



Summer 2005

The Compassionate Listening Project

A nonprofit organization dedicated to teaching skills to cultivate healthy relationships, heal polarization, and build bridges between people, communities, and nations in conflict

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You'll Find Us In Suquamish (and other news)!

The Compassionate Listening Project is moving one town over. When Reverend Tom Thresher invited us to move into the Suquamish United Church of Christ, we did not hesitate. The Church is not only a beautiful spiritual community, but a progressive center for other local groups as well. The Church is located within the Port Madison Indian Reservation, home of the Suquamish nation, whose roots on the land go back thousands of years. We consider this move a great blessing. Our appreciation to Tom and the Church for welcoming us. And we welcome YOU! Please visit us in our new office (located just off of Bainbridge Island). We look forward to new friendships, partnerships and possibilities!

And other office news: Our gratitude to Therese Charvet for her work to support our facilitator team, policy development and outreach, and coordinating our advanced training team. And we welcome Deborah Crews, who will join us one day each week to schedule our N. American trainings. If you have been wanting to bring Compassionate Listening to your community, now is the perfect time to ask!

Now that we have successfully completed our facilitator certification training in the U.S., we are eager to begin our Israeli and Palestinian facilitator training. We and our partners in the West Bank and Israel are hopeful as we submit our funding proposals. Your support is more important than ever as we build our capacity to initiate this work. In the meantime, come learn more about our work in the Middle East by joining our November delegation to Israel and Palestine... a great way to learn Compassionate Listening.

We continue with our teaching work. To date this year, we have completed over 40 Compassionate Listening training events in 10 states, reaching thousands of people in the U.S. and Germany. We invite you to celebrate with us this summer at our 2nd Annual Summer Gathering. With people registered from 8 states, Canada and Israel—and six more weeks to go—it promises to be another stellar Gathering. We hope to see you there!

2005-2006 Advanced Training Series: Practical Skills for Daily Life

We're happy to announce our Advanced Compassionate Listening Training series for 2005-2006. These are practical skills for everyday living! Whether you would like to become a more skilled peace-maker in your family, community or workplace, or initiate Compassionate Listening practice groups or other projects in your community, this Advanced Training series will serve you. We welcome the participation of all who have taken our introductory intensive or participated in a delegation (by this coming November).

The Advanced Training series consists of 3, 3-day weekends over a 7-month period, beginning in November 2005 and ending in May 2006. Carol Hwoschinsky, our wise and wonderful Training Director, will be the lead trainer, with the support of our facilitators.

We are awakening to what the mystics from all great faiths have known for centuries: that cultivating the wisdom of the heart is our hope for real peace "from the inside out." The intelligence of the heart is confirmed by recent findings in the field of Neurocardiology on the heart-brain relationship. Compassionate Listening focuses not just on communication skills, but on strengthening the influence of the heart through cultivating compassion, and learning to listen and speak from the heart, even in the heat of conflict. The practice of Compassionate Listening teaches us how to reach through layers of defensiveness and reactivity to our essential core. From there, we can shift communication and relationships into heart-to-heart interaction. Join us on this journey to the heart!

photo courtesy of Linda Wolf

Celebrating 3 Years of Jewish-German Healing

In the fall of 2002, we inaugurated our Jewish-German Compassionate Listening project in Germany. There, in the eco-village community of Lebensgarten (Garden of Life), 34 courageous Jewish Americans and non-Jewish Germans began a remarkable healing journey. For many Jews, the trip marked the first time they had allowed themselves to step foot in Germany. And for many of the Germans, this was their first face-to-face encounter with Jews and a "live" Jewish culture.

The 10-day program included honoring our ancestors, Compassionate Listening skills training, art, dance, and sharing our stories. We spent several days in Berlin, a day at Bergen-Belsen (a former concentration camp), and we listened to "witnesses" from WWII, including a former SS soldier, and Jewish and German survivors. We repeated the program in 2003 with equally profound results. Two former participants, Gabriele Seils and Eve Rennebarth, produced a documentary of the 2003 project called "Embracing Story", which screens widely in the U.S. and Germany (Embracing Story is available in DVD and video format on our website).

Recognizing that there were perhaps millions of Jewish Americans carrying wounds related to the Holocaust, we decided to hold the project on U.S. soil for the first time in 2004. Both new and returning Jewish and German participants joined us in the Washington, D.C. area this past fall. Witnesses included a Jewish woman who was hidden in Germany as a child during the war. One survivor of Auschwitz we listened to told us that in his many years of talking about the war, he had never been heard so profoundly. He said, "I don't know what you do, but if there was ever a mechanism for healing the world, this is it." And so the journey continues...Participants and facilitators have made scores of presentations to communities throughout the United States, Germany and England. We communicate daily on a list-serve that even one of our witnesses has joined (and provides time-consuming translation for!) as well as our Israeli-German tour guide in Berlin. Plans are underway for a book and traveling exhibit that integrate photos, film, artwork, narrative writing, and poetry from the project. Above all, those who have experienced the healing power of Compassionate Listening in the context of the Jewish-German "story" are bringing their softened hearts and ever-deepening skills into the worlds they inhabit – at home, at work and in their communities. One by one, we are making a difference.

(Please contact co-directors Andrea Cohen, cohencomm@comcast.net, or Brian Berman, brian@bermanhealingarts.com, for more information or to inquire about events in your community.)



Christa and Shimon

"It is not possible to express in words how I feel supported in what I always believed in: that it is necessary to face strong feelings, to express them, to face trauma, even when it is as overwhelming as the Holocaust. And to participate when a whole group of more than 30 is carrying this idea – that was more than I ever expected life would offer to me."

Eve Rennebarth, Germany

Dear Friends of Compassionate Listening: We want to thank you for inviting us into your communities and into your hearts; for participating in our programs and trainings; and for all of your support - including your financial support that allows us to bring this work to ever-widening circles. Thank you for this joyous partnership.



Join our Jewish & Palestinian co-leaders Leah Green and Maha El-Taji on our next Compassionate Listening journey to Israel and Palestine in November 2005. See our website for information & registration, or call us at 360-297-2280.

YES! I want to support The Compassionate Listening Project!

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