



The Common Good News
Regis University Institute on the Common Good

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DIRECTOR'S NOTE



The dialogue, deliberative, and social technologies used by the Institute and others are increasingly making an impact on important community issues. I recently returned from a week in Boston organized by the Society for Organizational Learning. Participants highlighted their work on everything from community reconciliation in Guatemala, to church and educational reform, to a reorganization of the world food distribution system.

At the core of successful change efforts, is the ability of individuals to stay open to new possibilities and to be able to reframe the issues at hand. Otto Scharmer, MIT faculty member and director of ELIAS (a leadership development initiative), writes about the need for individuals and groups to move forward with an open heart, an open mind, and an open will. This, of course, is not an easy task! But it is fundamental to our ability to grow and find new and innovative ways forward on the many complex social issues that confront us today.

~ Paul Alexander, Ph.D.

ICG HIGHLIGHTS

What is happening at the Institute on the Common Good?

“The Homelessness Dialogue Project”



In September the Center for Civic Ethics at DU, Capitol Hill United Neighborhoods, and the Institute on the Common Good at Regis University hosted and facilitated a dialogue on homelessness. With nearly 70 participants, this event introduced the purpose, methods and scope of the Homeless Dialogue Project and engaged participants in a model dialogue. During this initial conversation energy filled the room, as diverse community members spoke to the complexities of homelessness and the various set of circumstances, people, and systemic issues, which each deserve further consideration and response. Participants were clear to point out that making a difference in this effort will involve changes at every level of the system (institutions, individual existence, and worldview) – a new way of thinking as individuals, a new way of

relating to each other as neighbors (those with homes and those without), and a new way of working together as citizens and public officials.

After three hours of sharing concerns and expressing a desire to change the current situation, participants agreed that part of the solution lies in expanding the circle of conversations, to include more diverse partners – especially the homeless themselves – and to connect with other existing efforts.

The Homeless Dialogue Project is intended to engage people at the neighborhood level in a series of meaningful dialogues about the causes, impacts and implications of homelessness in Denver neighborhoods. Building on the momentum from the September dialogue, the purpose of the project is to provide a space for thoughtful discussion amongst diverse viewpoints, that offers more than a choice between either/or options on policy proposals, but instead provides an opportunity to take into account the complicated nature of the problem.

In order to provide the opportunity for numerous citizens to engage in a discussion about homelessness, neighbors, informal groups, organizations and church communities will serve as hosts of individual dialogue circles. This method will allow people to access a dialogue in a way that is most comfortable and con-

DIALOGUE TIP OF THE MONTH

Spinning Yarn — Weaving Communities

by Josh Gambrel

Carl Jung described one particular communal condition of human existence as the collective unconsciousness. The reason that thoroughly similar myths have been created by disparate cultures from around the world and throughout time is because these prose narratives arise from basic archetypal forms shared by the entire human race. To storytellers this phenomenon could be explored through the process of the story journey.

As human beings we not only share the archetypal forms from which to weave our story threads, but we also share the same innate capacity for story interpretation. By engaging others in a narrative discourse we are connecting with them in a deep and lasting fashion. This can be a powerful basis for social, political, environmental, and peace activism. Due to the shared archetypal discourse that has been going on for tens of thousands of years, stories help us develop compassionate communal relationships that transcend our corporeal interactions to add richness and vitality to the collective unconsciousness of humanity.

How should we go about developing this shared discourse? How can the archetypes of stories be used to help establish and sustain community relations? What role can storytelling play in dialogue? Susan Kaplan, storyteller and peace activist, recommends incorporating an appropriate storytelling exercise into the beginning of any dialogue session. This will allow the participants to connect to each other and begin to see themselves as a community, interconnected by their shared experiences and common narrative threads. One example of an easy relationship developing story activity is what Susan calls the Concentric Circle Activity.

The CCA requires an even number of people arranged in two circles, one inside the other. The participants standing on the inner circle will look out towards their partners in the outer circle. The facilitator will ask several questions allowing time for both participants to answer. The general guideline is that when your partner is speaking, or storytelling, that you should remain mindful of your partner's unfolding story by engaging in deep, empathetic listening. So, there are no comments added or questions asked. Then the facilitator will tell the group that it's time to switch and listen to their partner's story. When it's time for a new question you can have the circle move in anyway you want. This gives the facilitator the opportunity to mix and match group participants in order to get people speaking to someone they may not know. A model using three questions of increasing duration and substance could include:

Concentric Circle Activity

1. "What did you overcome in order to make it here today?" (1-2 minutes per participant.)
2. "Because of my age, gender, or religious beliefs, people see me as...,but what people don't know about me is..." (2-3 minutes per participant.)
3. "Think of a conflict you're involved in. Summarize the conflict in one minute, and then answer these two questions: A) What are you gaining from not resolving the conflict? B) What are you losing by not resolving the conflict? (5-8 minutes per participant.)

The questions can be tailored to fit the context, theme, or focus of your dialogue. Afterwards it could be valuable to reflect on the story process with such guiding questions as:

1. "What was easy/difficult about being the teller/listener?"
2. "What was easy/difficult about sharing your stories?"
3. "What did you learn about other members in our group?"

Narrative activities and questions such as these can help participants establish a rich, deep connection early in the dialogue process. This could aid in cultivating the communal relationships needed to move the issues towards a lasting, effective resolution.

DIALOGUE RESOURCE OF THE MONTH

For some great manuals about dialogue visit the Study Circles Resource Center at www.studyircles.org. SCRC has both generic manuals as well as resource guides on specific issues ranging from growth and sprawl to criminal justice and immigration.

COLLABORATION AT WORK AROUND THE STATE

Civic Mission of Schools Community Engagement Process

The Colorado Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools is working with local community leaders to hold a series of conversations across the state. Students, parents, educators, taxpayers, senior citizens, business and community members, and others are invited to share their views about the following issues:

- What does a civic-minded student look like, and what knowledge and skills do we want students to acquire before graduating?
- What are we doing now to ensure students are well-prepared to participate in our democracy?
- What else needs to be done at the local, district, and state levels?

The pilot program, which began in Garfield County in January, will help to identify what each community wants for its students; how schools and districts can meet these needs; and which policies and practices will help support these efforts. This dialogue will help the statewide initiative better understand what issues of importance and help are needed to ensure all students receive a comprehensive education in civic learning. To learn more about the Civic Mission of Schools please join us for the 2nd Annual Raise the Civic Canopy Event on February 22, 2006 from 3-5:30 pm at the Colorado History Museum where community leaders, citizens and public officials will gather to discuss civic engagement in our communities. For more information regarding the civic education dialogue process and the February 22 event visit the web-site at <http://www.co-civicmissionofschools.org/>

Homelessness Dialogue Project, continued from page 1

venient to them. The structure will be flexible, adjusting to the needs and approach of citizens, neighborhoods and organizations that volunteer to host the dialogues. The four dialogue sessions will consist of a structured set of small group (10-12) dialogues to help participants think through many of the complexities of homelessness while allowing people to voice their own impressions and conflicts around the issue. This approach is founded in the notion that a richer more inclusive discussion around homelessness needs to occur in our community in order for us to truly address the core issues.

The dialogues across the Greater Capitol Hill neighborhoods will begin in February and continue through the month of March. A large group “summing up” meeting for all dialogue participants will be held on April 4, 2006.

There are currently between 10 and 15 dialogues committed to begin in February (depending on numbers of participants), but it's not too late for anyone to organize and host a set of dialogues. If you are interested, contact the Institute on the Common Good Project Coordinator, Katie Bruen at 303-458-4967 or cbruen@regis.edu.



Dialogue Schedule

Congress Park/South City Park/Capitol Heights: Capitol Heights Presbyterian, 11th & Fillmore; Meeting Dates: Feb 9, 23, March 9, 23; 7pm to 9pm. Contact Rev. Mark Meeks, mkenosha@aol.com, 303-333-9366

Cheesman Park/Capitol Hill: First Unitarian at 14th and Lafayette, Feb 13, 27, March 13, 27 ; 7pm to 9pm. Contact Betty Wigington, bettywig2000@aol.com, 303-832-6205 and Sally Isaacson and Rev. Eunsang Lee eunsang51@hotmail.com, 303-388-4186

Country Club/Alamo Placita: Our Savior's Lutheran at 9th and Emerson; Jan 23, 30, Feb 6, 13; 6pm to 8pm. Contact Bonita and Nelson Bock, bonitarb@aol.com, 303-860-1467 and Rev. John Moorhead, jrmoorhead@att.net, 303-860-1272

Capitol Hill: St. John's Episcopal Church at 13th and Washington; Feb 27, March 6, 13, 20; 6pm to 8pm. Contact Rev. David Cooper, raincolorado@yahoo.com, 303.355.5665, Rev. Rebecca Crummey rebecca@sjc-den.org, 303-831-7115 or Belinda Lanyk, Belinda.lanyk@denum.org, 303-355-4896

Capitol Hill/North Capitol Hill: Trinity United Methodist Church at 18th and Broadway; March 3, 10, 17, 24; 7pm to 9pm. Contact Ken Whitney, kcwhit@ecentral.com, 303-340-5898 (home) or Miriam Slejko miriam@talloaks.com, 303-839-1493

City Park West/Wyman Historic/Uptown: St. Paul United Methodist Church at 16th and Ogden; Feb 7, 21, March 7, 21- 6pm to 8pm. Contact: Laura Folkwein, chumcm@yahoo.com 303-550-2577

DIALOGUE FRAMEWORK

DESIRED OUTCOMES

- Neighbors, business owners, homeless providers and the homeless involved in these dialogues arrive at a shared understanding of the complex issues of homelessness and its impacts
- Participants develop an awareness of the specific policy alternatives concerning homelessness
- People are connected to a wide range of resources, organizations and networks that focus on homelessness
- Participants develop ideas to impact homelessness and take action in their neighborhoods and throughout the city
- A model for engaging communities in constructive conversations is developed that can be applied to other tough community issues.

FORMAT

- In various neighborhoods throughout Denver, a small group of ten to twelve people will meet four times over the course of 6 to 8 weeks
- A host person or organization will convene the group
- Our team will provide agendas, tools, information and a dialogue guide to hosts. Further, we will be available to provide coaching on setting up dialogues and in some cases, facilitation where desired.
- Dialogue groups will strive for diversity, and include neighbors, churches, homeless people, business owners and other key voices.
- This effort rests on the belief that given good information and a good process through which values, experiences, and ideas can be shared with others, people will come to a better understanding about homelessness, its implications for our community and steps that we can take to address the challenges it presents.

DIALOGUE THEMES

Each convened dialogue will have an overarching theme with a set of materials and questions to support the discussion.

Dialogue #1 - The Complexity of Homelessness: Understanding the Diverse Set of Circumstances and People that Comprise Homelessness.

Dialogue #2 - Homelessness and your Neighborhood: Reflecting on the Realities and Impacts of Homelessness in Our Neighborhoods.

Dialogue #3 - Multiple Solutions: Considering the Policy Implications for Homelessness - addressing the systemic patterns vs. personal responsibility and everything in between.

Dialogue #4 - Action: Identifying the Actions We Can Take as Individuals and Neighborhoods.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS Spring 2006 Upcoming Events

“The Art of Facilitation” Workshop

March 9-10, 2006 – \$125

The Art of Facilitation requires a multitude of subtle skills such as: self awareness, balancing divergent with convergent thinking and the ability to be effortlessly present in the moment. Present to energy in the room, present to the unspoken thoughts and feelings of participants, present to your own inner world and responses to the external events around you. Therefore, using the arts to enhance facilitation is ideal, since facilitation is closer to an art than a science or a practice. ICG offers three workshops to bring out the extraordinary facilitator within you. Facilitated by Leilani Rashida Henry, founder of Being and Living Enterprises. Leilani is a pioneer of bringing innovative strategies to organization transformation.

“Democracy: The Never-Ending Battle”

Lech Walesa – March 24, 2006, 7:00 pm

President Lech Walesa, who led the Solidarity movement in Poland, will speak at Regis University at 7 p.m. Friday, March 24, 2006 in the Regis Fieldhouse on the Regis University Lowell Campus. He will talk about “Democracy: The Never-Ending Battle.” Recipient of the 1983 Nobel Peace Prize, Walesa will become the 12th laureate to speak at Regis University in nine years. He was an electrician when he energized striking workers at the shipyards in Gdansk, Poland, leading to the downfall of Communism. He became Poland’s first democratically elected president in 1990.

Today, Walesa continues to help make the world a better place as head of the Lech Walesa Institute, whose aim is to advance the ideals of democracy and free market reform throughout Eastern Europe and the rest of the world.

Tickets for Walesa’s speech go on sale the week of January 23. Cost is \$20 each. A limited number have been reserved for faculty, staff and students at a cost of \$10 each (limit of two per person at the special price).

To purchase tickets, contact the Office of Public Affairs at *3544 or publicaffairs@regis.edu to purchase with a credit card. Checks and ticket requests also may be mailed to Public Affairs at Regis University, 3333 Regis Blvd, Mail Code B-20, Denver, CO 80221-1099.

“The New Anti-Catholicism: Why Catholics Should Welcome it Partly” Father Mark Massa – February 21, 2006 7:30 pm

Regis University welcomes noted Jesuit scholar and author Father Mark Massa to speak at Regis University Lowell Campus.

Fr. Massa, Professor of Theology and Co-Director of the Curran Center for American Catholic Studies at Fordham University, is the author of a controversial new book entitled *Anti-Catholicism in America: The Last Acceptable Prejudice*. Fr. Massa raises questions about the perceptions of Catholicism in the nation's culture and discusses the validity or unwarranted bias present in such opinions. Th.D., Harvard University (1987); M.Div., Weston Jesuit School of Theology (1980); M.A., University of Chicago (1974); A.B., University of Detroit (1973).

“Women and Catholicism”

Dr. Phyllis Zagano – March 23, 2006 7:30 pm

In honor of Great Women of Spirit Week Dr. Phyllis Zagano, Professor in the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies at Hofstra University will speak on “Women and Catholicism” at Regis University Lowell Campus. Dr. Zagano is Senior Research Associate-in-Residence at Hofstra University. Dr. Zagano joined Hofstra University in 2002. During the Fall 2005 semester Dr. Zagano was a Visiting Associate Professor of Roman Catholic Studies at the Yale Divinity School, Yale University, New Haven, CT, where she taught “Roman Catholic Ecclesiology.” During the Spring 2005 semester, Dr. Zagano held the Aquinas Chair of Catholic Studies at St. Thomas Aquinas College. Dr. Zagano holds a B.A. from Marymount College, Tarrytown, NY, the Ph.D. from the State University of New York at Stony Brook, and three master's degrees, in communications (Boston University), literature (Long Island University), and theology (St. John's University).

For more information regarding any of the upcoming events or for a list of other future events visit our web-site at www.icgregis.org or contact us at (303) 458-4967.

Need Help?

If you believe you may be in need of the collaborative dialogue resources of the Institute please do not hesitate to give Katie Bruen a call at 303-458-4967, e-mail us at icg@regis.edu, or visit our website at www.icgregis.org.

MISSION STATEMENT OF THE INSTITUTE ON THE COMMON GOOD

To promote the common good through the use of dialogue, discernment and democratic deliberation.



Institute on the
Common Good

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