiator.

Although restricted to white males, these first encounters may serve as a model for any pair of similarly privileged persons such as teachers or parents.

The importance of peer dialogue on privileges lies in its democratic aspect, in which the initiator can most easily bond and claim equality with the other person, not only in privileges but most importantly in responsibility. It is a facet of dialogue distinct from Dialogue: Racism where oppressive inequalities are emphasized with the intention of stirring participants to protest injustices based on skin color and to dialogue across differences as members of our one human race. Dialogue Peer Privileges intends to stir participants to take up our personal responsibilities for any oppressive consequences of our privileges.

We are not yet sure just how reports on Dialogue Peer Privileges will be used, but more reports will be published in our newsletter. Please let us hear from you!

How might this activity help in healing racism? Are you interested in initiating peer dialogues on privilege and oppression? Can we help you by offering training? Please send your reports, comments, and evaluations to us at the center by mail or email: chfr1@juno.com

Dialogue Peer Privileges: white male encounters

By David Potter *

"I often tend to frame topics in terms of oppositions – not in a conflictive sense, but . . . it seems that anything worth dialoguing about is going to be dialoguing on "difference." When two people meet heart-to-heart and mind-to-mind, the process is not assimilative, but rather involves productive tensions and resolutions."

– Erika Brady

In June 1999 I began asking European American white men some leading questions. After small talk, I describe that I am

talking about privileges and oppressions, more or less as in the following script, before asking a leading question:

"I want to tell you about a project I'm working on these days with other white men like us. So, what I'm doing is asking this question: Are you always able to tell whether or not one of your privileges is being oppressive to other people when you exercise the privilege? (pause) Since I'm asking about this I have, of course, asked myself the question and have thought about it. For myself I found that,

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and hope for the people of color.

The last century was said to be the most violent in the history of the world. We have seen, as well as read, horror story after horror story. We have read about lynching, deep-seated hatred, cross burnings, internment camps, the Holocaust, Wounded Knee, the trail of tears and loss of human dignity. These are only a few. All of these stories happened to real people, for they are real, but it is up to us to add the missing pieces.

People of color must start to acknowledge our white allies. This year we will have a column called Missing Pieces where each of you can submit stories about people you have researched and want to profile. Maybe it is a person you know who may have served as your ally in a time of distress when something crazy was happening in the area of racism.

The Center will sing their songs and tell their stories. This country has to know they lived. We need to know they lived, for even in death, they can still serve.

Martin Luther King's birthday

As we celebrated the birthday of such a great man of the last century with parades, singing dinners, and all of the colorful gala, I hope we stopped for a brief moment and reflected on the European Americans who gave their lives in our liberation. Let us think about Viola Gregg

Liuzzo, Paul Guihard, Rev. Bruce Klunder, William Moore, Rev. Jonathan Daniels and Rev. James Reeb. These European Americans gave us the greatest gift – they gave their lives.

White Ally of the Month

The white ally of the month that I have felt so close to is, Viola Gregg Liuzzo, a 39-year-old mother of five children from Michigan. On March 7, 1965, while watching the 11 o'clock news she saw the first film clips of state troopers attacking Selma marches at the Edmund Pettus Bridge. Tears rolled down her face as she watched the brutal attack on television. Then came the news report of the death of James Reeb. She got in her car and left for Selma, alone, despite her husband's concerns. After she was killed, Jim and the children also became victims. They were besieged with hate mail and phone threats. The Klan circulated ugly lies about Mrs. Liuzzo's character which was later proven false.

Quote of the Month

"Hate is just as injurious to the hater as it is to the hated. Like an unchecked cancer, hate corrodes the personality and eats away its vital unity. Hate is too great a burden to bear."

– Martin Luther King, Jr. 1967

Dialogue Peer Privileges: some white male encounters

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no, I can't always tell.

"Then I'm asking, how can you find out whether there is any oppression happening as a result of your using your privilege? And, again, I'm asking myself and thinking about it. I find two answers. First, I can listen to people who might be affected, carefully listening to other people. And second, more actively, I can ask them directly whether there is any oppression."

After this friendly little speech, with a pleasant voice and some eye contact if possible, I ask, "What do you think?"

One man, D, and I met for the first time over lunch at a Chinese restaurant not far from his workplace, a state government office. D is an Irish American in his 50s with alert blue-grey eyes, neat mustache, wild hair, and pleasant smiles. After 45 minutes of sharing stories I said there was a project I wanted to talk about. After introducing it, more or less according to the script, I asked, "What do you think?"

As soon as I had mentioned privileges and oppression D seemed to want to say something, so I was glad the script was brief. He immediately began to share his

long concern about oppression in general and his views on our white male privilege and the injustice he saw in it. He described how often he brought up the subject of white male privilege with his family and friends and clearly showed me his concern and also his frustration. He said he had gone to a counselor about it. I asked if the counselor is a woman. D said no, that he is a black man, a Buddhist. The counselor had observed that D is burning up inside with this issue and advised him to become active in some way, to do something about it.

As D talked I became alert to his use of the words "privilege" and "privileges". He spoke mainly about our privilege as white men and how it causes others to suffer and how we were constantly using it and strengthening it. He had seemed less tense when mentioning a specific privilege, or privileges.

D said, "Look at us just now. We are eating good food at a reasonable price, we have clean water to drink and clean air to breathe, we are safely sitting here by this window with a nice view while many people do not have this privilege."

I gently said, "Do you think that the privileges you described in this situation, good food, good price, clean air and water, peaceful surroundings, are in any way oppressing anyone else? Can you agree that having and exercising such privileges would be appropriate for everyone? If so then can we just enjoy this time without imagining that we are being oppressive?"

D thought for a moment and said, "Yes, I can see that. But what are you getting

at?"

I explained that I thought the word "privilege" was often used as a pejorative, as in "white privilege" and "male privilege", by people who are oppressed, who have lost or never gained important privileges, and in this usage it seems appropriate. However for us, for white males, would it not be appropriate and useful to avoid such usage and begin to ask ourselves about the details; about when and how our privileges are used oppressively and when and how they are benign or non-oppressive or even supportive of others. While not forgetting that we white males do cause onerous oppressions of others in taking away or preventing their benign privileges by force and intention and also by neglect and closed-minded ignorance.

D said, "I'm not clear on the distinctions you are trying to make." Then D had to return to work. We each expressed our interest in meeting again soon to continue our dialogue. There seemed to be an unfinished tension between us that was not unwelcome.

Man B made no eye contact

Another man, B, was preparing to drive the Vermont line bus I was taking from Boston to Portsmouth, N.H. Waiting at the station, I was aware that B was making no eye contact with me or any other passengers. Wearing loose fitting clothes, he seemed unalert and somewhat dejected. B is a big man with a thick waist,

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dialogue

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Have you gotten around to filling
out your membership for 2000?

Please take the time to do so.

The work must go on!

**INTERNALIZE
ONENESS**

Has your address changed?

If so, please notify the Center so your
newsletter can be timely delivered!



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INTERNALIZE ONENESS

All submissions to the newsletter are due the first week of the month before publication. Articles are accepted in any form, but e-mail and 3.5 disks are preferred. Please send submissions to: robertcn@iapc.net or to **Newberry Communications, P.O. Box 980631, Houston, TX 77098-0631.**

Telephone: (713) 528-1965.

**Submissions are subject to editing.*

DIALOGUE: RACISM SERIES

The free Dialogue: Racism series is held in a supportive and honest setting. Information is provided at each session, followed by an opportunity for voluntary sharing. Facilitators say participants leave with a new understanding of racism, what they can do about it, and a sense of community with others of different backgrounds and life experiences.

Dialogue Peer Privileges: white male encounters

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sloping and slightly hunched shoulders, with a downward gaze. When boarding was announced, I was first in line. Still making no eye contact, B took my ticket and merely grunted when I asked how he was doing in a friendly, low voice. I sat in the front seat across from B as he drove us through downtown Boston. When I asked about the new freeway construction, B began talking about there being no gain for traffic but merely more green grass after the central artery is buried. As we left the city I described the project, as above, and said, "What do you think?"

After a brief pause B said things like this make his head hurt. He said if he kept thinking about it he would have to schedule an extra session with his psychiatrist.

I said, "So, you are seeing someone?" B said that he had been going to psychotherapy for several years. We then had a more animated conversation about his Vermont home and how Greyhound had

bought Vermont Bus and wanted to paint their dog on all the Vermont line buses. At the end of the trip B was friendly and gave me good directions for finding my friends.

*** This report is intended to support other white men, as well as myself, in our strengthening of a crucial, and too rare, process: Taking apart lifelong habits of silence about our habitual ways of exercising our privileges and their unacknowledged, often oppressive, effects. It is offered in support of finding our own personal ways to help one another acknowledge our various privileges while taking responsibility for evaluating their effects and transforming oppressive habits into benign and non-oppressive, even supportive, ones. Productive tensions arise, for me, in these encounters when I listen to other men disclose their thoughts and feelings about privileges and oppressions. My clear resolve to continue in this activity is one result.**

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