

July 1, 2005

Dear Friends,

The Social Justice Program (SJP) of the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society invites you to attend *“Transforming Organizing Culture through Contemplative Practice: A Gathering for Emerging Leaders”* at the Garrison Institute, Garrison, NY, September 22-25, 2005. The cost of your stay at the Garrison and your travel expenses (from the northeast and mid-Atlantic states of MA, CT, RI, NY, NJ, and PA) will be covered by the Center.

The Center for Contemplative Mind in Society, founded in 1997, is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization which works to integrate contemplative awareness into contemporary life in order to help create a more just, compassionate and reflective society. **SJP works with a diverse group of people representing all sectors of the social justice movement who believe a more just and sustainable world is possible and are willing to take action to create that world. It offers support to social justice organizers and activists committed to changing the existing culture of organizing and to creating a stronger, more sustainable movement for social change.** A full description of the Center is available at www.contemplativemind.org.

We are aware that you are on the frontlines of social justice work and are facing many challenges as you confront an enormous amount of suffering. When left unattended, this often leads to burnout. We know that losing perspective of the long view of change makes it difficult to think clearly and manifest one’s highest potential. Addressing suffering and dealing with internal organizational conflict is overwhelming.

The history of social justice work is filled with individuals and organizations who could not sustain themselves in the face of continuing oppression and the long term effort required for this work. Many activists today are learning from this history and are attempting to address the errors and limitations of past efforts, resulting in a new kind of activism taking hold in the social justice movement in this country. This “spiritual activism” can be seen generally as a result of an understanding of where past movements have failed or fallen short, and also of the peculiarities of modern day oppression which require new tools to be successfully addressed.

In the light of these realities, we are asking you and 25 other leaders to join us at the Garrison Institute (outside of New York City) for a weekend of practice, creative reflection, dialogue, community building, and strategy. Our focus will be on the ways

in which increased mindfulness, reflection and contemplation can be helpful to social justice activists during these challenging and difficult times.

If you are interested in participating in this gathering, **please complete and send the attached registration form no later than August 15th. Please pass on the application to 1-2 other members of your organization.** We will then be back in touch with you with more information. If you are not able to attend please let us know so that we can invite others.

Thank you for your interest and please contact us with your questions and concerns.

In peace,

Rose Sackey-Milligan
Social Justice Program Director

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*“Transforming Organizing Culture through Contemplative Practice:
A Gathering for Emerging Leaders”*

Garrison Institute, Garrison, NY,

September 22-25, 2005

Details and Agenda~

The group will include approximately 25 leaders in grassroots social change organizations committed to transforming the culture of organizing, and mentors, senior organizers and activists, who serve as allies. The mentors will represent a wide array of professions: art, media, community and university education, multicultural organizational development, conflict resolution, meditation and yoga teaching, and leadership development.

The objectives for the weekend will revolve around:

1. Connecting emerging social justice workers with elders in the field to learn how to use contemplative/spiritual practice as a tool to sustain themselves and their work.
2. Passing down the experience and wisdom of seasoned activists who have experience in negotiating the connection between activism and spiritual/reflective practice.
3. Assisting emerging activists in developing methods of sustaining themselves.
4. Creating a network of peers who can, in turn, act as a local resource for others who might be interested in contemplative practice.
5. Creating a continuing community of activists that provides support, communication, sharing of ideas and resources.
6. Exploring the “nuts and bolts” of how to create a contemplative organization.

Required Commitments~

Applicants for the “*Transforming Organizing Culture through Contemplative Practice*” gathering must commit to participating in two retreats in one year—this one in the fall of 2005 and another in the spring of 2006. The date of the spring retreat in 2006 will be determined by participants. Participation in both retreats—in their entirety—is a mandatory component.

In addition, it is highly recommended that each organization send at least two (2) representatives. It has been our experience that having two or more individuals representing the same organization allows staff the opportunity to bring a variety of perspectives to the gathering. It also helps if the knowledge gained over the weekend is seated in more than one person, making it easier to take the information back home.

Logistics~

The Center for Contemplative Mind pays all costs for transportation (from the northeast and mid-Atlantic states of MA, CT, RI, NY, NJ, and PA) as well as room and board at the Garrison

Institute, located one hour outside New York City on the Hudson River. Garrison, formerly a Capuchin Franciscan monastery and seminary, is very committed to spiritual practice and engagement in the world and this thinking is fully integrated in the Institute's mission and guiding values. You can find out more about Garrison at www.garrisoninstitute.org. The gathering will begin on Thursday at 4:00 PM and conclude at 1:00 PM on Sunday. Each day of the retreat will provide time for individual and group discussion of social justice work and how to sustain ourselves in this work over the long run and training in contemplative practice.