



Co-directors' Column

Center needs help of members now more than ever in these tough times

The Board of Directors and the Executive Directors would like to thank all those who made donations to "extend the life" of the Center.

As we look ahead, we realize that many nonprofit organizations, including the Center, are fighting for survival. It seems that every day we learn of downsizing, job losses, stock market declines, or another social agency being forced to lay off workers or close its doors. Added to these economic conditions are rumors of war.

We also recognize that most of us have shifted to a survivalist mode. Faced with these realities, the Center needs your help more than ever as we work to create a climate of understanding and cross-cultural relationships.

We want to reassure you that we are doing every thing in our power to cut costs. One way to keep down costs is to publish the Newsletter online. Please

take a moment to email the Center <cfhr1@juno.com> and let us know if you would like to receive the Newsletter online to save us mailing costs.

The end of the year donor letter again found us in a crisis mode. Here are a few ways you can help prevent this annual crisis:

- Invite all of your close friends and family to become members of the Center.
- Make gift memberships to the Center in honor of friends and family.
- Handle contributions to the Center by monthly bank drafts.
- Visit our website for newsletters and

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Internalize Oneness

We all 'burp up' our prejudices

By Carolyn Kieswetter

We all "burp up" prejudicial comments even though many of us think we aren't biased. Diversity training and cultural competency education courses are supposed to overcome these type of difficulties we face in nursing.

I have met patients who were overtly racist, refusing to have a roommate of another race, but I've never seen the overt prejudice Carrie Farella has experienced in her co-workers.

However, as a white person, who has discovered biases of my own, these overt prejudices might have gone right over my head.

Attempting to overcome racism and ethnic prejudice with the "head knowledge" of college courses and in-service training seems futile to me for two reasons.

First, unless we're self-proclaimed racists, we usually have no clue that we have any prejudice.

Second, closed groups such as school classes or employer-sponsored in-service education programs, will not promote personal expression of experiences and feelings that are lived by minority or majority groups.

My experience with a group dedicated to promoting racial understanding, The Center for the Healing of Racism, has

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Spring Dialogue: Racism

April 9-June 4, 2003

First Unitarian Universalist Church

5200 Fannin

Black/Jewish Dialogue

Date to be announced

Juneteenth Luncheon - June 14, 2003

Board member interview: Bobby Scott

By Tina Matthias

"They had the best hotdogs. Nice and long with good chili and toasted buns. Hotdogs will never taste that good again."

Bobby Scott and I are in a small Vietnamese restaurant in the Village shopping area and he's telling me about his life. He remembers the first time he realized people were treated differently because of the color of their skin. It was at the Woolworth's.

"The funny thing is whenever you were upstairs you had to order at the end of the counter and take the hotdogs to go but if you wanted to sit down you had to go downstairs to the basement. Then, it just hit me one day. Everybody upstairs is white. Everybody downstairs is black. When I was a kid I would sit back and wonder about things like that. So, I just came out and asked. I could tell by the way in which my Grandmother was acting she was embarrassed or didn't like answering the questions."

"Because that's just the way things is," she told nine-year-old Bobby.

"But why?" Bobby asked.

"That's just the way. When you get older you'll understand, but that's just the way things is."

"Not having answers at that young of an age makes you bitter. Makes you walk around with a chip on your shoulder toward people who have not done anything to you," Bobby says.

In 1997, Bobby finally got a satisfactory explanation. He attended Dialogue: Racism. He was 36 years old. He is now in his early 50s but he looks younger with his smooth brown skin. When you see him it's hard to believe he has four grown children and one new little grandbaby. Almost as hard to believe is the fact he grew up the only son of a family with nine daughters. Maybe that's why he's so easygoing and easy to talk with.

Bobby, and his nine sisters, grew up in Houston's Third Ward. He attended Jack Yates High School as a

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Co-directors' Column

Center committed to mission

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upcoming events:

www.centerhealingracism.org.

We are committed to fulfilling our mission by an increase in programs and partnerships.

Toward that end, in January the Center presented two videos in partnership with P.O.V. (Point of View): "Brother Outsider" and "Two Towns of Jasper, Texas" – both of which aired nationally on Public Broadcasting. On the local level, we partnered with the First Unitarian Universalist Church for a screening and discussion of "Brother Outsider." Sixty people, many of them new to the Center's activities, participated in these events.

In honor of Martin L. King, Jr., several members prepared and led a discussion on Dr. King's "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" for an audience of 30 participants. Discussion leaders were Barbara Hacker and Cherry Steinwender, with Center members, Chris Beam, Ruth Burgos-Sasscer, Donald Sasscer, Julius Pleasant, Georgette Dredge and Rosita Waden offering their interpretations and responses to sections of the letter.

Cherry made the Keynote Address at the Emery Wiener Middle School program honoring Dr. Martin L. King. Cherry

challenged the young students to look at Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Day as one for all people – not just Black people. She reminded them of Dr. King's admonition: "Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly." She asked them to think about ways in which Dr. King's words are reflected in their lives and reminded them that many things that affected their ancestors directly during the Holocaust affects them indirectly today.

Center member Chris Beam, served on a task force for the observance of Martin L. King, Jr. Day at Memorial Southwest Hermann Hospital. Chris spoke of Cherry's and the Center's role in shaping his understanding of the oneness of humanity.

In February the Center will conduct three "Opening the Breadbasket" sessions at Gordon Elementary School for 180 first-, second- and third-graders. The program will also be presented at Sherman Elementary School for 25 students.

Also in February the Center will make presentations at the Harris County Mental Health and Mental Retardation center, the Krause Children's Residential Treatment Center, and the Houston Community College Southeast Campus.

Sandy Boyd and Cherry Steinwender

A GIFT TO THE CENTER – NEW PUBLICATION

Hitchcock, Jeff. *Lifting the White Veil: An Exploration of White American Culture in a Multicultural Context*. Roselle, N.J.: Crandall, Dostie & Douglas Books, Inc., 2002.

In *Lifting the White Veil: An Exploration of White American Culture in a Multicultural Context*, Jeff Hitchcock treats a sensitive subject directly and honestly from several perspectives. Hitchcock, who is white and has lived multi-racially for a number of years, has this to say about *Lifting the White Veil*:

"Many white Americans think it is racist to talk about race, and especially white culture. I did not want to preach down, condescend, or blame Americans. Rather, I wanted to acknowledge the real problems in the racial structure of the country and the responsibility of white Americans – historically and presently – in creating the problems and finding the solutions to them."

Hope amidst despair
book by Stella Byrd

Stella Byrd, the mother of James Byrd Jr., recently recorded her thoughts in a self published book entitled *Hope Amidst Despair*.

In the book she tells how she learned of the tragic dragging death of her son and how she was able to cope.

Samples of expressions of condolences from around the world are included in the book as well as expressions from her children and grandchildren.

Information about the book can be obtained by visiting the following World Wide Web site: www.mndlv.com.

By Clara Taylor,
daughter of Stella Byrd

We 'burp up' our prejudices without knowing our biases

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convinced me that their method provides a good chance to improve racial/ethnic understanding.

Farella noted: "We are who we are." We became who we are as we grew up internalizing the beliefs and attitudes of our families and coming to some of our own conclusions based on faulty input from our environment.

I really thought I had no prejudice. My friend and I had had many discussions about her life, her experiences as the only minority in her workplace, her ethnicity. We enlightened each other. She introduced me to The Center for the Healing of Racism in Houston, Texas.

I learned the pain of racism: the experiences of a father seeing his children suffer as well as the pain of many others. I realized the guilt I felt for things I had no part in.

It was also through her that I learned

how easily stereotypes are built.

We shared a motel room. I took my shower first and needed her to pass a washcloth in to me. She commented that she didn't think white people used washcloths. She knew of one Caucasian who didn't, and assumed none of us did. What a lesson! How easy it is to build a bias!

The only way I can overcome prejudice is to be willing to acknowledge my own bias ...

Not for a moment do I suggest that the pain of the guilt I felt could compare with the pain of being the target of bigotry. However, all of us suffer

to some degree.

The only way I can overcome prejudice is to be willing to acknowledge my own bias no matter how small or large. The experience did wonders to open my mind and heart.

I suggest that we all find where such programs as Dialogue: Racism are being held and encourage people we come in contact with to go individually so openness can occur.

Quote of the Month

The truest and greatest power is the strength of Peace ... because Peace is the will of the Great Spirit.

Native American Hopi
Declaration of Peace

dialogue

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MISSION STATEMENT

To serve as a catalyst for the healing of racism through the education and empowerment of individuals.

Have you gotten around to filling out your membership for 2003?

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, 13511 Sherman Oak Dr., Houston, TX 77085-1480. Telephone: (713) 551-9025.**

**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.

Board member interview: Bobby Scott

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teenager and from the time he was a teenager he had wanted to know about Houston's African-American history. It was not taught in the Houston public school system. He did not learn about it until he was 40. It was the birthday gift he gave himself.

"I went to the library and did my research. For my 40th birthday I was stuck in the library for about 10 hours."

Later, more time was spent doing research in bookstores and on the streets of Houston's wards. Once he had the information, he wanted to share it with others. In 1991, Bobby founded Scott Assemblage Ltd. to educate others by conducting informative tours of the city, highlighting Houston's African-American history. He later expanded his business into a high-end, service-oriented travel agency.

Between his career, family and friends, and running Scott Assemblage on the side, Bobby does not have much free time left, but what he has, he gladly gives to CFHR. When I ask him about how long he's served on CFHR's Board of Directors, he laughs.

"When you're having fun you forget about things like that." Bobby answers me with a smile. Thankfully, he's brought his bio that contains this information. Bobby joined CFHR in 1997. One year later he was a trained Dialogue: Racism facilitator. A year after that he was asked to join the Board of Directors. He now serves as President of the Board and was eager to share the ideas he has for CFHR's future.

"I call this my Personal Vision for the Center. Things that I would like for us to do," Bobby says, giving me another sheaf of papers. "One thing I'm very afraid of is if Cherry were to move on. Would this organization continue? That's not a slap at Cherry but that's a fact this organization has to deal with. What, as a Board, are we going to do about it?"

Next Issue: Part 2 – Where's the Center going and how will it get there?

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