

Dialogue



Center for the Healing of Racism Jan. - Apr. 2014 Volume 21, Number 1

Internalize Oneness

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To save on postal costs, we no longer routinely mail the newsletter to members. Please send us your email addresses to receive the newsletter. Send addresses to cfhrl@juno.com or cfhrl@yahoo.com.

Quotation

"It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others. . . . One ever feels his twoness—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder."

—W.E.B DuBois,
The Souls of Black Folk

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Houston Community College System seeks to provide equal educational opportunities without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, or disability.

Director's Column

Twenty five years of healing, educating and empowering

As Director of the Center, I would like to thank each of you for taking this journey of 25 years with us. We want to thank you for your contribution of time, energy, prayers, and monetary donations to the Center. I hope connecting with us, sitting in a circle, facilitating a workshop, attending a presentation, or sitting silent, touched a piece of your soul. This is our hope!

Many of us tire and become weary of the struggle for equality and oneness, yet others have been able to find reserves that sparkle with inner joy, encouraging all onward. This 25-year journey has not always been easy, but the commitment was always there, the commitment of educating and healing, which can lead to empowerment. We would not take anything for the time we have served you.

The work of the Center has been heard across this country and has touched hearts under spacious skies, above the fruited plains, from purple mountains majesty and shining sea.

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Cherry Steinwender asked to contribute to book about domestic workers in city

We Women, One Woman! A View of the Lived Experience of Domestic Workers, is a book written by the women of La Colmena (The Beehive) Domestic Workers Collective, a project of the Fe y Justicia Workers Center.

The goal of La Colmena is to organize house cleaners, nannies, and caregivers, providing training and support to build the collective power of domestic workers in Houston. More info at www.houstonworkers.org

This chapbook is a co-publication of La Colmena and Libros Antena/Antena Books. Antena is a literary experimentation and language justice collaborative founded in 2010 by Jen Hofer and John Pluecker.

More information about Antena at www.antenaantena.org.

The writing process began in 2011, when the women of La Colmena did 150 surveys with domestic workers in the Houston area. After hearing the stories of other workers, they wanted to write their stories then requested the support of writers John Pluecker & Stalina Villarreal (longtime volunteers and supporters of the Fe y Justicia Workers Center) to assist them.

The book was written over two years during workshops between March 2012 and March 2014. Cherry Steinwender was asked to contribute to the book after meeting some of the women in a Dialogue workshop about the movie, *The Help*.

Internalize Oneness

HISTORY LESSON

Slavery by Another Name: The Convict Leasing Program in Texas

By Leroy Adams

On March 15, members and friends of the Texas Interfaith Center for Public Policy and the Texas Slave Descendants Society gathered in a field in Sugar Land to learn about the history of convict leasing in Texas, to pay their respects to those who died under that oppressive system, and to commit to taking the next steps to address ongoing racial injustice. I was there to represent the Center for the Healing of Racism.

I watched as many of those in attendance scattered shovels of dirt out on the field, a field that likely holds a number of unmarked graves, graves of those who died during their forced labor in Texas' convict leasing program. The convict leasing program was the practice of renting incarcerated individuals to private companies for unpaid compulsory labor. African Americans were almost always leased to work on plantations, facing inhumane conditions and early death. The state of Texas practiced convict leasing from 1867 to 1912.

Private companies, including the Imperial Sugar Company, profited from free Black labor through this program. Cities such as Sugar Land (whose name

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Published three times
a year by the
**Center for the
Healing
of Racism**
P.O.Box 27327
Houston, Tx 77227
Phone 713-520-8226

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Healing of Racism

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MISSION STATEMENT

To facilitate the healing of racism through education and dialogue in a safe and supportive environment, in order to empower individuals and transform communities.

Have you gotten around to filling out your membership for 2014? If not, please take the time to do so. The work must go on!

Has your address changed? If it has, please notify us so your Center correspondence can be timely delivered!

Also, send us your e-mail address to receive your Dialogue newsletter in your email in-box.

Director's Column

Twenty five years of healing and educating

Continued from page 1

The Center for the Healing of Racism set out to crown this nation with brotherhood and sisterhood by opening gracious spaces for individuals to engage in dialogue by examining their mental and emotional habits which are sometimes racist, sexist, and homophobic. Each of

the spaces has been a ceremony to aid in healing from the pain of prejudice, sexism, and racism. We are so grateful for all of the blessings and support bestowed upon the presenters.

This is what the Center seeks to bring to its global community. I pray that you will support the Center's work for the next 25

years, financially and spiritually, as we yearn to come together across the globe in oneness, to know that we are each loved and wanted. We will fill our Earth home with understanding, love, encouragement, and peace. This is the Center's hope. Please share it with us.

— Cherry Steinwender

Reasons to keep going another 25 years

The Center Building Community . . .

By Bobbie Osadchey

On behalf of the Center for the Healing of Racism, congratulations for 25 years of a "job well done" from civil rights to human relationships. May this tribute continue to secure justice and fair treatment to all people. Perhaps this sounds idealistic, but the work isn't finished yet.

Dialogue was diverse and funny now and then—especially the year when you allowed my seventh grader, Jacob, to be on a televised panel. Remember lunches of Chinese food everyone loved on Montrose Blvd? Ife's Tea, Felecia's support, so loved by all of us? Remember all of the great Center leaders? Wow!

Perhaps, in the next 25 years we can destroy the idea that there is a correct way to weather prejudice.

The volunteers that you gathered is genius, Cherry, and your hard working, beloved husband, Sigi, who heads up your Support Team! Great credit to those who gave their time to the website and newsletters, and your very special message by teaching young children who so loved your "Bread Basket."

Thank you for your generous donations to our world.

The Center Jump Starts an Ongoing Dialogue . . .

By Tim

Just want to say thank you again to you and Craig. I learned a LOT from you and Craig, and I think I may have learned even more from my fellow white folks and the varying levels of resistance in the room.

Thank you for giving me a jump start and reminding me of my passion for this work. By the way, since your workshop I have facilitated a conversation about white privilege with two of my white, straight male friends here, and also started a weekly facilitation training that runs for 12 weeks with our office of Diversity Services. Thanks again for giving me a jump start and reminding me of my passion for this work.

The Center Offering Support for a University Course . . .

By Janis

For over a decade Cherry Steinwender and her colleagues at the Center for the Healing of Racism have come to my class, The Anthropology of Race and Racism at the University of Houston-University Park.

Through workshops organized by the Center, undergraduate students of all ethnicities deal with their racial beliefs and practices. In their essays and class discussions, students comment on what they have learned about themselves and their families and how they plan to deal with various future racial situations. I encourage students to take the workshop on racism at the Center, which I have also attended. While I am a teacher, I was also born and raised in Birmingham, Ala., during the Civil Rights period. I have written numerous articles and books about racism.

However, the workshops offered by the Center have made me rethink some approaches to dealing with racism in my life. I am very proud that the Center is in Houston and that there is an institution that is constantly focused on healing racism.

Let's Review ...

Reading *Twelve Years a Slave* provides more insight than movie

By Barbara Hacker

No doubt anyone who has participated in Dialogue: Racism has a memory of Cherry leading the group in a call-and-response. As she would briefly describe successive groups who came to this country, the Dialogue participants would reply with the phrase "to do the work." Understanding this historical reality is vital to understanding racism today.

Dehumanizing a group of people through both physical and psychological means was necessary to force their labor, as was done with Africans during slavery. While changes in the law bring progress, attitudes are not changed by law and so they persist, being expressed in different forms. This is evident, not just among a small, hidden remnant, but can take center stage as in the current Texas governor's campaign where it was deemed acceptable (by some) to refer to the President



as a "sub-human mongrel" and a piece of s__." This level of disrespect is so abhorrent that it is difficult even to cite, and yet it clearly illustrates the challenges we face in 2014.

For insight into this history, I highly recommend reading *Twelve Years a Slave* by Solomon Northrop (Penguin Books). Even if you have seen the film (and you should), the book contains much more in terms of observations and insights that could not be translated into the action of the film. Northrop was

a free Black man, the son of free parents, living in upstate New York in 1841 with a wife and children when he was tricked into traveling to Washington, D.C., for a job playing his violin and instead was sold into slavery.

The book is his own account of his experiences from the time he left his home through the next 12 years when he finally regained his freedom and returned home. Descriptions of slavery abound, but this description is unique because of his education, literacy, and worldly experience. As a free man, he is able to describe and analyze his environs and experiences. He experienced several "masters," spending most of his time in western Louisiana, near the Texas border. Unlike many slave narratives, he cites names and places, all of which have been verified by historians. Also, he uniquely describes the nature of the work in detail and how all-consuming it was for the slaves.

In addition, he describes the

means of control and how ultimately inefficient slavery was as a means of production.

Northrop gives astute observations of the individuals he encounters, both slave and free, and the nuances of how slaveholders maintained control. He describes all the means of resistance, however small, that slaves used to deny their masters complete domination and yet stay alive.

Originally published in 1853 at the encouragement of the likes of Frederick Douglas and William Lloyd Garrison, the autobiography became something of a best seller. In 1984, photographer Gordon Parks made it into a movie. The city of Saratoga, New York celebrates a day every July in Northrop's honor.

Many of us were unaware of his story until the current movie was made. The book it is based on is a beautifully written, compelling and insightful work that should be widely read.

Reasons to keep going another 25 years

The Center Opens Eyes . . .

By Michael "Mickey" Ingram

C for caring where I did not see before,
F for fearless to see straight,
H for healing my heart to love unconditionally,
R for being a warrior against the disease of racism.

Before Dialogue: Racism, I was blind and naïve; now I see through it all.

I am fearless to recognize, tell, or shout the various forms of racism.

I am healed of the ignorance that prevailed before.

Being a warrior against racism, encountering its venom when and wherever

As long as I am breathing, the Center for the Healing Racism can count on me.

Reasons to keep going another 25 years

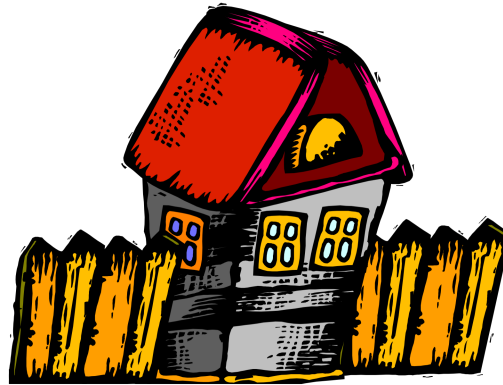
The Center Supporting a High School Course . . .

By Diana Turney

The Center for the Healing of Racism has had a tremendous impact in my own life and in the lives of my students. When the opportunity to teach our Healing Racism class at school became available, I jumped at the chance because Cherry Steinwender has mentored every teacher who has taught the class since its inception in 1995 and I hoped she would take me under her wing as well.

After participating in the Dialogue Racism program offered by the Center, I wasn't sure if I was up to the challenge of facilitating that conversation about race at my school, but Cherry was with me every step of the way. She helped me to examine the impact of racism in my own life and she has helped me to teach the one-semester senior course on Healing Racism, as she did the other teachers who taught the class at my school for nearly 20 years.

Because of the Center we have been able to offer a class to high school students to begin the conversation about how racism has manifested itself in subtle and destructive ways in our society and in our hearts. Thank you for the important and difficult work that you do.



The Center Raising Awareness About Housing Discrimination . . .

By Chirag Patel and Amy Reid

The CFHR organizes many programs aimed to increase awareness, and, more importantly, solutions, for the healing of racism. From Cherry's breadbasket exercise for children to Dialogue: Racism for adults, the Center has touched innumerable lives, young and old.

In particular, I recall a group tour of Houston neighborhoods that Cherry guided in May 2012. Traveling in a single car, we were able to learn about the intersection of race and socioeconomic status in our own backyard. An overarching theme to the tour was the effect of "redlining" in lending practices, as sanctioned by the federal government until 1968. What struck us most about visiting neighborhoods (physically entering the neighborhoods to directly see and feel for ourselves the locations of history, rather than talking or reading in the abstract), was the psychology of need, status hierarchy, and security.

The glimmer of hope from the tour could be that the actual happiness of the various neighborhood residents does not vary as a function of wealth. We learned that modest but uplifted living conditions can be sources of great happiness and pride. This is only one of many examples of how the Center continues to touch the hearts and open the minds of those it serves as it continues its mission of healing.

The Center Inspires a Career Dedicated to Healing the Divide . . .

By Sonia Kotecha

I was introduced to the Center almost 13 years ago as a graduate student seeking to understand issues of race and ethnicity in this country.

I was a second-generation South Asian American who always struggled with a sense of belonging in a racialized America.

On a personal level, the Center validated my journey. On a community and professional level, I have been able to use the Center as a vehicle for others to engage in dialogue and break down the invisible barriers between us. Since leaving Houston many years ago, I have taken the Center's work with me from Washington, D.C., to Austin, Texas. I continue to link community leaders and organizations to the Center.

The Center has been a great resource in advancing the work I do as a Social Worker with children and families as a means to reduce racial and ethnic disparities we see in social service systems.

The Center Supports Social Workers at a Large Houston Hospital . . .

By Erin Clements and Suzie Shelby

In 2013, as social work interns at a large hospital in Houston, we collaborated with Cherry Steinwender and the Center for the Healing of Racism to develop an anti-racism workshop for the hospital's graduate student social work intern group. Over

the course of two sessions, Cherry artfully generated dialogue based on her curriculum Bending Long Years of Customs and Habits and invited self-reflection and honest discussion as a means for increasing awareness and healing from racism.

We were deeply moved by the experience and our group unanimously reported increased

awareness, compassion, and empathy for how we have each been affected and hurt by racism. Students also reported higher confidence in exploring, unlearning and confronting racism in their personal and professional lives.

Cherry and the Center left a lasting impression in the Social Work department and students later collaborated with depart-

ment leaders to discuss initiating department-wide anti-racism training. We are so grateful for the work the Center does to help us all do the difficult and necessary work of examining our racial conditioning and unlearning racism, and hope the Center can continue this work for many years to come!

Congratulations on 25 years!

Reasons to keep going another 25 years

The Center Inspires a Life Abroad ...

By Kim Dupree

"I'm going to live abroad." This has been, time and again, replayed for my friends and family, and the milk and honey — second to publishing a novel — of my dreams for what seems to have been a hundred years.

No seeds had been planted, but for reasons I deem divine, I fixedly envisaged how my life would burgeon if I would live it authentically—inhaling foreign winds and stretching my purview of the world.

I regularly professed my love for humanity like a badge of dignity, which is why the Center for the Healing of Racism drew me. The organization's singularity made an impression. The CFHR offered me an open refuge to learn and exchange and to acknowledge all peoples as both flawed and magnificent, worthy of inclusion, understanding and



respect. Cherry Steinwender, a long lost acquaintance before our chance encounter some years ago, is the most passionate humanity champion I know. Her example has been a point of reference for my contemplations and pontifications on human relations and on my minimum contribution of equitable perceptions and treatment of "others" in every inch of the earth.

And so, after 40-plus years of "when the time is right," I

reorganized my thinking into a course of "now or never." My simple overseas ambition was faces, foods, and habitats in new places. So with my mental bags packed, I entertained thoughts of Georgia, South Korea, and Bangladesh . . . And then, on the brink of a decision, I got a million dollar phone call from Cherry, the call that changes a life in a few throat tickles. It went something like:

"Hey, you still wanna live in another country?"

"Ah, yeah."

"Well, I know someone who needs a teacher at a university in China."

I remember my haze and "now or never" floating above my head like swirling stars. Within 30 days after that call, in February 2013, I prayed, purged, and packed, and arrived safely in

Changsha, China, Hunan Province, ready to prove my love.

For brevity, I encapsulate my thus far experience in one word, "super-alien." The stark cultural contrast of the West to the Middle Kingdom has been a true test of my love, one that has not gone without a period of the ugliness of culture shock and disillusionment. Gradually emerging from "my way" of life, I have gained a richer perspective: I am no longer abroad but at home on "other" soil, not superior or inferior; rather, in a land dotted with historical footprints and my self-discovery. The revelation that has most shaped my resolve (to appreciate people without conditions) is this: I am an imperfect member of one true race—human—and a future recipient of one true fate—death. And I am living this truth in whatever place my head meets a bed.

The Center Nourishes Dialogue and Healing . . .

By Craig Oettinger

In July 1967, after three summers of urban racial rebellion, President Lyndon Johnson organized a National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders. In its report, the commission famously noted that this nation was moving toward two societies, one black, one white separate and unequal. Although we now recognize more than two hues of difference, there is convincing data that our racial and ethnic divisions are greater now almost a half century later.

The Center for the Healing of

Racism stands as one of the few (and one of the most effective) institutions that work to counter this trend. Unlike college and university courses on race and ethnicity (which I taught for most of 35 years), the Dialogue: Racism process allows a group of strangers to become aware of their race and ethnic *emotions*. This is a rare, almost unique trick and happens because of Center guidelines that define an intimate and safe space to explore an explosive topic.

Those guidelines, plus the authentic experience and clarity of purpose that Cherry Steinwender and friends bring to

leading workshops, are sufficient ingredients for magic. Typically, a workshop organized by the Center welcomes people of a wide variety of experiences and opinions. All find full voice; no attempt is made to find a

consensus. And, yet, people come away aware of perspectives they had not considered. Participants are changed, sometimes healed. Now, if we only could learn to propagate the organization!

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SUBMISSIONS

Newsletter submissions are due the first week of the month before publication. Articles are accepted via e-mail and may be edited for brevity or clarity. Send submissions to the Center's e-mail address.

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DIALOGUE: RACISM SERIES

The 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.

Convict leasing: slavery by another name

Continued from page 1

derived from the product that the inmates help to produce) was built on the backs of people who suffered through harsh times identical to slavery (although slavery had long ended) without compensation.

I listened to the songs that were once sung in unison by the incarcerated as they worked the fields, their hope seemed to remain strong even under their harsh conditions and with a man on a horse holding a shotgun itching to end their life for any trivial reason. Sometimes that hope would turn in to desire, a desire I believe that one young man possessed when he drowned trying to escape — at least that is what his tombstone said — “drowned while trying to escape, Age 23.” Why is this information not shared with students in

schools? Is this not important history closely related to the current economic prominence of the state of Texas?

Texas Slave Descendants Society spokesperson Reginald Moore said, “The profit from hundreds of thousands of pounds of sugar, cotton, and other goods made up the largest source of revenue for the state in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Dr. Reginald Moore said, “The profit from hundreds of thousands of pounds of sugar, cotton, and other goods made up the largest source of revenue for the state in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.” As we well know, the state of Texas is not suffering financially and the city of Sugar Land is known for its affluence.

I leave you with this: it is no coincidence that following the legal abolition of slavery, the

Texas prison population increased by 700 percent, driven in part by new laws that criminalized the behaviors of freed slaves. These individuals would then go on to be leased to private plantations where some died early deaths. Slavery had ended but work was still needed to be done; cotton needed to be picked and sugar needed to be produced. So they schemed to build a new system to drive us back to the fields by lying to themselves and saying, “this is justice.” The thirteenth amendment would provide them a way: “Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, *except as a punishment for crime* whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to jurisdiction.” This was simply slavery by another name.

**CENTER FOR
THE HEALING OF RACISM**

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