
Interhelp Newsletter, Summer 2010

Dear Interhelpers and Friends,

What a moment in time this is! Oil gushes into the Gulf of Mexico. Radioactivity leaks from the Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Plant. A poem I wrote years ago comes to mind. I called it Disaster Train, and the train seems to be speeding up, and most certainly out of control.

It's now essential to summon the wisdom of The Work That Reconnects. I'd like to offer space in this newsletter for a forum on ways we are bringing The Work That Reconnects into our communities. Please send along news of what you are doing (deadline for the next issue is August 28th). Below we have news from Kentucky and Washington state.

Also you will find offerings from three participants in a workshop with Joanna Macy that I attended this spring at the Rowe Conference Center. I'm grateful to be able to share a bit of our journey with all of you.

The theme for the 2010 Annual Interhelp Gathering is timely: Embracing Uncertainty: Finding Our Way Together in a Time of Chaos. I hope to see many of you there. Please see <http://www.interhelpnetwork.org/>

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Mark Steiner, of Cultivating Connections in Louisville, Kentucky, helped organize "Responding to the Gulf Coast Oil Disaster: A Community Conversation and Exploration of Opportunities for Action." The program was inspired by the Spiral and included song (This Land Is Your Land with slide show of gulf area, creatures, humans, pre- and post- spill); open sentences (evoking both Gratitude and Pain); poetry; a Story followed by small group conversation (Seeing with Fresh Eyes); and opportunities to connect with various action-oriented groups (Going Forth).

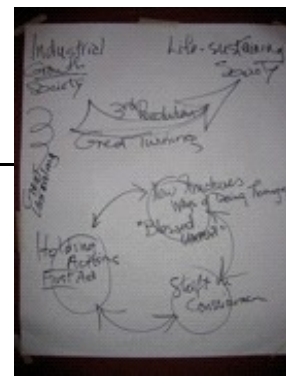
Here is a link to the event flyer:

<http://archive.constantcontact.com/fs024/1102213393686/archive/1103426788583.html>

This spring Gretchen Sleicher convened a Work That Reconnects study circle in Port Townsend, WA. Each meeting biweekly gathering consisted of reading together from *World As Lover*, *World as Self* or *Coming Back to Life*, discussion, sharing an exercise, and song. Topics, chosen ahead by the group, included the points of the Spiral and other subjects from the two books. Foundational segments of Joanna's teaching video were also used. The group's intention is to conclude with an offering to the larger community. The meetings provided a welcome space for sharing deeply. I was especially pleased to hear about Joanna's book *World As Lover* being used in this way. It offers a heartfelt and accessible journey through the theory and practice of the work, leavened with stories.

<http://www.joannamacy.net/books-dvds.html>

Thanks to three participants in the spring workshop at Rowe, Marc



Lapin, Bernadine Mellis and Bronwyn Preece, for the offerings below. In her writing, Bernadine tells about sharing a film she made about Earth First! activist Judi Bari and her legal defense team. Watching this powerful film, *The Forest for the Trees*, was an integral part of the week. Please go to www.redbirdfilms.com to learn more.

Photo: Bronwyn Preece. Joanna's flip chart notes about the Great Turning.

Taking the work that Reconnects home: post-Rowe 2010 **by Marc Lapin**

After a week of feeling all the pain, sorrow, anger, fear, Wonder, joy, courage, connection,
UNCERTAINTY—

At home I connect with family, friends, the garden, trees, spring flowers.

I yearn for everyone to feel the connectedness of this interbeing earth we live in,

for everyone to know the sacred earth, the life-sustaining, and live true to it.

How can we who don't generally live in daily connectedness to the life sustenance—walk on the soil, grow or hunt our own food, build our own shelters, make our own clothes—how can enough of us turn and GET the connection, within our worlds of plastic, petroleum and poisons?

UNCERTAINTY.

As I reflect, the vision and voice come—

Standing in knee-deep water, I hear “Go forward. We understand.”

In the sea of uncertainty—not seeing the other side, but hearing the voices of the ancestors—I know that we, the people here in 2010, cannot return to a long ago ancestor time.

Only go forward in the spiraling web of relationship and flows.

The power of our work together at Rowe bolsters us with strength, support and tools we need to do this.

I bow to the adversaries, come in and out of deep time, and go forth into action. Again and again and again.

A friend who is in despair is now nourished by our energy that I am able to take home from the week we created at Rowe. We experienced that the pain, despair, frustration, and questioning *are all* of ours. As the dark rears its head now in him, I put aside my quite constant questioning of how we will create the new out of this ailing, sinking, toxic society, and I'm able to offer the light of our knowing—We all journey together in this striving to create renewed connection. We cannot fall out of the web.

He and I link arms, as Joanna continually reminds us we must do, and I remind him that he feels all this because he cares so much, and has had the courage to create new systems and structures, unfamiliar and perceived as threatening, so they are scoffed at and denounced by others.

With thanks to the work that reconnects, and the knowing that there are many of us, together, brave enough to be truthful, honest, vulnerable, and unable to do other than go forth, as we ourselves, the ancestors and future ones let us know is the only real choice.

from Bernadine Mellis

The work with future beings was completely new for me. I often think about ancestors and the lineage I come from, how things were done in the past, etc. But I rarely think of the more distant future of humans on earth. For me, a sense of energy and commitment to my current work arose out of imagining how people in 200 years would still be feeling the ripples of actions we take now. I also loved the feeling of being connected through time to an ongoing line of earth-loving humans stretching both back and forward.

Sharing my film with the group was profound and rewarding for me. After several days together in the workshop, I felt a strong sense of the commitment to our planet of the people in the group, of just how big everyone's hearts are and how hard people work in their chosen paths. So it was very meaningful for me to watch the film with that particular group of people. This film, in so many ways, was meant as a tribute to activism. In a way, it was an offering to activists - a reflection of the beauty, importance, and power of the work that activists do. And showing it in a room full of people whose work I so much want to affirm and support gave me a renewed sense of the purpose of my work. People's responses were beautiful and moving. This helped fuel my intention to continue to use film as a tool for healing and positive change.

The event as a whole was a life-changing experience. Joanna Macy's work and her teachings heal a life-long divide in me between my spiritual path and my need to participate in the world as an activist.

from Bronwyn Preece

There is a poem

in our Gratitude

in the Ancestry that is our Future

in the Presence

that fruits our past

and our passing

There is Gratitude in our

steps that find us standing still,

while our sitting down finds us

standing up

There is a poem

in the Honoring of our Grief
in the pain from which we are
no longer polarized
in our cradle that no longer
clutches for a calm,
in a torrent where we find tenderness
for tears so salty
they stream from the sea

In the Honoring of our Grief

we give as we receive
eyeing our way to the center of
the storm
and we do not hide
and we do not seek
the Stillness of this Movement

There is a poem

in our Seeing With New Eyes
where our Gaian vocabulary
loves composite words
Looktouchingsmellinghearingtasting
exists as a synesthetic prefix
to inhalexhale and a verb
for
Living

There is poem

in our infinite

dictionary
that breathes
a poetry of
symbiotic survival

There is poem

in our Going Forth
in our groundedness
that dances
in our soaring
that roots us
in our knitting that
re-weaves the web

There is a poem

in all of us
in our Work that
Reconnects.

~Bronwyn Preece

May 2010

I dedicate this poem to Joanna Macy