

# NFNC Summer Camp West 2010 Opening Remarks

by Patricia Diehl

## WELCOME TO NFNC SUMMER CAMP WEST 2010

also to the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of

## NETWORK FOR A NEW CULTURE

Network for a New Culture was birthed and named 15 years ago at the first Summer Camp in 1995 – here in Oregon. None of the original organizers are here with us today, although a few of us were at that camp. And I think all of us found it life changing.

Network for New Culture is a non-organization. It is just what its name implies – a network – a network of people who share a common vision – a loosely common vision. And over the last 16 years this vision has shown up in different ways and in different locales. There is SC East, started by Michael Rios and Sarah Taub in 2003, as well as their community, Chrysalis. There is also Laakeah Community in Hawaii, which has sponsored some winter camps. There is the Heart of Farming Community right outside Eugene. There is \_\_\_\_\_ in Santa Cruz CA, which sponsored a Spring Camp. And in September, there is a brand new NCNW mini camp happening in Seattle. And, I imagine there are other expressions inspired by NFNC that perhaps we don't even know about.

Since NFNC is not an organization and (deliberately) has no legal status, in 2003 we created a nonprofit organization here in Oregon, New Culture Institute (NCI) to sponsor NFNC Summer Camp West, as well as any other project we may choose to take on. This means, among other things, that donations to Summer Camp are tax deductible (subject, of course, to IRS rules).

Now, how did I get off on that? Oh, that's "Who We Are"

### WHAT IS OUR VISION?

The Vision for Summer Camp is all about Polyamory . . . . Right?

WRONG!!

What then is the vision, the cultural World View, to which NFNC aspires?  
(Hint: it's spelled out in a box on the front of your registration packet.)

"Network for New Culture is dedicated to creating a world without fear or violence, by promoting self-awareness and personal empowerment. We believe these goals are most effectively achieved in the context of a loving and supportive community. One of the primary purposes of summer camp is to create such a community as a vehicle for social change. And to serve as a model for participants to emulate."

In other words, the vision of NFNC and Summer Camp is to co-create a culture of non-violence.

How do we propose to carry out this vision of cultural change?

By becoming the change we seek.

How does one go about this? Where does one even start?

Notice our behaviors – really look at them – especially in the context of relationship. Then look at the beliefs and assumptions that support the behavior

Behaviors are the clue to our operative beliefs

not what we ought to believe or what we profess to believe –  
but the ones operating in our psyche – “Why did I do/say that?”

When I ask that kind of question, I’m probably looking at an old belief – a cultural (i.e. learned) pattern.

So why do I want to look at old behavior patterns? What for?

To cultivate consciousness around my behaviors and my relationships

And what am I aiming for?

## **CONSCIOUS HUMAN RELATIONSHIP**

Relationship with whom?

That includes our relationship

with ourselves – our true primary relationship

with others – friends, lovers, our children, co-workers

with society and its institutions

with the environment

all of which are also aspects of the Universe – the Transcendent

And with whom is my (and your) primary relationship?? Who is our primary, lifelong partner?

**OURSELVES!**

To help this process along, there are a few key attitudes that we have found helpful here at Summer Camp. For us these have become buzzwords, and you who have been to camp, of course, know them.

So help me here. The first is the “T” word:

The first is to develop TRANSPARENCY

Transparency is about TRUTH – and not just the truth we speak

Look at our behavior (Remember? the clue to our operative beliefs – not what we “ought” to believe) - and then make a *judgment* and beat yourself up and vow to never do *that* again!      RIGHT?      WRONG!!

- DO NOT JUDGE that's a dead end. It takes you to violence
  - with yourself
- Instead QUESTION – What is that about? Invoke your CURIOSITY  
Example – I meet a guy – what is my first reaction? Do I become shy? Flirtations? Hostile?

Does my behavior reflect my own consciously examined belief about myself?

If not, whose belief? An unexamined, enculturated belief?  
Perhaps my mother's?  
What someone told me? The proverbial “They”?

Transparent behavior is behavior that reflects my authentic self,  
i.e. my authentic belief about myself and the nature of the world

NO lying to myself  
therefore, no lying to others

ZEGG FORUM is a vehicle we use for creating and practicing transparency in community

Personal issues, experiences, as well as hopes, dreams and visions reflect on and are a reflection of our common experiences – and all of these can be explored in Forum.

We can see ourselves in each person who steps into the circle.

This year we also have in our schedule The Work of Byron Katie, presented by Ronit Corry -- which should soon have all of us asking ourselves “Is that true?”

The second attitude is the infamous “CH” word

Exercise conscious CHOICE

I want to NOTICE my choices – and there are choices in every situation

- again, QUESTION, DON'T JUDGE

Does my choice reflect my authentic desire and belief?

I have a teacher who has said that a less than enthusiastic YES is really a NO in disguise.

Am I taking full responsibility for my choice?

And remember: You can choose and choose again.

Lisa will have some exercises relating to choice later today.

And tomorrow in Betty Martin's workshop this will definitely be addressed.

In fact, I am sure that you will have ample opportunity during this camp to exercise your power of choice and to reflect on the results.

Then there is the “E” word

Be willing to EXPERIMENT

Experiment with new behaviors – CONSCIOUSLY  
in the spirit of PLAY

Example:

“Nice is my fallback position. It has been the most successful strategy for getting what I want -

But I have been reading Kelly's book Don't Be Nice, Be Real and I'm trying on the Damsel Bitch

You can ask my partner about the success of this experiment.

Give yourself permission to experiment

– also give yourself permission to retreat

And then there is the other “C” word:

There is no possibility of changing a culture without COMMUNITY

We simply cannot change a shared belief system in isolation

– we can set an example, become a martyr, or go crazy

– but it takes the support of others, practice with others, refinement

of rubbing against others to hone a cultural agreement

So, for ten days we are creating a COMMUNITY of experimenters in creative, CONSCIOUS HUMAN RELATIONSHIP .

We talked last year about our current culture and a little about what we want in a New Culture.

This year I would like to expand on one aspect that may shed light on what we want and need to change the cultural bias toward verbal attack and defense – which leads to violence

And perhaps offer an alternative

So, let's talk a bit about new Cultural Agreements

Now, cultural agreements are, for the most part, unconscious – as is our attachment to them. (Looking at our behavior can be a clue to both the agreement and the attachment)

Culture is much like a box within which we operate. It defines our limits – becomes our familiar environment. It gives a certain shape to our reality – a certain sense of security. It is supported by the tacit agreement of those around us – and we tend to take it for granted.

I have a sense that our current culture is emerging from a box – one that has been a comfortable environment, but no longer feels viable (quite literally). In a way, we are being thrown out of the box. And, we may sometimes feel like a “Jack in the box,” one moment wildly jumping into the open, then feeling stuffed back in.

So, I have a question: If we are to consciously create a new culture, what do we want it to look like?

Do we want to create a newer, sexier box to protect our newer, sexier beliefs?  
Is the new culture to be a box to protect and/or defend new beliefs?

Or, can we see the boxes we build (and we will likely build some for the illusion of security – a human need) – Can we see them as “temporary containers”? - as *experiments*?

Can we maintain our aspiration to the right to *choose* and to *re-choose*?

Can we see our *transparency* – revealing our authentic Truth (or our recognition of truth) as a moving, continually unfolding target?

This has not been the outcome of movements of change in the past. The tendency is to re-create a comfortable box and furnish it with somewhat different décor, which is then accepted as the new norm and defended with vigor  
which comes back around to inviting violence . . .

Is there a way out of this vicious circle?

I really don't know.

But one thing I do see as a possibility – and in fact, as necessary to even hope to neutralize the human tendency to fear – and therefore to violence – is to promote an attitude of embracing DIVERSITY

I do not mean “tolerating,” or “accepting,” diversity – but *appreciating* and *embracing* Diversity – as a “way,” a path to a world without violence.

Diversity includes what we can see, such as skin color, physical appearance, mobility. It also includes opinions, world view, mental and emotional “styles;” relationship “styles” - such as monogamy / poly / celibacy; sexual orientation – hetero / “queer? / bi. (These latter are areas which we already foster here at Summer Camp.)

We have so many hidden prejudices – we even hide them from ourselves  
e.g.: overweight people  
older people  
poor people (probably more insidious than racial prejudice)  
people we feel are entrenched in “false” beliefs – a big one  
for me.

There are so many behaviors and attitudes that I see a just WRONG.  
JUDGMENT JUDGMENT JUDGMENT

But is this judgment that I have helpful? Is there an attitude that could be more helpful?

My partner and I have a friend, Gary Reiss, who is a psychologist and, for more than 10 year has been traveling to Israel to promote reconciliation between Israelis and Palestinians. The first year he and his partner went, the aim was to bring together Palestinian and Israeli women. They met and talked one on one and collectively about “What do I fear about you?” The women were enthusiastic and went home and talked about this to their husbands. By the end of the week, the husbands were also coming and participating in these dialogues.

As this story indicates, how we approach diversity is important – platitudes and statements of acceptance don't suffice – we all have opinions (aka beliefs) whose expression fosters behavior of acting as if we know – even though we know that none of us owns the truth.

Yet our current culture and education fosters an attitude of defense of our opinions. Our schooling teaches us to look for errors, not truth  
to debate – i.e. to defend our position, or to make our opponent wrong  
(Notice the word “opponent” - we assume that those who disagree with us are “opponents.”)  
the best debater is the “winner” - generally the one who convinces us that their opponent is “wrong.”

So, we learn about thesis and antithesis –  
making a proposition or finding holes in one  
(Look at the process of defense of a doctoral thesis, e.g.)

There is nothing inherently wrong with this. These skills can be very useful.

But what is *missing* here? Why do we stop here and become satisfied that “A” is right and “B” is therefore wrong? - especially when we know that A is not entirely true – and B also has some merit or it wouldn't be arguable.

What is missing?

We learn to debate, but we do not learn to DIALOGUE.

We are not taught to listen with empathy

To want to understand the position of the other  
To question out of genuine curiosity.

I imagine debate to be a matter of engaging primarily the mind and the tongue; whereas dialogue demands engaging the ears and the heart. The mind is then in service to the heart, and questions are sincere (authentic), seeking truth.

Debate is about the debater, about performance, about skill in convincing – about winning. Dialogue is about seeking truth, understanding perspectives. True dialogue is not competitive.

Also missing in our education is the next step beyond thesis/antithesis – to move to synthesis.

We learn to defend.

We question to find the error, the fallacy.

We are not taught to reconcile positions, to seek alternative choices, to go beyond the dilemma.

Why? We are motivated to be a winner. We are not taught to seek the commonality, to search for the hidden truth.

We are taught to use questions. But Questions can be tricky:

There are questions that are put-downs in disguise.

Questions that are seeking out errors

Questions that just confuse the issue

Questions that are simply self-serving

What is needed are

Questions of genuine curiosity –

seeking to expand one's knowledge, enlarge one's ideas -

seeking to understand the other's point of view

So what is the key here? What is required to foster a cultural attitude embracing diversity?  
No easy task.

First, an attitude of “I don't know The Truth” (with a capital T)

Second, education and practice in the art of dialogue.

(I imagine Tree's workshop on appreciative Inquiry will offer some insight here.)

And – most important – an attitude of genuine CURIOSITY

a real desire to be open to a new possibility  
to expanding or revising one's point of view  
to perhaps creating a new, synthesizing perspective

So, here is my challenge for Summer Camp 2010:

Before jumping to a conclusion  
about a person  
a situation  
a behavior at camp

When you notice a judgment coming on  
about Yourself  
Someone else  
or an incident

Invoke your power of CURIOSITY  
Invoke your ears and your heart to listen with empathy  
And let your mind and voice take direction from the heart  
to form questions that lead to understanding and  
genuine discernment

And you don't need to confine this experiment to Summer Camp. Try it in "the World" outside.  
Apply it to what you read, see, experience.

It's sorely needed.

Perhaps CURIOSITY could be the key to disarming the tendency to violence – to a process of  
judgment → attack → defend

Perhaps CURIOSITY could be the key to creating a genuinely  
NEW CULTURE.