

Will there be a 4th National Conference on Whiteness in 1999?

(Continued from last issue). So far, so good. Our last newsletter (Spring 1999) described some of the thinking behind the event being planned in Boston. But neither that newsletter nor our general mailing earlier this month mentioned the date. It looks like **November 5-7**.

The Conference this year will look at what white people can do about racism in the Boston area. It is locally focused. The process will emphasize dialogue among participants. A large group process—the open-space model is being considered—will bring participants into a structured sharing and exchange of ideas, views and experiences. Plans are to operate 3 discussion groups of 60 people each, for a total conference size of 180 participants. Participation will be limited to 60 spaces for people outside the Boston area.

The planners hope the conference will energize antiracism and anti-whitism efforts in the Boston area, and also provide a model for other local and regional events seeking to energize and support the same. The 60 spaces for outsiders have been created to bring in outside views, and allow interested persons from around the country to witness the process first hand.

These plans are tentative. We were wondering if the local focus might lead planners to name the event as something other than the 4th National Conference on Whiteness, but in our last contact a few weeks ago we were assured that the Boston planners continue to conceptualize it as part of the continuing process the National Conference on Whiteness begun in 1996. We're happy to hear that, and we continue to support what promises to be an exciting departure from "business as usual." The Center, along with other organizations involved in this conference believe this event, though locally focused, will prove to have national import.

For up to the minute information, contact conference planners **Marian Groot** of the Women's Theological Center at (617) 536-8782, or **Paul Marcus** of Community Change, Inc. at (617) 523-0555.

SUMMER'S PACE, SLOW AND STEADY:

Around the office

Life often slows with the summer. Around our modest one room office this plays out as fewer phone calls, less email, and less on the immediate schedule of events. Not that we're not busy. We've completed a general mailing, handled some media inquiries, and performed a couple of training events. There's even been time for some vacation. Now it's time to get back in touch with our members. Greetings. Hope your summer is going well, too.

Getting our name out there

We've experienced a spate of activity with the media recently, including mention in the following outlets:

Houston Chronicle (and other newspapers), "Only enriching the American mainstream," opinion column by William Raspberry, March 12, 1999. Mentions WHITENESS PAPER No. 1, on Decentering Whiteness.

San Jose Mercury News, "Entering unknown territory," by Ben Stocking. Part of a series entitled "A majority of none." April 14, 1999.

Baltimore Sun, "New field of study focuses on what it means to be white," by Erin Texeira, May 5, 1999.

KFNX 1100AM in Phoenix, AZ, and WALE 990 AM in Providence, RI, Human Development: A Journey of Life Experiences with Dr. Rich Sherman. 1-hour talk program with call-ins. Jeff Hitchcock appeared as guest host on Monday, June 14, 1999 from 2:00 to 3:00 PM PDT.

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Tell it to the Board

The Center's Board of Trustees will be meeting sometime soon, possibly the end of August. Now that the Center is in its fifth year as an organization, it's time to review our mission and purpose. Part of the Board's time will be devoted to these concerns. Our present mission is to "examine white American culture in the context of the greater American culture." We also have corollary ideas that inform our practice in a central way. Thus we are multiracial. We believe both inside and outside views of white culture are needed. We are antiracist. We recognize the interrelatedness of oppressions, and we advocate decentering whiteness.

Do you have something you would like to tell the Board? What are we doing well? What are we doing poorly? What would make us a more valuable organization? Should we modify our focus?

Let us know in writing. Send us a letter or email message with your opinions, suggestions, insight and advice. Let us know your letter or email is for the Board's consideration and we will present each Board member with a copy at the annual meeting.

Our training practice

The Center recently completed two training engagements. Our *Learning How to Talk about Whiteness* workshop was well received by 40 participants at the National Conference on Peacemaking and Conflict Resolution in Phoenix, Arizona on May 28. We also appeared at the annual conference of the National Multicultural Institute (NMCI) in Washington, DC on June 4. About twenty people attended our 1-day workshop there.

Feedback from both events was overwhelmingly supportive. According to Elizabeth P. Salett, President of NMCI, in a follow-up letter evaluating the Center's performance, "evaluations for your workshop, 'Decentering Whiteness to Build a Multiracial Community,' were very positive. Several participants commented on how they felt safe to explore difficult subjects in more depth. Many expressed their satisfaction with the number of new insights and points of view that were presented."

Cessie Alfonso, A.C.S.W., of Alfonso Associates, Inc., Jersey City, NJ co-facilitated the NMCI workshop with Jeff Hitchcock. Cessie, pending board approval, has also agreed to work with the Center as Associate Director of Training. She brings well over twenty years of training and human relations expertise to the undertaking. Her duties will include following up on inquiries about our training programs, developing new workshops, and facilitating training sessions as they take place. Her presence is gratefully welcomed by the Executive Director, who is thus free to manage other areas of the Center's growing activities.

Publications

The Center extends its thanks to the ten members who pilot tested our Racial Awareness Quiz. Results varied, with some finding it not useful for their audience and others finding it made a significant impact. Generally the impact was favorable, particularly in academic and classroom settings. We are reviewing the feedback and plan to incorporate our findings into a facilitator's guide for the quiz. The guide and quiz should be available for sale by the end of the year.

We're also happy to announce that coming this fall is a new paper in our WHITENESS PAPERS series, by **Judith H. Katz, Ed.D.**, titled "What White People Can Do about Racism."

General mailing

The Center just completed a mailing to our general mailing list. This list, consisting now of nearly 300 people, was assembled from purchasers of our publications, attendees at our workshops and conference events, and people who asked to have information about our activities. The mailing was informational and included a request for new members. Several persons have responded and we welcome them as they receive their first newsletters.

New materials

The Center is updating its informational materials, including a brochure, materials about our training services and a list of publications. Copies of our new brochure were sent in the general mailing, and we've enclosed two brochures (one for a friend) here as well. Training materials are complete and will be mailed out on request starting in August. Our description of publications is near completion.

Members - new and renewing

Students

Timothy J. Birchard	Jennifer Elliott
Kim A. Case	Zoe Perry

Contributors

Michael Brazzel, Ph.D.	William R. Kelley
Bill Gregory	Carolyn Keys
Daniel Hall	Rev. Paul Partridge, Jr.
Sandy Heierbacher	Brian Riker
Dr. Melvin W. James	Margot & Barry Sage-El
Dr. Laurie B. Lippin	Ken Taber, MSW, M Div.

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