

Notes from Open Space Topic Convenors

What was your topic or practice?

Our topic addressed shared concerns about what arose from awareness of the lack of presence of more people of color at the conference and the issue of white folks working on racism in a way that fosters compassion. (Not an easy thing, but a worthy one.)

What were major discussion points?

Four of us met and very quickly tuned into the deep pain we find in this whole topic. We engaged feeling and thought:

- There is the pain of recognizing the issue of white rank and privilege and how very difficult it is to talk about or convene a discussion about this and related issues of marginalization; There was wondering about the level of priority or concern this issue has for us here at the conference, as well as in our collective/personal consciousness;
- We spoke about internalized oppressions for both white folks and people of color; we talked of the need to clearly articulate, identify and own the problem; emphasis was placed on needing to let ourselves feel, rather than suppress, pain, sadness, outrage, loneliness, heart-felt longings, and other feelings connected to our awareness about all this;
- We spoke of how shame, blame and endless guilt do little more than perpetuate the problem;
- We recognized how very far we are from race/class equity in our culture—and that for instance, the history of racism and slavery are still gaping wounds that require deep healing, but that we will only be able to redeem our history by clear seeing of how we ourselves are socialized within a culture of racism and classism, and the impact of this, which is most often disavowed;
- We noted that we all suffer a loss of important learning, wisdom, and healing when our sisters and brothers of color are not present;
- We acknowledge the suffering and pain about this can be used as “good medicine”—that is, becomes a basis for empathy, compassion, and action fueled by love.

We know our pain to be a portal into loving-kindness, and as importantly, we know we need to access the God-field to tap into the joy that empowers our work; we agreed to not “resolve” the conversation, but rather, tune inwardly to note what we each seek to release in ourselves that will help us take our consciousness of this into our relationships and work in the world. There was the intention to do something concrete rather than stay engaged in social analysis only—which can be a form of evasion. We all found we suffer the limiting belief that we can not or do not make a difference in changing this profound rupture in our human relations/history, so we practiced the art of binding and releasing

we learned from Lee yesterday, and we let this belief go; we then sealed the empowering intention and prayer that we do indeed make a difference.

What did you learn?

See the above. In addition:

- To consciously reach out to friends, acquaintances, colleagues of color, and extend welcome invitations and maintain sensitivity to “being one of a kind”, especially at large gatherings (but certainly in all settings);
- To connect with those who organize gatherings (in our workplaces and other contexts) to inquire as to the ways we are reaching out to traditionally marginalized populations—to raise the issue and be prepared to get and stay involved.

Whom should we contact for more information?

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Who helped create this new practice?

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