

Report to WACAN members written by Peter Caulfield describing Day One of Summit III

Hey community! It's the road crew again with today's report for Wednesday, April 18th, 2007.

Ok. Here goes. Really good stuff to talk about!. As you may know, today marked day one of the White Anti-Racist Summit 3 here at the WPC. This year's events are being co-facilitated by Lou & Jayne from the Episcopal church, those cool cats from AWARE in L.A., Lisa Albrecht of Project South fame and, of course, your favorite anti-racist superstars... the WACAN Road Crew. (Applause)

We were all up, washed, dressed and in the lobby by seven to get some breakfast and meet with friends. Relationship building is definitely an ongoing theme this time around.

We set up the summit room in a nice, big, welcoming circle and posted up the rules for the convention. When folks arrived (some even said they'd wandered in because it looked so inviting!) Lisa went over the event rules and WACAN's Bonnie Cushing lead the group intros. Peter covered the WACAN intro for the crew. Lila then challenged the room to take a look around and think about three folks we felt we'd like to get to know based on what they said in the intros.

After disseminating info on all the participating groups (of which there were over a dozen) Lila lead an invocation exercise. The room got still and quiet for a moment and then we were prompted to call out the names of folks of color in our lives from whom we derive inspiration. The same was then repeated invoking the names of folks of whiteness in our lives who have encouraged or inspired us in a similar way. I gotta say, this exercise is always much more powerful than I think it's gonna be. Corny as it may sound, let's just say we were lucky the space had a maximum occupancy of 140 because it sure felt like the count went up a few. Yeah, you're right. That was a little corny. Moving on...

Our first group break-up went according to age.. Out of the four generational groups into which we divided, road crew members found ourselves in three of them. Pretty inter-generational, eh! Among the questions for thought: "How do you think being a part of your generation has informed your work?" Wow. There was lots to discuss. We also had to come up with a song to share from our generation which we felt repped us and our work pretty well. For the under 25's, it was the Black-Eyed Peas. The 25-40's chose "Willing to Fight"

by Ani DiFranco. The 50+'s decided to really own it by breaking out in a verse of none-other than "We Shall Overcome". Trust me. Laughter soon turned to the cliché... "Oh, I've just got something in my eye." Yeah, right Bonnie!

The next exercise facilitated by Lisa was really insightful. Before breaking for lunch, participants were asked to take two Post-Its™, one yellow and one orange. On the yellow one we were instructed to write succinctly about our first recollection of seeing injustice played out in our lives accompanied by the approximate year of occurrence. On the Orange one, we wrote about our "Ah-Hah" moments involving white supremacy also accompanied by an approximate year. They were posted on a social justice timeline of sorts provided by Lisa which hung on the wall. After returning from lunch we shared a few from the lot. The catch to it was, examining the time lapse between our personal "ah-hah" moments revolving around injustice in our own (mostly) white lives, and then the "ah-hah" moments when we came to see white supremacy playing out for us. Ouch. We all sat with that one for a few. Then it was on to some quick check ins. Energy was very much up by then.

The next exercise involved caucusing in different groups that we'd all decided on together. Jeff, for instance, joined the one discussing doing anti-racist work in a faith-based context. Lila, Jud and Peter joined the caucus which addressed dealing with the "isms" in a capitalistic society. A lot of class issues came up. We also got to network with like-minded people. It was really cool. After sharing what we'd spoken about in our caucuses, Lila and Bon facilitated a quick evaluation of day one of the summit. Folks seemed pleased as were we. This year really felt well organized. See guys! Told you all those conference calls would pay off!

The rest was just about dinner and prep for the following days events. The crew is pumped and ready to go. As it's wearing on 2:30 in the morning, it's time to wrap up this post and get some shut-eye. Keep it tuned here though folks for the latest from The Summit and WPC8 in beautiful (but conservative!) Colorado Springs. Seriously. The mountain view is INSANE! Gotta be seen to be believed. Til' tomorrow... Have a great night all!

Yours in solidarity,

Jeff, Bonnie, Lila, Jud and Peter: The WACAN road crew