

StirFry Seminars & Consulting

December 2009

Racism in Rockford: The conversation must continue



PHOTO: SCOTT MORGAN/RRSTAR.COM

On October 29 & 30th, 2009, Stirfry Seminars partnered with the YWCA-Rockford and other community sponsors to carry-out 'A National Conversation on Race' in Illinois. The event started with a film showing and discussion of Lee Mun Wah's documentary film, *Last Chance for Eden*, and followed with an all-day workshop meant to encourage participants to continue dialogues on race. Here are some participant testimonials. (Excerpts reprinted with permission of the Rockford Register Star • www.rrstar.com)

Five employees of the Rockford Register Star attended the YWCA's National Conversation on Race seminar Oct. 30 at Rockford College. Four members of the Editorial Board — Tom Lasley, Mary Kaull, Doug Gass and Wally Haas—and Human Resources Director Mona Kidd offer their reflections.

I am a racist.

If you had asked me if I was before I participated in the National Conversation on Race workshop last week, my answer would have been, absolutely not.

But as a white American male of European roots I have lived a very privileged life and see the world differently from someone who is black or Hispanic or American Indian. I see the world from a position of power. I don't know what it's like to walk into a room and have people turn around and look at me. I don't know what it's like to be stopped when driving because I don't "belong" in a certain neighborhood. And I don't know what it's like to be denied a job or a place to live simply because my skin is a different color.

I've never had to worry about those things and frankly, in my everyday life, never really thought about others whose life is a constant struggle because of their color or ancestry. I always believed that in essence we were the same. But we're not, and that's OK. Until the time comes that we can celebrate our differences and not be threatened by them, nothing will change.

And until that time comes, I must put myself in others' shoes, and stand up for those who don't have a voice.

—Tom Lasley,
general manager

There is nothing I can say that is right. Every word is a potential land mine.

That was my reaction when my boss, Editorial Page Editor Wally Haas, asked me to write a few paragraphs about the seminar on race at Rockford College last week. The experience touched me in a very profound way, but it's not the kind of experience that lends itself to words.

I am now convinced I can never understand the struggles of people of color. What must it be like to be the "only" so often? To feel the burden of always saying the right thing, doing the right thing, knowing your actions will be (consciously or unconsciously) reflected on other people of your race? All I can say is, I want to make the connection. I must make the connection. My life would be so much the poorer without it.

We may not be the same — I may not be able to ever understand the struggle — but our effort to connect is the essence of being human. There are land mines, all right, but the alternative is worse: the uncertainty, the isolation, the bonds to this community and its diverse people never made.

Let's not hesitate any longer.

—Mary Kaull,
assistant editorial page editor



MINDFULLY RESOLVING CONFLICTS

Level One

January 8-10, 2010

Friday 2 pm-9 pm; Saturday 8 am-6 pm; Sunday 8 am-2 pm

Quan Yin Training Center
2311 8th Street, Berkeley, CA

Workshop Objectives:

- Discover a variety of ways to de-escalate a conflict within minutes
- Learn how to replace adversarial and defensive statements with 26 responses that are mindfully & culturally receptive
- Explore different methods that can help in creating a sense of community between diverse groups & individuals
- Enhance your observational and listening acuity by learning how to translate non-verbal messages into meaningful interventions

StirFry Calendar

December 14, 2009 Campbell, CA	Diversity Communications Training Not Open to the Public
January 8-10, 2010 ** Berkeley, CA	Mindfully Resolving Conflicts for Diversity Issues - Level One Open to the Public
January 11, 2010 Campbell, CA	Diversity Communications Training Not Open to the Public
January 13-15, 2010 Richfield, MN	Mindfully Resolving Conflicts: Part One Not Open to the Public
January 22, 2010 Little Rock, AK	If these Halls Could Talk Southern Early Childhood Association (SECA) Conference/Open to the Public
January 27, 2010 Pike Gallatin, TN	An Unfinished Conversation Not Open to the Public
January 29, 2010 Tucson, AZ	Cultural Competency for Leaders International Conference on Intercultural Competence/ Open to the Public
February 8, 2010 Minneapolis, MN	Cultural Competency for Leaders Not Open to the Public
February 9-11, 2010 Richfield, MN	Mindfully Resolving Conflicts: Part Two Not Open to the Public
February 16, 2010 Trenton, NJ	Cultural Competency for Leaders Not Open to the Public

** Held at the Quan Yin Training Center, 2311 8th Street, Berkeley, CA

For more information, registration and links to conference workshops, visit <http://www.stirfryseminars.com/events>

Contact Us: 510.204.8840 Trainings, Films & Diversity Products, ext. 101 www.stirfryseminars.com