



July 2013

Newsletter of Initiatives of Change USA

Issue No. 22

Greetings!

This issue of *Breakthroughs* addresses the theme of healing.



Twenty years ago the *Healing the Heart of America* conference in Richmond, VA, featured the city's first walk through its racial history and launched a national movement for honest conversation on race, reconciliation, and responsibility. Two articles look at this on-going journey of healing and the partnerships that have made change possible.

This year in Caux, Switzerland, people from more than 30 countries gathered to address the need for *Healing History, Overcoming Racism, Seeking Equity, Building Community*. This conference developed more effective global civic engagement around these issues and explored how communities can work together to build trust, heal wounded memory, and create cultures of inclusion and economies that work for all.



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Sixty percent of our support comes from people just like you! No gift is too large or too small.

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**Metropolitan Richmond Day November 8, 2013**

This lunch forum will be keynoted by

**Dr. Gail Christopher**  
vice president for program strategy at the W. K. Kellogg Foundation.

**Time:** 12:00-2:00pm,  
**Location:** Omni Richmond  
100 South 12th Street,  
Richmond, VA 23219.

We have included three articles from the conference to give you a taste. On our website you will find more videos, blogs, articles and photos. A printed report will follow in September.

## Healing History - Caux, Switzerland

### Dreams for the 21st century

*Grant Rissler (CSP 2001) is a PhD student in public policy at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, VA. He writes:*

On the 150th anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg, a turning point in the US Civil War, more than 250 participants at the *Healing History: Overcoming Racism, Seeking Equity, Building Community* conference heard several compelling visions of what will produce turning points in 21st century efforts to heal divided communities and overcome racism.



Gail Christopher, vice president for program strategy at the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, spoke from the experience of the foundation's America Healing initiative which has committed \$100 million over five years to bring healing to divided communities and bridge racial equity gaps in the areas of education, health, juvenile justice, economic success, the media, and other areas.

"My dream," Christopher told the gathering, "is that all children will grow up in a world that no longer clings to the myth of hierarchy within the human family. That [false story] is racism. We're not there yet - it's a long journey ahead of us - but the key to getting there is leading with love."

To illustrate her key point, Christopher spoke of a Native American group in Alaska that the W.K. Kellogg Foundation supported in developing better dental care for their children. Despite the laudable goal the advocates encountered strong opposition from entrenched structures. A leader of the group told Christopher of wisdom she received from her mother in a moment of despair: "You always win if you lead with love."

Alex Wise, chair of the Initiatives of Change USA board, opened the plenary by observing, "our presence [here] suggests we have something significant in common. We believe that a world still haunted by racism is a blemished and distorted creation, not a creation as God intended it to be."

*For more information*

## Caux Conferences 2013



**June 29-July 3**

### Just governance

Exploring the personal qualities needed for effective governance and structures which promote integrity and cooperation

**July 3-7**

### Healing history

Overcoming racism, seeking equity, building community

**July 7-11**

### Dialogue on land and security

Share experience and build partnerships in restoring land, lives and peace.

**July 13-19**

### Trust and integrity in the global economy

Toward economic justice and environmental stability

**July 24-30**

### Children as actors in transforming society

The role of children and youth as active citizens

**August 1-6**

### Learning to live in a multicultural world

Imagining and co-creating a desired future in Europe through intergenerational and intercultural dialogue

**August 7-12**

### Seeds of inspiration

People sharing the inspiration that shaped their lives

More information available on the [Caux website](#)

Wise also challenged participants to examine their own narratives of life and shared how, as a white person from the US South whose family once owned slaves, he had needed to re-examine his own narrative. One inspiration was working on German-American relations during a time when German chancellor Helmut Schmidt took the courageous step to support the showing of docudramas about the Holocaust on state television

"It dawned on me that we needed this kind of honest conversation in my nation as well," Wise said. That realization led Wise to work with others in developing the American Civil War Center in Richmond, Virginia, (the capital of the southern Confederacy during the war) that presented the stories of Confederate, Unionist and African Americans honestly.

In concluding the session, Rajmohan Gandhi, grandson and biographer of Mahatma Gandhi, spoke of his grandfather's belief that "it may be through the [actions of] African Americans that the unadulterated message of nonviolence is delivered to the world." Drawing from the wisdom of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., he invited participants to reflect on several questions, including what "overriding loyalty to humankind demands of us now" and whether, in seeking to heal divisions within the Muslim world and between the Muslim world and Western cultures, "is not there wisdom for this work in the heritage and experience of African Americans?"

### The bias that operates behind our backs

*Tim Carrington, journalist and development specialist from Washington, DC, writes:*

Many societies and individuals struggle to dismantle the structures of racism and systemic exclusion.

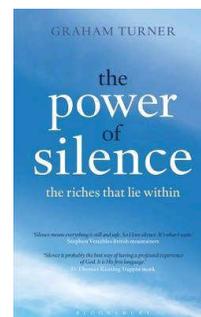
But what about biases that are unconscious, unrecognized, but nonetheless powerful? john powell, Director of the Haas Diversity Research Center at the University of California, Berkley, says that "unconscious prejudice is something that happens behind our back." One of the lead speakers at the [Initiatives of Change Healing History](#) conference at Caux, Switzerland, powell warns that biases that operate essentially without our conscious permission are often damaging. They come from widely reinforced signals from the social environment, and all people maintain them to some extent.



*john powell (right)  
(Photo: Grant Rissler)*



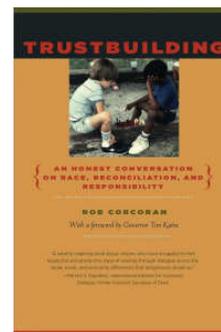
The 2012 Annual Report of Initiatives of Change International is available online and can be ordered from our office



British journalist and author Graham Turner explores the world of silence ... and those who recognize its value.

[Read the review online](#)  
by Charles Aquilina

Order from you local bookstore on online



Read author Rob Corcoran's latest blog, [Twin strands of honesty and hope](#)

"It's cultural," powell says, but difficult to uproot, since "the unconscious mind speaks a different language than the conscious mind." He adds that "the unconscious couldn't care less about facts and figures" that might be assembled to refute a crippling stereotype or pull down a collective cliché that insults an entire group of people.

Research shows disturbing results of unconscious bias. Teachers lower their expectations for black students, and in turn lower those students' aspirations. A recent study shows that emergency-room doctors provide pain medication less often to black and Hispanic patients than to white patients suffering from the same injuries. Tall people tend to command higher salaries than short people.

Powell explains that "the unconscious figures out short-cuts so that we can save energy and make quick decisions." The surrounding media culture, meanwhile, provides a steady pipeline of associations that assist the unconscious in categorizing groups of people as dangerous or safe, clever or slow, dirty or fastidious. With respect to race, powell finds "a host of negative association with blackness." A tall black man with a beard, powell recalls a generally polite saleswoman asking, "Can I help you?" as she unthinkingly took three steps back from a presumably threatening figure.

"This doesn't mean that we're racist," he stresses, "just human." The worst danger comes when unconscious prejudice mutates into policies and norms that are demeaning and oppressive. By setting equitable norms, the effects can be tempered, ie. hospitals can stipulate that pain medication always be provided for particular injuries, removing the decision for the purview of invisible bias.

Another remedy, says powell, is to "change the environment, creating new associations." It helps when television writers include Muslim doctors and teachers in scripts, and check themselves when they have depicted a succession of Muslim terrorists. Finally, says powell, "Don't be depressed - empathy is also natural."

## The work of our generation

*Susan Corcoran, Communications Director, IofC USA, writes:*

On one of the final days of the conference Dr. Gail Christopher, vice president of program strategy at the W K Kellogg Foundation, called for "a global fund for the healing of racism" and said that the business of asserting our true humanity as equal human beings is "the work of our generation."

She said that the Foundation, among the largest in the world, has worked for 20 years in dealing with the denial of opportunity. They have reached the conclusion that racism is at the heart of the issue. Over the past five years the Foundation has invested

## The Imam & The Pastor

*"The African model for finding peace amid the continent's warring communities"*  
The Times (London)



### *An African Answer*

The second film about the work of these two African peacemakers.

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## Initiatives of Change

focuses on the link between personal and global change and seeks to inspire, equip, and engage individuals as trustbuilders.

It starts with listening and responding to the still small voice within, applying values of integrity to everyday living, and taking risks to bridge divides.

Visit our [website](#) for more information.

## Follow-up Links

- [Initiatives of Change](#)
- [Hope in the Cities \(HIC\)](#)
- [Caux Scholars Program](#)
- [IofC on Facebook](#)
- [Trustbuilding on Facebook](#)
- [HIC on Facebook](#)



*Gail Christopher (Photo: Grant Rissler)*

\$100 million in the work for racial equity and racial healing.

Christopher expressed appreciation for the opportunity to engage with a global community. "We are learning from and interacting with brothers and sisters from all over the world."

Christopher referenced European Enlightenment

philosophers who placed white people, who looked like themselves, at the top of the racial hierarchy. Despite sincere efforts for human rights and civil rights we are still dealing with the consequences of that belief system. "We must be in the business of changing a belief system."

She posed the question, "What do we lose because we deny opportunity to so many people?" Noting that we live in an era of brain research and brain science, she said, "The brain is wired to process stories. We will not always remember data but we will remember story. It is the way we make meaning in our world. As long as we keep reiterating the stories that are grounded in the false belief of human hierarchy we will not overcome racism. We are learning how to influence the stories that are told."

Mike Wenger, who served as the deputy director of President Clinton's initiatives on race, introduced Dr. Christopher as a person "who dreams big dreams ... and then carries them to reality." He quoted Vincent Harding, "if you don't ever walk through trouble or reach beyond your comfort zone, you will never meet the rest of yourself." Christopher "doesn't hesitate to walk through trouble, or reach beyond her comfort zone."

Marc Leyenberger, a member of the European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance of the Council of Europe, welcomed the enthusiasm, conviction as well as realism of analysis that he had found in the conference: "We need a global commitment to tolerance." It is tolerance and openness that that makes peace possible. "But we must systemically renounce the voices of hate and violence. We can't tolerate the intolerable."

All of the audience took part in an interactive exercise of writing a postcard to the next generation with a statement beginning, "I know, I've learned, or I believe." Then were asked to consider "a joyful or painful lesson in their personal life that has taught you a valuable lesson in how to bridge differences between people."

Dr. Christopher concluded that for the millions of infants, many yet to be born, we must create a new future and "we must be the bridge over troubled water to heal the wounds and chart a new future."

# 20 YEARS OF HEALING THE HEART 1993 OF AMERICA 2013

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## Hope in the Cities in a word

*Karen Elliott Greisdorf, photographer and film maker from Bethesda, Maryland, writes of her experience of filming in Richmond, Virginia:*

Richmond is steeped in history. Close to 30 museums capture the details and determination of the former Capital of the Confederacy. Recently I interviewed 15 Richmonders (native and adoptive) who are writing a new history.

On location to film for an upcoming web short on Hope in the Cities, a program of Initiatives of Change for over 20 years, I traveled from the University of Richmond in the west end to the Fulton community in the east and south over the James River along Hull Street.

After visiting the city and covering Initiatives of Change for nearly two decades, Richmond has come to occupy a significant piece of real estate in my heart and mind for someone who doesn't live there. After the privileged interview time, I am even more deeply impressed and inspired by the women and men who are working to examine the legacies of the past and build an equitable future.



Each interviewee's story and contribution left me wanting to hear more - from corporate leader Tom Chewing's account of crossing barriers to build a friendship with local tennis legend Arthur Ashe when they were both in their teens, to learning about the challenges met today by City of Richmond Multicultural Director Tanya Gonzalez.

At the end of the five days of shooting, I was deeply encouraged by the network of people that the Hope in the Cities team has connected with over the years. I was also struck by the way in which these Richmonders, while called to their individual pursuits, also share a collective commitment to honest conversation required for the social and structural transformation still needed.

Shooting for the web short, which will be online by the end of the summer, led spontaneously to the creation of an even shorter

piece titled "defining Hope in the Cities." At the end of each interview I asked each Richmonder how he or she would define the work of Hope in the Cities. That translated into the piece you can see now on the website.

The city website sports the tagline "Easy To Love". After all these years of journeying south on I-95 from the DC area, I find that this tagline is truer now than ever. But I don't just feel love. I have a deep sense of gratitude and hope for what's yet to come.

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## Commentary

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### Richmond's healing spirit spreads

*This column by [Rob Corcoran](#), national director of IofC USA, appeared in the Richmond Times-Dispatch, June 16, 2013. It is reproduced with permission.*



Twenty years ago on a sweltering June afternoon, Richmonders of all backgrounds from city and suburbs, led by Mayor Walter T. Kenney and Chesterfield County Supervisor Jack McHale, came together in a dramatic act that broke the silence surrounding much of the city's racial history. Through a two-mile walk to mark sites previously too painful or shameful to remember, Richmond became the first US community to give its racial past such public and formal acknowledgement.

This first walk on June 18, 1993, set in motion a sustained movement of honest conversation across the region that continues to gain momentum today. The historic Slave Trail is one of several public history sites that are attaining widespread recognition. The commitment to honor our many different stories, no matter how conflicted, is at the heart of Richmond's healing process.

While the original walk was largely the result of grass-roots action, today the full telling of our history is promoted by the city's Slave Trail Commission and our universities, museums and faith communities. Donald Shriver writes in "Honest Patriots: Loving a Country Enough to Admit its Faults": "Like few other cities in the United States, Richmond can now host a civic conversation that involves virtually the whole of the American story."

Rajmohan Gandhi, grandson and biographer of Mahatma Gandhi, was among those walkers from 25 countries in 1993 who accompanied Richmonders in their bold initiative. He writes: "June 1993 was the start of a remarkable revelation. Resolving (with some difficulty) to face a painful past, Richmond discovered that concealed inside that pain was the seed of a great promise - a promise that an America that seeks healing will be sought after by a hurting world. Thanks to many in Richmond, that promise is

seeing fulfillment."

Stephen Hendricks, now a professor at the University of Pretoria in South Africa, also took part with his wife, Brenda. "The Richmond walk was very significant for Brenda and myself," he says, "because in South Africa we were undergoing a transition toward democracy for the first time. ... The walk prepared us as black South Africans to forgive the oppressors for what they did to us as a people and together forge ahead as we experienced the release of Mandela."

Over the years, visitors from as far away as Northern Ireland, Lebanon and Guatemala have come to study this city's approach to healing wounded memories and building partnerships across traditional divides. Despite the odds, Richmond continues to build networks of trust that stand the test of time and are helping to transform the community.

Stated briefly, the core principles of this approach are: Begin the change process with yourself. Include everyone. Acknowledge history. And build a team.

This summer, Richmond is the primary inspiration behind an international forum: "Healing History: Overcoming Racism, Seeking Equity, Building Community," which will be held at the Initiatives of Change (IofC) conference center in Caux, Switzerland.

IofC USA is best known in Richmond for its Hope in the Cities program. Edward Ayers, president of the University of Richmond; Christy Coleman, president of the American Civil War Center; and Ben Campbell, pastoral director of Richmond Hill retreat center, are among the local community leaders who will share Richmond's story. More than 70 Americans from 12 states will take part.

Historians, business and faith leaders, grass-roots activists and youth, as well as representatives of NGOs from around the world, will explore the history and legacy of racism and how communities can work together to create cultures of inclusion and economies that work for all.

The forum reflects collaboration with the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, which five years ago launched a racial equity project as an important approach in its mission of supporting vulnerable children. Richmond can expect to gain fresh perspectives at this forum that will give added energy to our efforts to build a healthy and inclusive metropolitan community. Hopefully it will encourage conversation - and action - on some of the tough issues facing the region.

Honest conversation means asking ourselves, "Is there something that I or my group is doing that is perpetuating the problem?" and asking those from whom we feel divided, "What is it that you need to hear from me in order to begin to build trust?" Asking these questions will be uncomfortable. But we should take heart from the fact that Richmond has already accomplished things that once seemed impossible to contemplate. We can say

to America and the world that it is possible for trust to be built in the most unlikely places.

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We hope you enjoyed this issue of *Breakthroughs*. Please share this newsletter with your friends and forward it to those you know have a passion for trustbuilding.

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