

GARRISON INSTITUTE

Inspired Thinking • Thoughtful Action

Newsletter Issue 3 - Spring 2006

CONTEMPLATION AND EDUCATION

By Deborah Schoeberlein

More than ever before, meditation is attracting notice in contemporary American society. Heightened coverage in mainstream media confirms and magnifies public interest in mind-body science and the benefits associated with mental training. Research on adults suggests that contemplative practices have profound mind-body effects that influence physiologic-, cognitive-, affective- and social-regulation systems.

To date, the bulk of the research into meditation has focused on adults. Given positive outcomes in the areas of attention as well as emotional balance, it makes sense to investigate the use of contemplative techniques among students in K-12 educational settings. This new area of exploration is gaining significant interest, and the Garrison Institute is at the forefront of the field.

Something is Missing

Education is preparation. Schools, parents, and community all play a role in teaching and socializing young people. In terms of scale, schools have the greatest opportunity and responsibility to serve the needs—and shape the lives—of America's diverse youth. By high school graduation, students should demonstrate mastery in basic academic subjects and display the citizenship behaviors that support an

open society. In other words, academic success and the development of pro-social behaviors are among the most important goals of K-12 education.

“Contemplative practice hones attention and supports emotional balance.”

Although relatively simple to define, schools across America struggle to realize even modest success in reaching these goals. Effective curricula exist, but many students have poor academic performance. As standardized test scores show, American youth lag behind their peers from other industrialized nations.

Similarly, despite the positive outcomes associated with proven approaches that foster social and emotional learning, too many schools are unsafe and too many students are affected by or engage in anti-social behaviors. Limited human and financial resources contribute to the crisis in education. But, something appears to be missing—the absence of which has hindered the outcomes of even the best curricula and brightest students.

Increasing Attention and Emotional Balance

The Garrison Institute's Program on Contemplation and Education (C&E),

...continued on page 3

IN THIS ISSUE:

Contemplation and Education	1
New Board Members, Executive Team Staff	2
Spirituality and Social Action	4
The Garrison Institute Welcomes	6
Reflection by Rabbi Zalman Schachter	7
The Garrison Institute Programs	8
<i>Contemplation and Education</i>	8
<i>Hudson River Project</i>	9
<i>Transforming Trauma</i>	10
Retreats at Garrison	12
Calendar	16

THE GARRISON
INSTITUTE

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Rachel B. Cowan
Ruth Cummings Sorensen
Christopher J. Elliman
Theophelia Koffler
Gehlek Rimpoche
Diana Calthorpe Rose
Jonathan F. P. Rose
Sharon Salzberg
Betsy Taylor
Mary Evelyn Tucker

SPIRITUAL ADVISORS

Fr. Thomas Keating
Gehlek Rimpoche
Rabbi Zalman Schachter

EXECUTIVE TEAM STAFF

Robert Gabriele
Jeanne Johnson
David I. Rome
Diana Calthorpe Rose
Deirdre Taylor

The Garrison Institute
14 Mary's Way, Route 9D
P.O. Box 532
Garrison, New York 10524
p 845.424.4800
f 845.424.4900
garrison@garrisoninstitute.org
www.garrisoninstitute.org
♻️ Printed on 100% recycled
paper with 30% post-
consumer content.

NEW BOARD MEMBERS

The Garrison Institute welcomes two new members to its Board of Trustees. We are honored to have the commitment and contribution of two remarkable women whose personal achievements exemplify the Institute's mission of integrating contemplative wisdom and social action.

Theophelia Koffler



©Richard Freedman

Theophelia (Theo) Koffler was born in Canada and received her bachelor's degree in social sciences from the University of Windsor. She began her business career

in her family's drugstore chain in marketing and special events. In 1979, she co-founded Israel's first national drugstore chain and is a director of Super-Pharm Israel Ltd. and Global Retail Ltd. She remains active as a consultant in global pharmacy retailing. Theo has divided her life for the past twenty years as a mother of two children and as an entrepreneur in the for-profit and non-profit sectors. Some of her current affiliations include: board advisor, InnerKids Foundation, board member Goldie Hawn's Bright Light Foundation, advisor to American Friends of the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra and president of the Therapeutic Riding Center for the Disabled in Israel. Theo has a long practice of Tai Chi, meditation and mindfulness and is passionate in her philanthropic efforts to unite contemplation into mainstream education. She currently resides in Tiburon, California.

Executive Team

The Garrison Institute is managed by an executive team which meets bi-weekly. Pictured here are Diana Rose, Co-founder and President (center) with (from left to right) Dede Taylor, Senior Vice President, David Rome, Senior Vice President for Programs, Jeanne Johnson, Director of Administration, and Rob Gabriele, Director of Operations. Jonathan F. P. Rose, Co-founder and Chairman (not pictured) participates in team meetings whenever possible.

Betsy Taylor



©Center for New American Dream

Betsy Taylor is President of the Center for a New American Dream, a national non-profit organization she founded in 1998 that helps Americans live

consciously, buy wisely and take action for a better world. Previously, Betsy spent twenty years in the philanthropic and non-profit sector. She was Executive Director of the Merck Family Fund, a private family foundation, and Founder and Vice-Chair of the Environmental Grantmakers' Association, a national federation of over 300 foundations. She was a member of the Population and Consumption task-force of President Clinton's Council for Sustainable Development, and has testified before the United Nations, Congressional committees and municipal governments. She has authored three books: *Sustainable Planet: Solutions for the 21st Century*; *What Kids Really Want that Money Can't Buy*; and *More Fun, Less Stuff*. Betsy earned her masters in public administration from Harvard and BA from Duke. She meditates daily, is an active Quaker, and is married with two children.



©William W. Irwin



...continued from page 1

believes that teaching students secular contemplative techniques is the missing ingredient that can enhance the broad range of goals identified for K-12 education. This approach is simple, cost effective and easily integrated within existing educational methodologies.

The benefits appear to be multifold. Existing research suggests strong links between these techniques and academic success, self-awareness, self-reflection, emotional intelligence and social skills. Contemplative techniques help people learn to focus their attention and increase their awareness—internally and also of the world around them.

Although knowing how to calm and focus oneself may seem innate, most people need to learn and practice strategies to achieve this. We believe that schools can teach students effective strategies for refining attention, dealing with stress and anger, developing greater empathy and communication skills, and in time, cultivating a compassionate approach to life.

Existing Models

Contemplative programming in American schools is very new and involves a broad range of contemplative techniques drawing from Western and Eastern traditions. As described in the C&E's 2005 *Survey of Programs Using Contemplative Techniques in K-12 Educational Settings: A Mapping Report*[©] these techniques include attention training and refinement practices, secular meditation and yoga.

Teachers, community-based educators, mediators, health care professionals and others have developed various school-based contemplative models

over the past decade. Typically creative, flexible and dynamic, many of these models are difficult to replicate and challenging to research. Nonetheless, some have expanded beyond a single school or school district and gathered anecdotal evidence of success.

“The intuitive mind is a sacred gift and the rational mind is a faithful servant. We have created a society that honors the servant and has forgotten the gift.”

—Albert Einstein

Research and Defining the Field

The time is right for exploring the ways in which developmentally appropriate contemplative techniques can help students succeed. Rigorous study of curricula is needed, as is the integration of research findings into program development. Research and curricula go hand-in-hand: the most promising educational strategies use research to inform program design and rigorous assessment is the ultimate determination of success.

Scientific study of contemplative practices and youth in K-12 is currently extremely limited and poses some significant challenges. Children need developmentally appropriate programming—not just simplified versions of contemplative practices that work well with adults. Similarly, research design for youth must also be developmentally appropriate.

The existence of research demonstrating a link between contemplation and successful student outcomes is the key to mainstream implementation of contemplative techniques. Gathering evidence of such success, in turn,

depends on the existence of partnerships between promising programs and dedicated researchers. However, scientists and programs often need help finding each other and funding the research.

In addition to research, several other factors are critical for field development. Stable, broadly adopted terminology with accepted definitions is critical for effective communication. At present, terms like “contemplative practices, attention training, and emotional balance” are used inconsistently across programs. Varied definitions can lead to confusion and make comparison extremely difficult.

Clarification regarding terminology is particularly important since contemplative practices can be secular or religious in nature. Consider school-based yoga programs—are they necessarily related to ancient Indian religious teachings or is Western-style yoga a distinct form of essentially secular physical activity? In this case, different views can significantly affect the likelihood of school-based implementation.

Field development for contemplation and education also includes broadening understanding of existing research. Identification of best practices, program replication and systematic study are important. Multidisciplinary collaboration is essential as is communication between scientists and program developers. Dissemination of relevant research findings within the mainstream education community is needed to increase awareness. These areas of focus are at the core of the C&E's current and future activities.

...continued on page 8

SPIRITUALITY AND SOCIAL ACTION

REFLECTIONS FROM THE BLUE MOON FUND RETREAT

In November the Garrison Institute hosted a two-day retreat for the advisory board of the Blue Moon Fund, a Virginia-based family foundation with a mission to improve the relationship between humans and their environments.

The theme of the retreat was the role of spirituality in social action and philanthropy. Blue Moon was looking for a particular blend of pragmatic and inspirational experiences for its advisors. The Institute's Senior VP for Programs David Rome worked with Blue Moon officers and staff to design a program that was grounded in the reality of the organization's mission and at the same time created a sanctuary for deeper exploration of their sense of purpose as individuals and in their work together.

The first day began in central Harlem with a guided tour of the Addicts Rehabilitation Center, an extraordinary residential and treatment facility fueled by a powerful Christian faith. The team then traveled by van to the Greyston Foundation in Yonkers, NY, a Buddhist-inspired community development organization built around a \$6,000,000 bakery that hires and trains the "hard-to-employ."

Enriched by these visits, the team left the inner city for the Garrison Institute, gathering in the dining hall to share dinner and their reflections

from the day. In the evening session, "Exploring Our Deepest Purpose," David guided the group in becoming fully present by grounding their awareness fully in their bodies. Thoughts and feelings arising in the mind were simply noticed without getting involved with them, always returning to one's sense of bodily presence.

As participants stayed in this deep reflective space, David posed the question, "What is my deeper purpose?" He encouraged everyone to try not to answer from the head, but to wait until a felt sense emerged in a more bodily way. Whatever answer emerged was then gently challenged with a further question, "And what lies below that? Is there something deeper or more encompassing than that?" This process of going deeper was repeated several times. Finally, participants emerged from their silent contemplations for a period of open-hearted sharing and deep listening.

Next morning, following an early meditation and silent breakfast, the

team had the opportunity to dialogue with two outstanding social activists whose work is deeply grounded in spirituality. The Rev. Angel Kyodo Williams gave a vivid talk about her experiences working in a post-Katrina evacuation camp in Selma, Alabama. Following this, the Rev. Reginald Williams, Director of Operations of Addicts Rehabilitation Center (and no relation to Angel!), spoke about how his own deep faith sustained and guided him in the difficult work of turning around the lives of hundreds of addicts over the past twenty years.

That afternoon the Blue Moon team discussed the theme of "Faith and Spirituality as Organizing Principles," focussing on practical implications for Blue Moon Fund's future philanthropy, especially in ameliorating communities in the wake of Katrina. The next morning the group dispersed, having completed a moving and re-energizing journey from first-hand observations of community-based social action, to a deep contemplation of meaning and purpose, to the pragmatic implications for their future work.

"... confronting our own grasping tendencies is a friendly act toward ourselves. As this friendliness develops, our awareness and concern for those around us enlarges as well. It is at this point that we can begin to envision a more open-ended and non-egocentric compassion."

—Francisco Varela



Rev. Angel Kyodo Williams,
Spiritual Activist and Author

A PERSPECTIVE FROM KATRINA

Called “the most vocal and intriguing African-American Buddhist in America” (Library Journal), Rev. Angel Kyodo Williams is a teacher, author, artist, activist, and the founder of Urban Peace in Oakland, CA. She serves as guiding teacher of New Dharma Community and spiritual director of Urban Peace, a training center for spiritual practice and individual, community and social transformation. Reverend Angel believes that faith is the antidote to fear, and advocates the building of a spirit-centered social change movement as the foundation for personal freedom and healing our divisions of race, class, faith and politics.

Shortly after Hurricane Katrina struck Reverend Angel was asked to go to a hastily-formed evacuation center in Selma, Alabama, where she and two colleagues lived and worked for four weeks.

Here is a brief account of that experience as she presented it to the Blue Moon Fund participants.

Excerpts from the Speech by

Rev. Angel Kyodo Williams: The pain and confusion we encountered were enormous.

I can't tell you how many times the folks that came with me said, 'If I didn't have a spiritual practice, this would have been unbearable.

Once we fully comprehended the magnitude of the problems, we decided to try and change the dynamic of what was happening around us. We realized we needed to establish a healthy balance between interference and intervention. After having spent most of the first week cleaning toilets, we made a conscious effort to say, 'Okay, we've done the immediate things and helped to organize things, and kept things flowing—now let's bring some of our sensibility to the table.' And what we did then was to spread out and talk to people, to bring people together to talk amongst themselves, in a way that didn't feel as though it was intrusive or judgmental, or pathologizing in any way. At that point we began to shift the space and the energy.

What we found most helpful was providing an opportunity for them to sit still in silent contemplation, so we created environments that allowed people to come safely together in a quiet space. The silence permitted their feelings and emotions to surface, enabling them to begin to comprehend what had happened to them and to acknowledge and accept their current circumstances.

The second thing we did was to create a loose talking circle. It really seemed to help as it allowed us to ask, 'What is it that you need and want?' One of the women, the matriarch of a family of 12, who had seemed incredibly reticent up till then, said, 'The whole

time that I've been here, no one has sat down and talked to me. They've tried to give me something, fix something, they've tried to tell me what I need or where to go, but no one has sat down and talked to me.'

My time in Selma really affirmed my deeply held experience and belief that we have to figure out how to operate as just people to people. And that it's much simpler than what we create. It was the most basic gestures that transformed. We didn't need some kind of complicated system; we had a group of people sitting in a circle together. That began to shift things and to equalize people. And it helped me to really see how important it is to rebalance, to re-distribute the burden of what needs to be done around the place, in such a way that it is humanized. When that sense of contact is developed, the people who have resources can help in ways that feel good and human and possible to them. Otherwise the whole thing is so out of proportion and so disconnected that it feels like their money or their time or their energy is just going into some unknown hole. This deadens our senses instead of bringing our efforts into a human scale.

If we don't approach what is happening with Katrina with a new lens, we will have lost a significant opportunity in this country to really understand how social action and social service that are void of a spiritual underpinning may provide some relief, but don't go to root causes.

They don't go towards changing the paradigm that is keeping these things going. And we're in danger of needing larger and larger wake-up calls, larger openings in the earth to kind of swallow us up before we go, 'Oh!'

THE GARRISON INSTITUTE WELCOMES

The Garrison Institute is pleased to introduce two new members of its Executive Team. David Rome and Deirdre Taylor both joined the Institute's staff in 2005.

David Rome, Senior Vice President for Programs

David Rome is Senior Vice President for Programs at the Garrison Institute and oversees all of the Institute's programmatic initiatives. Prior to joining the Institute, he served as Senior Vice President for planning at the Greyston Foundation in Yonkers, New York, an innovative and nationally acclaimed community development organization committed to improving the lives of people living in America's inner cities.

Following a BA in classics from Harvard and a two-year Peace Corps stint in Kenya, David began the practice and study of Buddhism in 1971. He served for nine years as private secretary to his teacher, Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, during which time he also taught meditation and was closely involved in the founding of Shambhala International, Naropa University, and the Shambhala Training meditation program. He is the editor of *Timely Rain*, an anthology of the poetry of Chogyam Trungpa. During the 1980s, David was an editor and president at Schocken Books, a distinguished New York publisher. More recently, David has trained in the Focusing method for accessing bodily knowing with its founder Eugene Gendlin and has brought Focusing together with Buddhist mindfulness-awareness practices in a workshop called Deep Listening, which he has presented in the U.S., Canada, and Europe.



©William W. Irwin



©William W. Irwin

Deirdre Taylor, Senior Vice President

Deirdre (Dede) Taylor who joined the Institute in August 2005 as Senior Vice President with responsibility for marketing, communication, publishing and institutional development reflects on her choice: "The Garrison Institute's mission resonates deeply with my own desire to see the growing spirituality movement connected more directly to action that makes a positive difference in the world."

Dede spent a decade as director of the communications and publishing departments at historic Trinity Church Wall Street in New York and was the founding Publisher and Executive Editor of *Spirituality & Health* magazine, a highly acclaimed consumer magazine with over 250,000 readers nationwide. She was a founding member of the executive committee of the Spirit in Business Global Institute and is on the editorial advisory board for Hazel Henderson's *Ethical Markets* PBS series. She was actively involved in the United Nations Millennium Peace Summit for Religious and Spiritual leaders and the Women's Leadership Council for Peace at the UN in Geneva. She spent an intense year as a writer and development communications manager for Save the Children, lead international relief agency in Indonesia after the Asian tsunami, and third largest humanitarian aid organization in the world. Earlier in her career she managed international advertising accounts for Dailey & Associates and D'Arcy, Masius, Benton and Bowles in San Francisco and subsequently as a Principle, Executive Producer and Writer for Crowley & Associates/MediaWEST, an award-winning visual communications company.



REFLECTION:

RABBI ZALMAN SCHACHTER

If we look at the political and social conditions on this planet, all indicators point out that the days ahead that will be difficult ones. We are experiencing what Isaac Asimov called “the angry planet.” However, I believe it is not only an angry planet but a sick and suffering planet.

Since the beginning of the Renaissance period, Western civilization has idolized individual ego; since that time the social fibers connecting us with one another have become increasingly short. What was available to us earlier in history, through the tribe, the clan and the extended family, is no longer available to us. Social mobility has created distances between us so that the easy transmission of culture from generation to generation has been interrupted.

When we look at the means by which we have to steer through the shoals and the rapids of the coming time, many of us are without a compass to show us how to make our way through the difficult times. In an earlier time, grandparents to grandchildren were most effective in the transmission of family and cultural values. Since tribal cultures no longer provide us with archetypes, hopes and dreams for our own enclaves, we have become impoverished of those things that are non-verbal and yet essential to support us.

We need to create practical and engaged ways in which we can actually offer help to each other. We need to have something that we can practice during the

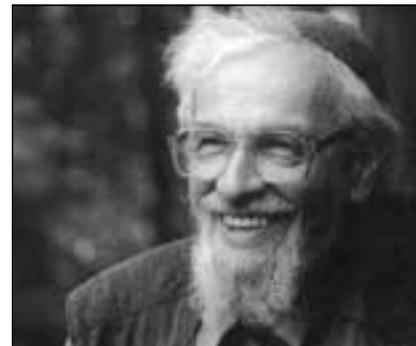
week and with our families. Some of us use particular spiritual practices.

However, these practices are often solo endeavors and do not help us with the amelioration of our social situations.

For years I have advocated socialized meditation as a way of taking our inner experiences and sharing them between people, reaching for the possibility of spiritual intimacy. In spiritual intimacy two or three can achieve a field for mutual support that is much more than a single individual can achieve alone.

These times require that all of us do a lot of inner work, and follow Thich Nhat Hhan and other teachers who say that peace is achieved by being peace. The practice of kindness and gentleness in which we see ourselves as nurses for the wounded in our social settings—this is what is called for at this time.

We can also begin to pay greater attention to the more gentle and positive features that our traditions offer us. The first of these is a greater honoring of the Sabbath, the day off for just being. It is also important to have celebrative times. In celebration we do not lose sight of the fact that we are souls embedded in bodies who are meant to live heavenly days right here on this Earth. By singing, by sharing food in the sacramental way of breaking bread with one another, by inviting people to our home who come from much more diverse places, the social fibers will be lengthened.



The Garrison Institute

Rabbi Zalman Schachter is a Garrison Institute spiritual advisor.

One important social evolution in the Jewish tradition has been the reactivation of the Havurah movement in which small groups of friends meet to share where they are in their soul life. As they discuss how to work on their commitments and to collaborate with one another, they create spiritual intimacy. There are similar practices in Christianity and other traditions. I have, for example, been greatly impressed by the work of the Saddleback Church in Anaheim, California. By arranging for weekday evening meetings, lunch meetings and study sessions, people there have also been able to help one another.

Also, it is necessary to do these things not only in the narrow way, with the people in one’s own group. It is now necessary do this in an ecumenical outreach way, outside of one’s own committed and covenanted community. We must learn a much deeper way of sharing. In doing so we will be a lot more integral to the life of the planet and reweave the torn web of life to which we belong.

THE GARRISON INSTITUTE PROGRAMS

The Garrison Institute's programs are bound together by their common mission of applying the wisdom of contemplative traditions to the challenges in our society and environment. The programs work towards two goals: to explore issues with depth and insight and to articulate specific action steps to enhance society and enrich the human spirit. It is our hope the programs will catalyze new collaborations, partnerships and networks, with the common goal of creating a more just, peaceful and sustainable world. We have presented here descriptions of a few of our programs in development.

...continued from page 3

CONTEMPLATION AND EDUCATION (K-12)

The Garrison Institute and Developing the Field

During the next two years, C&E will take the lead in promoting the implementation and research of contemplation-based interventions in the American public school setting. Our activities will focus on the most important aspects of field development: fostering idea-exchange and multidisciplinary collaboration; promoting research and encouraging new research partnerships, increasing awareness and generating interest among the education community as well as disseminating information that documents progress and builds a common language.

All of our activities stem from and reflect back onto our belief that secular contemplative practices will increase students' ability to focus their attention and ready their minds for learning, thereby enhancing their academic, social and emotional skills. We view emotional balance and academic success as interrelated. Ultimately, we believe that these activities will increase children's resilience for meeting the challenges they face each day in school and life.

2006 Program Activities

Our activities will include several invitation-only discussion forums as well as symposia for the general public. The first discussion forum, to be held in April 2006, will focus on attention and behavior among young children. Co-Chaired by Dr. Mark Greenberg and Dr. Patricia Jennings, approximately a dozen leading researchers will examine the relationship between attention, social interaction and emotional regulation in the context of developing effective interventions to improve children's social-emotional development.

In fall 2006, Dr. Robin Stern and Florence Meleo-Meyer, MS, MA, will co-chair the PCE's second discussion forum. This meeting will address the interrelationships between contemplative techniques and social and emotional learning in curricular implementation at the classroom level. Participants will include scientists concerned with attention, educators with expertise in SEL and educators specializing in contemplative curricula for youth.

Also planned for fall 2006 is the Second Symposium on Contemplation and Education which will disseminate information, build networks and foster idea exchange among educators, researchers, program developers and others interested in this emerging field.

Other 2006 activities will include:

- Convening a leadership group to guide the subsequent development, implementation and research of a Garrison Institute-initiated pilot study to assess the impact of contemplative techniques on students' academic, social and emotional outcomes.
- Hosting a meeting at which researchers, educators and philanthropists explore the most current scientific and educational rationales that support the use of contemplation-based interventions in K-12 settings.
- Developing and disseminating materials that communicated key findings from the C&E discussion forums; document best practices and recommendations; raise awareness about relevant research findings; and promote the use of school-based applications for contemplative techniques.

For more information about the Garrison Institute's Program on Contemplation and Education, or if you are interested in becoming directly involved with the program as a funder or participant, please contact Program Director, Deborah Schoeberlein at Deborah@garrisoninstitute.org or call 845-424-4800. The Mapping Report and other program details can be found on our website at www.garrisoninstitute.org.



The Garrison Institute Programs continued...

HUDSON RIVER PROJECT: CARING FOR CREATION Overview of the Monthly Public Conversation Series

The Garrison Institute's Hudson River Project: *Caring for Creation*, brings together the environmental groups along the Hudson River Valley with diverse religious groups in a quest to find common ground on language and projects. In September 2005, we began a series of free monthly Public Conversations with support from the Surdna Foundation, the Luce Foundation, Malcolm Gordon Charitable Trust and other donors. This series will ultimately lead to a public statement of principles and action steps that has endorsement from key leaders of both environmental and religious communities. The Public Conversations have attracted an audience of 100-200 people to the Garrison Institute's Meditation Hall each month. Hundreds of individuals and dozens of organizations have been involved in creating these events, which have been enriched with contemplation, art, music and meaningful discussion on the sacredness of the river. While the conversation series topics are based on the NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation's Hudson River Estuary Action Agenda, speakers have been encouraged to speak from the heart about the (often unspoken) values that underpin the Action Agenda.

The process of exploring the common ground of values shared by religions and environmentalists is bringing a new constituency to the environmental discussion, energizing people and views that are currently underrepresented and activating innovative ideas and projects. The open, participatory style of the conversations has often revealed the environmental passion of religious leaders and the spiritual and religious sensibilities of environmentalists.



© Tom DiMarco

The Reverend Fletcher Harper, Executive Director of GreenFaith, participated in the first Public Conversation in September 2005.

Through the Public Conversations, the Project is drawing wisdom to use in crafting a formal Statement of Shared Values regarding the sacredness and care of the Hudson River. The goal is to establish a framework for ongoing interchange and actions that preserve and protect our environment.

The Conversations have already attracted significant attention from the mainstream media. *"The idea is at once simple and quite profound,"* wrote Peter Applebome in The New York Times recently. *"What could be more central to a religious worldview than the questions of preserving the natural environment, which all religions in differing ways see as God's handiwork? And even many environmentalists say what the movement needs now is vision, spirit, not just bloodless science and impassioned advocacy."*

If your organization or worship community would like to know more about the Hudson River Project, please contact Patricia Ackerman, patricia@garrisoninstitute.org. More details about the Public Conversations can be found on our website, www.garrisoninstitute.org.

"We have to trust that our bodies contain the boundaries of the self which in deep meditation provide wisdom and a sense of the whole to which we are connected. The River is you; you are the River. This coextension with the earth awakens a capacity which is profoundly spiritual."

—Sister Miriam MacGillis of Genesis Farm, speaker at the December 2005 conversation.

The Garrison Institute Programs continued...

TRANSFORMING TRAUMA: WELLNESS FOR WOMEN WORKING TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

By Marie O'Neil

In 2005, the Garrison Institute successfully completed a pilot project, *Wellness for Domestic Violence Shelter Workers*. This groundbreaking initiative in our Transforming Trauma program area brought together 65 women from 17 domestic violence shelters in metro New York to explore how the contemplative practices of meditation and yoga can help reduce stress and transform vicarious traumatization.

The effects of domestic violence impact not only battered women, but the counselors, advocates and administrators who diligently serve them. As a result of regularly listening to stories of abuse and witnessing physical injuries, emotional scars, and broken human connections, domestic violence workers are particularly susceptible to burnout and vicarious traumatization. Consequently, much like victims themselves, caregivers may often experience symptoms such as generalized anxiety, intrusive images, nightmares, depression, and difficulty sleeping. Vicarious traumatization can also impact the spiritual domain, causing changes in a person's belief system potentially resulting in despair, cynicism, and the loss of a sense of safety and connection to others.

The 2005 *Wellness for Domestic Violence Shelter Workers* program consisted of a three-day retreat at the Garrison Institute in June, with

interim yoga and meditation groups in New York City from July through October, and a follow-up retreat in November. Through a dynamic and



The Garrison Institute

Participants in the June 2005 Wellness Retreat practice yoga.

organic process, faculty and participants worked together to accomplish three objectives during the *Wellness* program retreats: to introduce and practice meditation, yoga, and mindfulness; to develop a supportive community experience; and to provide an opportunity for rejuvenation and personal growth.

walking and dance meditations and several daily yoga classes. The retreats also offered the opportunity to discuss and explore vicarious traumatization within an open and safe environment. Participants attended break-out groups, question-and-answer sessions with teachers, and didactic and experiential workshops on vicarious traumatization. A lasting element of these retreats was the experience the women had coming together to celebrate the invaluable and often heartbreaking work they are doing to end violence against women.

To reflect the ethnic and cultural diversity of the participants, fifteen faculty members were carefully selected. They included Sharon Salzberg, internationally acclaimed meditation teacher and writer; leading yoga teachers; trauma experts; and women with extensive experience working in the domestic violence field.

“I feel like my soul has been lifted up for the first time in a long time.”

— 2005 Wellness Program Participant

In the pre-retreat survey, filled out during June registration, participants identified significant stress levels related to their work. At the beginning of the retreats faculty explained the benefits of meditation such as reduced stress and anxiety, increased concentration, and the ability to be present. During the retreats participants received extensive guidance in a variety of sitting,

Participants were eager to incorporate their new skills into their personal and professional lives and expressed their gratitude for the *Wellness* program. *“The retreat made me feel special, first as a woman and second as appreciated for the work I do. But I also realize that it is okay and expected that I take care of myself and have boundaries,”* shared one participant.



The *Wellness for Domestic Violence Shelter Workers* program will continue in 2006 with three components: an initial three-day retreat at the the Institute in May, monthly yoga and meditation classes in New York City and a follow up three-day retreat at the Garrison Institute in September. An introductory workshop was held in January at the OM yoga center in New York City. Thirty women who work on the front lines in domestic violence shelters attended — about one third had been participants in the 2005 program. When returning participants were asked how their involvement in the first year's program had positively impacted them, one woman stated, *"I learned that even though you might not always be calm, there is a place within to find peace, you know it is always there and can access it."*

In addition to our program for front line shelter staff, we are pleased to announce a concurrent program 2006: *Wellness for Domestic Violence Agency Directors and Supervisors*. This new program was developed in response to requests from both 2005 participants and the shelter directors and supervisors themselves. An introductory workshop, similar to the workshop for shelter workers, was attended by twenty directors and supervisors from both residential and non-residential domestic violence agencies in January, 2006 at OM yoga center in New York City. A number of the supervisors had

sent staff to the 2005 pilot program and commented that their employees were less anxious and better able to perform their jobs after participating in the program.

"The retreat made me feel special, first as a woman and second as feeling appreciated for the work I do. But I also realize that it is okay and expected that I take care of my self and have boundaries."

—2005 Wellness Program Participant

The newly created *Wellness* initiative for directors and supervisors consists of four day-long workshops in March, April, May, and June, with subsequent yoga and meditation classes in New York City. In addition to exploring first-hand the benefits of meditation and yoga as tools for reducing stress, the directors' workshops will focus on how to create a culture of wellness that transforms trauma through contemplative practices, self-care and community building.

The long term vision for the Garrison Institute's Transforming Trauma program area is to create a self-care model based on contemplative practices, which can be utilized throughout the trauma field to assist service providers in reducing stress and burnout while transforming vicarious traumatization. This past January the Transforming Trauma Program Steering Committee convened for a 2006 planning and visioning session at the Garrison Institute. Work began on how to expand the model beyond the domestic violence field and bring it to service providers working with other traumatized populations such as prisoners, refugees and victims of sexual assault, natural disasters and torture.

All licensed and accredited domestic violence programs in metro New York have been invited to participate in our 2006 Wellness programs. Expenses are being underwritten, enabling participants to attend at no cost. For information on sponsoring a shelter worker or making a general contribution to this very worthwhile program, please contact Marie O'Neil, marie@garrisoninstitute.org

"The success of an intervention depends on the interior condition of the intervener."

—William O'Brian, Former CEO, The Hanover Insurance Company

RETREATS AT GARRISON

Retreats at Garrison has been created to put the the Garrison Institute's resources at the service of visiting teachers and students from the world's great spiritual traditions. Typical events focus on prayer, meditation and reflection.

"Supporting ongoing spiritual practice by groups in retreat is a central part of the Garrison Institute's mission," emphasizes Director of Operations Rob Gabriele. "It complements our focus on the programs that we directly sponsor. The Institute is a tremendous asset for the contemplative community, and we want to share it as widely as possible."

For some, Retreats at Garrison has filled a gaping hole. Before, it was hard to find a place near New York City that had the right kind of environment, the right size, and that actually felt like a sacred environment. "Because of its location and the kind of people who will use it, the contemplative work that takes place at the Garrison Institute will have a major impact on society," said Sharon Salzberg.

"Change in the world begins with the individual," concluded Gabriele. "We hope many, many individuals will come here year after year after year to engage in sustained spiritual practice. Then, they can go back out in the world and effect that change."

HIGHLIGHTS OF OUR THIRD YEAR

Retreats at Garrison has been blessed to host some very special retreats. Here are a selected few:

**BONNIE MYOTAI TREACE,
SENSEI:**
Hermitage Heart sesshin

In 2005, Bonnie Myotai Treace, Sensei led three Zen Buddhist sesshins at the Garrison Institute. These silent retreats had a daily schedule of zazen (seated meditation), Dharma talks, private meetings, and quiet walking on the woodland trails surrounding the Institute.

"These sesshins, are meeting streams of dedicated contemplative energy that has a container, of this building, the lands, the river"

—Bonnie Myotai Treace

Myotai Treace works with students to ease the mind's constrictions and sense of suffering. When they gather, her charge is "to meet them with their questions, wonder and edge, that arise with their practice, and provide enough of a push to be contained in mystery."



©Garrison Institute

Hermitage Heart October 2005 retreat participants share a meal in the Garrison Institute dining hall.

While at the Institute the students, who are home or lay practitioners, form a community. Their primary spiritual work is at home, as well as a commitment to attend between 2-5 sesshins a year. "The world is crying for us to be engaged, not to discard us of our capacities," Myotai explains. In her mind "there is a

fierce yet tender sense that we need to do what we need to do with integrity and depth."

Prior to founding Hermitage Heart, Sensei served for many years as Vice-Abbess of Zen Mountain Monastery in Mt. Tremper, NY and in recent years as Abbess of Fire Lotus Temple in Brooklyn, NY. She received Dharma Transmission in 1996, becoming the first successor of John Daido Looi, Roshi, of the Mountains and Rivers Order.

In 2006, Hermitage Heart will offer four five-day sesshins at the Garrison Institute. They are open to those who have previously attended Myotai's sesshins. For those are interested in this practice, a great way to get started is to attend a day-long retreat in New York City.



STONE CIRCLES' SPIRITUAL ACTIVISM RETREAT

In June 2005, Stone Circles convened "Spiritual Activism: Claiming the Poetry and Ideology of a Liberation Spirituality" at the Garrison Institute. Led by Claudia Horowitz and Jesse Maceo Vega-Frey, Stone Circles works to sustain activists and strengthen the work of justice through spiritual practice and principles.

The Spiritual Activism retreat gathered 57 leaders and allies from a variety of ethnic and cultural backgrounds, spiritual practices, political perspectives, and geographic locations whose work in the field of social justice clearly reflects a deep grounding in spiritual wisdom.

"Many people have been thinking about this deep intersection between spirit and justice for a long time. We wanted to start organizing the main principles and strategies behind 'spiritual activism.' And the Garrison Institute seemed like the perfect place for our work"

—Claudia Horowitz.

Harnessing the energy of existing relationships and previous events, the group gathered for four days to discuss values, share the methods they use in their work, and deepen relationships. "We grappled with some important issues, including the role of oppression in our work. We agreed that the integration of spirituality and social change requires a few key elements: a commitment to spiritual life and practice, a framework of applied liberation, an orientation towards movement building and a desire for

fundamental change in the world based on equity and justice," Horowitz explained.

During the retreat, participants not only were able to uncover many common principles, they also developed their sense of an array of strategies used in work, and bonded as a community. They discovered the different viewpoints of the eclectic group, sometimes celebrating the sense of common-cause and at other times struggling with important differences and dynamics. In the end, participants laid the groundwork for a coherent set of principles and marked the pieces of work that need action in order to move forward.

JOHN O'DONOHUE: BECOMING BEAUTY

In November of 2005, the Garrison Institute hosted John O'Donohue, Irish poet, author and Catholic scholar. Through lectures, poetry readings, discussions, and experiential exercises, he examined the ways in which beauty persuades one towards unexpected forms of compassion, healing and creativity. Participants were given long breaks between lectures to integrate the teachings, allowing them to explore the nature trails and beauty of the Garrison Institute's grounds during the height of the fall foliage.

In addition to his talks, O'Donohue invited the over one hundred enthusiastic participants to share their histories to gain a sense of beauty that is not fixed. In a poetic voice, he wove together stories and insight with humor and compassion.

O'Donohue's acclaimed writings reveal an original thinker rooted in an unorthodox blend of Irish heritage, German philosophy, western theology, and an intimate relationship with the wild, luminous landscape of his home. He is wonderful at transmitting this complex combination through the lens of Catholicism, yet he is open to all kinds of spiritual experiences. He lives in the solitude of a cottage in the West of Ireland and speaks Gaelic as his daily language.

"To behold beauty dignifies your life; it heals you and calls you out beyond the smallness of your own self-limitation to experience new horizons. To experience beauty is to have your life enlarged. As soon as we choose Beauty, unseen forces conspire to guide and encourage us towards unexpected forms of compassion, healing and creativity."

—John O'Donohue

KABIR AND CAMILLE HELMINSKI:

Threshold Society

Kabir and Camille Helminski led a weekend retreat in October of 2005 at the Garrison Institute organized by the Threshold Society. Kabir Helminski is a Shaikh of the Mevlevi Order, and Co-Director of the Threshold Society along with Camille Helminski.

The Threshold Society is a non-profit educational foundation with the purpose of facilitating the experience of Divine unity, love, and wisdom in the world. It is rooted within the traditions of Sufism and inspired by the life and work of Mevlâna Jalâluddîn Rumi and values continuity and community. "We like to cultivate a deepening process both in the dimensions of practice and knowledge and also intend to continue to serve our East Coast community," Shaikh Helminski said.

During this retreat, participants focused on the theme of "Becoming Fully Human Today". They explored what the tradition offers, how to energize oneself with positive energy and faith to meet the challenges of life, and how to live in the present moment. The Helminski's met participants for daily sessions and included times of voluntary salaah (group prayer). "During the time we were there, the Garrison Institute was the contemporary 'tekkye' or 'dervish lodge.' It really felt like home," Shaikh Helminski explains.

"The beauty and suitability of the Institute made it easy for us to make a commitment to an annual retreat near Rumi's birthday, September

30th," Shaikh Helminski commented. The weekend also included Sufi contemplation (maraqaba) and a celebration with whirling dancing inspired by Persian Sufi music.

The Helminski's place strong emphasis on developing one's capacities for presence, remembrance, service, and humility within their teachings. Shaikh Helminski said, "Each year we hope to offer a deep contemplative experience inspired by the wisdom of Rumi and the spiritual practices of Sufism, and supported by a strong sense of community that warmly welcomes newcomers."

KRISHNA DAS AND SHARON SALZBERG

In November of 2005 Krishna Das and Sharon Salzberg, lead a weekend of lovingkindness meditation



©William W. Irwin

Garrison Institute board member Sharon Salzberg and musician Krishna Das lead their November 2005 retreat and kirtan.

and Hindu kirtan at the Garrison Institute. Internationally known musician Krishna Das is a master at creating soulful chanting that is eminently accessible to Western hearts. Sharon Salzberg has been a student of Buddhism since 1971, and has been leading meditation retreats worldwide since 1974.

With approximately 100, the teacher's complementary practices

meshed as they articulated the essences of meditation and kirtan. Sharon said, "We also care a great deal for one another thus providing a good model of collaboration rather than competition and holding onto sectarian views. That is sometimes the most valuable thing."

Sharon led the morning session, focusing on meditation, both sitting and walking. They worked with basic practices such as developing concentration on the breath, and also focused on engendering lovingkindness for oneself and others. "The theme was the power of a loving heart," explains Sharon, "an exploration of the dimensions of love, kindness and compassion, and going beyond the common cultural notion of those states as weak or ineffective."

In the afternoon, Krishna Das and Sharon guided sitting meditation, chanting, and a lengthy question and answer session. "This was in the basic spirit of satsang, or community, where we could all share the space of coming together and learning from one another," said Sharon. On Saturday evening Krishna Das led a public kirtan attended by 250 participants. All shared the experience of fullness through the practice of kirtan, the call-and-response chanting genre from India which is one of the oldest sacred music traditions of the world.

SPIRIT ROCK MEDITATION CENTER: Community Dharma Leaders program

In August of 2005, approximately 100 teachers gathered for the first part of The Community Dharma Leaders



Program, a two and a half year, 5-part retreat program offered by Spirit Rock Meditation Center in Woodacre, California. It is designed to train selected senior Buddhist practitioners in the vipassana tradition from across America, Canada, Mexico, and Europe. Upon completion of the CDL program, participants are authorized to lead Buddhist meditation practice and dharma study groups in their local areas.

The lead teachers for this retreat were James Baraz and Tara Brach.

Additional teachers included Gina Sharpe, Adi Bemak, Janey Zietlow, Joseph Goldstein, and Andy Olenski.

James Baraz has practiced vipassana meditation since 1974 and taught since 1980. He is a founding teacher of Spirit Rock Meditation Center and he coordinates the Community Dharma Leader program. "Our experience being at the Garrison Institute for our Community Dharma Leaders Retreat was outstanding", says Baraz. "The grounds are gorgeous, the facility superb, the food delicious and the hospitality the staff showed made everyone feel welcome and cared for."

"Probably the most important part of our time at the Garrison Institute was the birthing of community", Tara commented on the retreat, "the expressions of honesty and care that arise from a shared dedication to awakening."

—Tara Brach, Founder,
Insight Meditation Community
of Washington and
Co-Founder, Washington Buddhist
Peace Fellowship.

Three of the upcoming weeklong retreats will be held at Spirit Rock Meditation Center, and one other

will be held at the Garrison Institute in June 2007.

MIND AND LIFE SUMMER RESEARCH INSTITUTE

Attendees for the second annual Mind and Life Summer Research Institute (MLSRI) traveled from all over the world to be at the Garrison Institute in June of 2005. The participants from this event included 81 Research Fellows, 42 Senior Investigators, 12 Senior Faculty, and various sponsors and guests.

"The open minds combined with the open hearts resulted in a fantastic and rare atmosphere among academics"

—2005 MLSRI Research Fellow

Senior Faculty included Jane Carpenter-Cohn, MA, Naropa University; Jonathan Cohen, MD, PhD, Princeton University; Richard J. Davidson, PhD, University of Wisconsin; Joan Halifax Roshi, PhD, Upaya Zen Center; Margaret Kemeny, PhD, University of California-San Francisco; Stephen M. Kosslyn, PhD, Harvard University; Matthieu Ricard, PhD, Shechen Monastery; Sharon Salzberg, Insight Meditation Society; Bennett Shapiro, MD, biotechnology consultant; Phillip R. Shaver, PhD, University of California-Davis;

"Unify your attention. Do not listen with your ears but with your mind; do not listen with your mind but with your essence. The ears can't do more than to listen, the mind cannot do more than to recognize. As for the essence, it is a void completely unengaged. The Way gathers only in the void."

—Confucius

Evan Thompson, PhD, York University; and B. Alan Wallace, PhD, The Santa Barbara Institute for Consciousness Studies.

The purpose of the MLSRI is to advance collaborative research among cognitive and affective neuroscientists and contemplative practitioners and scholars. Specific goals of this programs were to elicit strategic discussion between experimental psychologists, neuroscientists, and contemplative scholars; to have a cadre of nascent scientists to develop the next generation interested in innovation at the mind-brain interface; to advance a collaborative research program to study the influence of contemplative practices on mind behavior and brain function; and to explore ways in which the first-person examination of mental phenomena may be raised to a level of rigor comparable to the third-person methodologies of the cognitive sciences.

The overriding theme of the meeting was to foster a meaningful dialogue between modern cognitive/ affective neuroscience and contemplative practice. The Mind and Life Summer Research Institute will meet again for a week in June of 2006 at the Garrison Institute.



2006 SPRING - SUMMER RETREATS AT GARRISON CALENDAR

Retreats that are open to the public are listed in italics.

Register at 845-424-4800 or retreats@garrisoninstitute.org

For detailed retreat information, please see our website.

January 27-29

C. Otto Scharmer, Arawana Hayashi, and David Rome: Presencing, The New Theory and Practice of Deep Innovation A Weekend Retreat for Leaders

February 1-5

Bonnie Myotai Treace, Sensei: Hermitage Heart Winter Sesshin

February 24-26

Fr. Thomas Keating, Tara Brach, Shaikh Kabir & Camille Helminski, Rabbi Rami Shapiro, and Dr. Edward Bastian: Spiritual Paths, The Path of Love and Compassion

March 17-19

Pachamama Alliance: Awakening the Dreamer, Changing the Dream Symposium (closed)

March 31-April 2

Emerald Mountain Retreat (closed)

April 7-9

Susan Ji-on Postal: Empty Hand Zen Center Retreat
Barry Magid: Ordinary Mind Zendo Retreat

April 21-23

Ken Page, Patricia Simko, Michael Moran & Catherine Scaffidi: Spirituality and Intimacy Retreat for Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender Women and Men

May 2-7

His Holiness Menti Trizin Lungtok Tenpai: Bon Foundation Retreat

May 10-14

Bonnie Myotai Treace, Sensei: Hermitage Heart Spring Sesshin

May 23-25

Rev. Fletcher Harper: GreenFaith Spirituality & Environmentalism Clergy Retreat (closed)

May 26-29

Gehlek Rimpoche: Song of the Four Mindfulnesses, A Perfect Architecture of Enlightenment

June 2-4

Master Khan Ba Da: Three Dimensional Conscious Awakening Retreat

June 7-8

Sacred Foods Conference (closed)

June 11-17

Mind and Life Summer Research Institute (closed)

June 29-July 5

Ven. Mingyur Rinpoche: The Buddha, The Brain, and the Science of Happiness

July 15-30

Lama Surya Das, Charles Genoud, Lama John Makransky & Lama Palmo: Annual Dzogchen Center Summer Meditation Retreat

“A beautiful society is a collective society of beautiful beings.” —Gehlek Rimpoche



Garrison Institute
P.O. Box 532
14 Mary's Way, Rt. 9D
Garrison, NY 10524

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
WHITE PLAINS, NY
10610
PERMIT NO. 6692