

# interhelp



*a networking newsletter*

June 2004  
Issue No. 25

## ***Unearthing Our Courage in a Time of Fear***

*(Continued from Back Page – see also the enclosed flier)*

Interhelp is a mutual support network of people committed to peace, social justice, and environmental sanity as well as to the personal transformation needed to sustain that commitment. Interhelp gatherings feature experiential workshops, often based on the work of Deep Ecologist and Buddhist Scholar Joanna Macy, that help us to actually feel our integral connection to the vast web of life and see through our false sense of being separate, isolated entities. These experiences allow us communally to simply and profoundly be with the suffering of the world, overcome our psychic numbing and denial, and become re-energized by the recognition that we are not alone.

Experiential workshops occur during each morning, with age-appropriate workshops for children at the same time, daily meetings in smaller groups, afternoons free for recreation, self-organized activities or discussions, and evening programs where the Interhelp community gathers for Heart Stories, dancing, singing and camaraderie.

The basic cost, including excellent food, bountiful recreational facilities, and the full program, is \$250 for adults and \$140 for children 12 or under if camping (either in your tents or EMRCs). Accommodation in EMRCs beautiful 12-person domes is \$15 more per person. Accommodations are also available at additional cost in private, 2-person, and 4-person rooms with bath. Partial scholarships are available.

All people with concerns for peace, justice, environment and community, especially parents who want their children to share in a nurturing and intentionally caring community, are invited to participate.

### **Found Poem for People Concerned**

Monsignor Romero told me  
not to need hope.  
He said if you need to feel hope  
you're courting despair,  
and if you court despair  
you'll stop working.

So try to wean yourself  
from this need to have hope.  
Try to have faith instead,  
to do what you can,  
and stop worrying  
about whether or not you're effective.

Worry about what is possible  
for you to do,  
which is always much greater  
than you can imagine.

I like the Hindu idea  
that we are all  
caught in a humming interconnected web.  
Anything anyone does  
sends a hum through the web  
that might be barely discernable  
but always affects  
every part of the web.

Everything you do  
for good in the world  
affects the web  
regardless  
of whether you can trace the effects  
or not.

It is not ours to measure  
our effectiveness  
or the results of our actions.

—Carolyn Forché (*Sojourners* interview, 11/90)

## *Race: Unfinished Business*

*Interhelp's March 2004 Activists Networking Weekend at Friendly Crossways near Boston featured a workshop on Dismantling Racism led by Mary Baker and Mary Gleason. There follows a correspondence between one of the participants, Diane Jetmund (who wrote to ML Healey with cc to editor Michael Rice) and Michael:*

**From Diane:** It's Sunday morning and I am still crying and behind the tears is rage. Yesterday, I couldn't articulate it, but I knew I felt angry. Today, I know where the anger comes from a part of me would like to scream at that group of people what's the matter with you! Where were you 40 years ago? How come we're still wrestling with this? How come my son is still being looked at and treated differently (by people not unlike people at Interhelp), even though he may not be aware of it, 40 years after the civil rights movement, 40 years after all the fighting and the consciousness raising? How come this group is all white? There are lots of dynamic black activists out there!!! Are all our institutions, or even our action-focused institutions predominantly white? Why aren't we reaching out to the Black activists, to the Latino activists, to the Brazilian, Chinese, Native American, etc activists? You and I, and everyone in that room know they exist! Why aren't our environmental action campaigns populated with people of color and minorities? Have we really so little progress? I could go on and on. I guess I had lost touch with the state of things, or maybe repressed it or maybe just denied it.

I know the Interhelp group is a very well intended group of individuals, and I don't want to devalue the group, the individuals or the work they are doing, or the honesty and respect that exists in that circle [and] frankly, I didn't realize how much pain and anger around this was beneath the surface for me.

To be angry about injustices done to yourself is one thing, but the anger one feels when an injustice is done to someone you love is somehow worse. I loved my husband immensely and there is no doubt in my mind that his mental illness was related

to American white racism directly and indirectly. When I think of the hurtful things said to my son, that will be said to my grand-daughter, it's almost unbearable. The interesting thing, a kind of curse of being white in a white racist society/world, is that in some ways, I know more about the racism that lurks than does my son because white racists have often assumed I was also a racist and made comments to me, or around me that they wouldn't make directly to my son.

You are right, ML, when you said you couldn't fix the situation. You as an individual are probably one the few who truly looks at the world without regard to race. You as an individual are an ally to all of us who are fighting prejudice and bigotry. Only you know this for sure, but I'm guessing you as an individual are doing everything an individual can do. But most of the world isn't where you are and as you know, the world is changed individual by individual.

To Interhelp, Michael, I would say, own your individual attitudes and feelings which you've acquired as the result of overt and covert racist messages, as we were on Saturday, and reach out to black activists. It didn't take me very long to find a url that listed Black Associations [www.citycom.com/links/NBO1](http://www.citycom.com/links/NBO1). Albany probably has its own listing as well as Boston. As an example, IBM, as I have told ML, is publicly, openly recruiting Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgendered individuals.

I remember once in a discussion many years ago about racism and quotas the comment "you may have to hunt a little more to find qualified Black individuals, but there ARE black candidates who are just as qualified as any white candidate." The VP of HR at IBM is black by the way. The point is, if Interhelp wants to integrate, it may take a focused effort, but there are activists who are people of color, and out of that collection of people, I'm sure there are those who would like to be part of a network like Interhelp. Interhelp just needs to make an effort to cross the color line and reach out.

I would further suggest that Interhelp simply own up to its dilemma and strive for “partnership” with Black organizations (that of course means closer interaction and participation with Blacks as well as Blacks with us white folks). Explain what the situation is, that Interhelp recognizes that it is missing the balance and richness that can only be gained when all members of a society are represented in the circle; that the members recognize that being black in a white dominant society creates special circumstances that defeat achieving our vision of a just and sustainable world, that Interhelp would like to consciously build some bridges and extend the network, and by the way, for the sake of honesty, we recognize that most of us still have some work to do around our own feelings and attitudes.

Thank you, ML, for encouraging me to come to Interhelp. It’s hard for me to say I “enjoyed” it, but I did enjoy meeting the people and seeing that there was this group of individuals who continue to try to do the right thing and that there is a place where we can come to refuel and to share ideas, and to get help.

Thank you, Michael for reaching out to me to talk further about racism at lunch time.

**Michael replied:** Thank you for ccing me on your letter to ML about the Activists Networking Weekend. I love both its honest passion and the challenge you throw out to us as individuals and as an institution. Since the issues you raise are (and have been) of major concern to Interhelp as they are central to all of American experience I would like your permission to publish it, in whole or in part, in the Interhelp Newsletter. Meanwhile, I hope you will not mind my passing it on to the leaders of the workshop and to the Interhelp Council.

I note that you share the paradox that I face and that practically every organization I have ever belonged to faces: on the one hand we want a race-unconscious society (of people who look at the world without regard to race) and on the other we must adopt a highly race-conscious approach of reach[ing] out to black activists. Long a member of the Interhelp Council, I can tell you that the goal of a more diverse network is ever-present, though a

strategy for achieving it is highly underdeveloped. A couple of years ago, at the first Interhelp Gathering she attended, Mary Baker offered a sparsely attended but highly valued Networking Group (as we now call these ad hoc topical sessions) on racism, and the full-Gathering workshop at this latest weekend was Interhelp’s effort to lay the issue squarely on the table.

Your suggestion to reach out to black activists is well taken. Allow me to provide a bit of personal history as well as some Interhelp institutional history in order to clarify for myself and for you what strengths we possess and obstacles we face. First, one positive result for me of the workshop and especially of your response to it has been that I have made a move to get a biracial book discussion group going; towards that end, I’m suggesting we start with Randall Robinson’s *The Debt*, and perhaps go on to *Race Matters* by Cornel West and Michael Lerner (though a final choice of book list ought to be determined by the Black members of the group).

You ask: Where were you 40 years ago? How come we’re still wrestling with this? I can tell you where I was, let’s see, 59 years ago: at a Quaker summer work camp with a group of other high school students working on home-improvement with a remarkable community of 13 Black families living literally on the other side of the track in otherwise white Paoli, PA. And returning to the all white and all male Louisville (KY) Male High School for my senior year in the fall of 1945, getting with a group Youth in Action to occupy the mayor’s office in an effort to integrate the public parks! Even then, however, my attention was divided. The atom bomb had been dropped. My winning essay for the Colonial Dames of America (who must never have read it, but I have their medal anyway) was on the need for a world government, and not on racism in America. In college and then graduate school race issues were on my radar screen but somewhat drowned out by issues of militarism, the draft, McCarthyism, Korean War. Finally, Ph.D. (Physics) in hand in 1958, I went into high gear on anti-racism work, organizing a chapter of CORE in Boston. It was a very tight (and modestly biracial) group of 10-12 people, seven of us inordinately active, like 20 hours per week. I had promised to give it a half year (in my spare time from starting a teaching

career), hoping to apply what I might learn to the, to me, even greater challenge of preventing nuclear war. But I kept at it for a year-and-a-half, until I had recruited and trained a young activist in the local support for the Southern sit-ins to the point where he was willing to take over as Chair of the Chapter (and who then went on to become national treasurer).

The point is that my personal activism has always bounced around among anti-racism work, anti-militarism, anti-war-of-the-day, anti-imperialism, and anti-corporatism (my preferred word for anti-globalization), anti-hierarchism in general, along with work FOR peace, human rights, feminism, localism, organic farming, in short, the kind of world we'd like to live in.

The reason Interhelp is important to me is closely related to my own diversity of concerns. Interhelp is a support network for individuals with deep individual concerns. It does not have any single institutional concern such as choice or anti-racism or peace or social justice or anti-imperialism or freedom of sexual expression; it supports individuals to have concerns. Its strength lies in recognizing interconnectedness of people with one another and with other beings, and in the need to overcome numbness and disengagement. As such its health depends on as great a diversity of age and gender and race as is consistent with this central commitment. I don't think that Interhelp can form partnership with other organizations; but it can, should and does encourage individuals in the network to make such alliances and to introduce to Interhelp, and involve in our thus improved network, those people from other organizations who can benefit from our style of mutual support or as you put it, reach out to black activists.

Sondra notes that one measure of the effectiveness of Interhelp is that its culture and atmosphere allowed you to feel and share your authentic response, both in your small group and in the group as a whole. And others to learn from this. Also that your experience of this would have been even richer had you been able to be there for the entire time.

Thanks again for writing,

**Hi Michael** — You have my permission to publish this letter. I just want to point out, those were the “feelings” — “where were you 40 years ago?” was not so much a personal challenge but an expression of my frustration that racism is still an open topic.

I am actually quite impressed by Interhelp. I want to make that clear also. And I do truly appreciate the environment that not only allowed me, but encouraged me, to share my feelings.

And you're right, reaching out to black activists is certainly not being blind to race, but doing so because we recognize that we are lacking that balance for whatever reasons and wanting to correct it is not a bad thing. It's simply a recognition that we are missing a piece of the puzzle or that we're trying to correct a historical problem. It's not unlike quotas. I remember I said to my husband to be when we first started dating, “I'm not sure if I'm attracted to you because of you, or because you are Black and are a way for me to further rebel against my parents and the establishment.” He, of course, was hurt but it quickly became a moot point. In the 60's one didn't dabble for long with Blacks if one wasn't serious. I'm sure you understand that. But someone or several people will need to have some real honest discussions with the first Blacks who come to our table. We wouldn't want them to feel like they were “tokens” or something to be “examined.” As you and I discussed, we do need to do some self-education and you've got some good books to encourage that growth.

I'll come back to Interhelp another time and I'll be interested in hearing the progress on the discussion groups.

Thanks, Michael -- and keep up the great work!

Diane

*See also the letter from Mary Baker on page 6.*

## *From the Mailbag*

Beth Tener wrote:

We had a contingent of four at Joanna Macy's recent 10-day Intensive in the redwood forest near Santa Cruz including Simon from UVM, Dori from Acton, Liz from Martha's Vineyard, and me from Arlington, MA. Needless to say the workshop was an incredible journey — spending 10 days amidst 40 people from around the world with a common vision of what The Great Turning could mean was so moving. Joanna's experiential teaching approaches and her deep wisdom and compassion were very powerful.

Lennart Parknäs writes (via email):

I am a member of the Association of Swedish Psychologists against Nuclear War and for Peace and Ecological Balance. I had many contacts with Interhelp in the 80's. Joanna Macy was in Stockholm in 1986 and we made workshops together. I and Lillemor Florin were visiting an Interhelp Gathering and got many Interhelp friends. I will send these old friends and the new Interhelpers that I don't know a peace greeting from Sweden. We admire and support the work you are doing.

I am still working to support the love and the light in people. Today I am mostly working in Italy where I have an apartment in Ardea south of Rome. I attach a meditation that I sometimes use in my work. You may use it in the Newsletter if you want. (See page 7).

Bruce Hawkins writes:

I am glad someone gave you the opportunity to expand on the "assassination?" question. I have had the same thoughts, and wonder about the Carnahan plane crash also. Two so convenient crashes.... But now that they are getting control of the voting machines with proprietary software and no paper trail, and I believe no exit polling, they won't need to do this again?

Kaela Vronsky writes:

I have been [in Guatemala] since June 28 last year. I am working for an organization called Common Hope, or Familias de Esperanza ([www.commonhope.org](http://www.commonhope.org)). I am co-coordinating extracurricular/personal enrichment programs for Guatemalan teenagers who receive educational scholarships from our organization. It's perfect for me. Also serving as my practicum for my Masters in Sustainable Development from SIT. I live in a little apartment in Antigua, surrounded by majestic volcanoes (one had a major eruption recently — I'm still in awe), living a lifestyle that feels very sane. I love not having a car, not using heat or hot water, and buying my yummy produce always directly from the farmers in a market where shopping is always a blissful experience for me. My original plan was to stay a year, but I'm thinking I'll be here more like two, until my graduation in May 2005. I'll finish my practicum in May and will do research and write my thesis here in order to be ready for graduation. As for after that, I am still in the process building a new vision. I spent so long getting here it is hard to picture my "after-Guatemala" life. The closest I've come is international training or development contract work, which would allow me to live in Western MA part of the year and travel the other part. It's important for me to be with my mom, but it's hard to imagine not being torn when it comes time to leave.

Deborah Bachmann writes:

Thank you for the continued good work with newsletters and workshops. I am always so happy to receive Interhelp information and inspiration.

Enclosed is a brochure of the Ki and heart School course I'm beginning in April in Madison, WI. This work with TAO Sangha I feel helps shift our hearts from fighting to survival to spiritual growth for self and all others. . . . My job and passion as the TAO Shiatsu and TAO Sangha represen

tative in the States is to share this way with others. Perhaps I can do this in person with Interhelp people in the future.

[Note: To obtain information about the TAO Sangha Movement, please email Deb directly at [usa@taoshiatsu.com](mailto:usa@taoshiatsu.com).]

Mary Baker writes:

I applaud Interhelp for putting dismantling racism on the front burner so that it could bring up this type of dialogue and communication on such a crucial issue which along with classism is at the root of many of the world's problems. It is important that we air our feelings with the support of others. During the weekend I had a conversation with Ruth Klein who suggested that NYC do a one-day Interhelp gathering for which she would invite friends of color. It seems to me that newcomers who are people of color would be more likely to attend shorter gatherings of this kind in urban areas. I encourage you to develop these smaller events in Boston, Albany, New York and Rochester.

It will be important that Interhelp folks who want African-Americans to attend these events to reach out to people whom they already know, as well as make larger outreach efforts. If there was one key theme from Saturday morning that Mary and I were hoping to get across it is that one-on-one friendships do make a difference, and that to be most effective we need to develop a forum in which to talk about and support each other in our efforts to build these 1:1 relationships.

If I might add, while keeping in mind that race is a social construct, the goal is not to be color-blind or to numb ourselves to the vicious racism which all white people have internalized, but for all of us to talk about what we can do to dismantle our own racism, whether active or passive, and keep building relationships which contradict the system of worldwide oppression. I and United to End Racism believe we will make a difference here, and we will succeed. As we struggle with our frustration and urgency we get a chance to be that hopeful.

Beware the leader who bangs the drums of war in order to whip the citizenry into a patriotic fervor, for patriotism is indeed a double-edged sword. It both emboldens the blood, just as it narrows the mind. And when the drums of war have reached a fever pitch and the blood boils with hate and the mind has closed, the leader will have no need in seizing the rights of the citizenry. Rather, the citizenry, infused with fear and blinded by patriotism, will offer up all of their rights unto the leader and gladly so. How do I know? For this is what I have done. And I am Caesar.

—attributed to Julius Caesar

*Interhelp is an international network of people who share a deep concern for world conditions that threaten human life and the earth. We support each other in moving from feelings of hopelessness and isolation to empowerment and action. Through community gatherings and shared experiences, group exercises, and opportunities for reflection, we integrate deep social concerns, personal psychological growth, awareness of our spiritual core, and intimate connectedness to this living planetary system. We help each other strengthen our personal support systems and renew our commitment to the earth, peace, and social justice.*

Michael Rice, editor

Please send editorial material to: Michael Rice  
You may send tax-deductible donations for our work by check to "Interhelp, Inc."

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Please e-mail your e-mail address to us if you are willing to have us send you the Newsletter in PDF format instead of by post. (Let us know if you prefer both in print and electronic form.)

## *Yes to peace: a guided meditation*

Please, close your eyes and take a deep breath. Every day we meet disastrous messages — through media, through people around us, through ourselves. The negativism and the lacking trust in the future is the illness of our time. But among common people you also meet something else: an increased consciousness about the good, about justice, about solidarity, about the possibilities that the present may offer us. Imagine for your inner vision that you are able to see all people in the world. Imagine that you can talk to them and they all hear you. Imagine that you are asking them the following questions:

*How many of you want peace and to stop the war?*

*Look at all the hands waving at you and saying yes*

*How many of you want to see basic food, housing and health for all people in the world?*

*Look at all the hands waving at you and saying yes*

*How many of you want to stop the pollution of our environment?*

*Look at all the hands waving at you and saying yes*

*How many of you want to see equal rights for all human beings?*

*Look at all the hands waving at you and saying yes*

*How many of you want to stop the extinction of other species?*

*Look at all the hands waving at you and saying yes*

*How many of you believe that everything and everyone are connected?*

*Look at all the hands waving at you and saying yes*

*How many of you want to stop oppression between nations, people and sexes?*

*Look at all the hands waving at you and saying yes*

*How many of you believe that our world is more than merely physical?*

*Look at all the hands waving at you and saying yes*

*How many of you want to spend as much money for building a better world as now is spent on weapons and military?*

*Look at all the hands waving at you and saying yes*

*How many of you want to see a world of love, compassion and cooperation?*

*Imagine for your inner vision the giant forest of hands saying yes. Millions of millions of millions of people saying YES! YES!! YES!!!*

*So, of course there is hope. We are not alone.*

*It is in this consciousness we have our hope, our support.*

*Pace e luce e amore.*

*Take a deep breath and slowly, slowly open your eyes and return to this reality.*

Sometimes I add to the meditation or better add in the discussion afterwards something like this:

A world-wide layer of consciousness is latent and is charging for a quantum jump, that will change the world. You and I have a responsibility for this jump to happen! We can contribute to this layer of consciousness by choosing what to give, what to say to our neighbours, our friends. This world-wide layer of consciousness will build a common pressure on the future to be a world of love, light and peace.

—Lennart Parknäs  
lennart.parknas@swipnet.se

# 2004 Interhelp Summer Gathering: Unearthing Our Courage in a Time of Fear

**6 pm Friday, July 23 to 3 pm Monday, July 26, 2004**

Easton Mountain Retreat Center, Greenwich, NY (30 miles North of Albany)

Enormous change surrounds us. The degradation of our planet and our political environment is real. Many of us feel frightened, despairing or overwhelmed, yet also passionate and hopeful, as we grapple with critical upcoming national elections. In these times, how do we unearth our courage? How do we find the community we need to combat our isolation? And how do we maintain our hope and fortitude within a culture of fear?

Join us (along with your children) to address these issues with a community of others committed to peace, social justice, and environmental sanity as well as to the personal transformation needed to sustain that commitment. *(Continued on Page 1, with more information included also in the enclosed flier and registration.)*

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**PLEASE FORWARD IF NECESSARY**