

## **Workshop “The Invitation”**

### **The Practice of Listening and Guiding another in the Telling of their Intercultural Journey.**

**1: Framing the Workshop.** This workshop focuses on a critical modality for intercultural expression -- that of listening - of inviting another person to reflect and share deeply of themselves. Through deep listening we open ourselves to be changed. But this is not something that comes naturally, rather it is one that merits practice and refinement.

The questions below are adapted from those prompts that we have used to prompt our own introspective, reflective global intercultural writing to an interview -- dialogic format. Interviews are commonly used by ethnographers to capture oral histories, in many cases from individuals who otherwise may not have had the opportunity or the means to convey their stories in writing.

When we shift out of the intimacy of our GIC gatherings, we may also be shifting from intentional introspection to a more outward opening to others who are new to us. So, it can be helpful to practice and refine the art of listening. When we get together with new friends we can try out these newly practiced skills in extending ourselves and inviting others to share with us and be changed through the sharing.

**2: Overview of Interview Techniques.** The following interview techniques have been adapted from the Mother/Daughter oral interview protocol developed as part of the “Generations of Women” project by Women’s Studies colleagues -- Drs. Rubin and Friedensohn. Much like the women’s movement drew upon techniques to raise people’s consciousness about women’s lives, we can use similar techniques to raise people’s consciousness about what it means to be global intercultural people.

- Make arrangements in advance for the interview. Be sure the time is good for both parties.
- If you are going to record the interview, ensure the equipment is working before you begin.
- (Rather than using a recorder, refer above to applications like “Smart Recorder”) available for smart phones which allow you to record and share a audio file onto Google Docs.
- Before beginning to record, talk informally for a few minutes. Try to make the person you are interviewing feel at ease --- One approach you might consider is asking them to share their name and how it is meaningful to them.
- Put your signature on the recording as you begin... “This is Christa Lee Olson and I am interviewing >>>> . I just learned that her/his name means....
- Note the date, where you are meeting and the general context for your conversation. “We are sitting at the >>>> in Des Moines, Iowa. It is August .... It’s beautiful outside and we have...
- Be patient. Try not to interrupt. Remember that the subject is the one being interviewed; it’s their story that you are trying to capture and not your own. Do not launch into your own stories ... you are there to lean into and really hear the story of the person you are interviewing.
- Be attentive. Interviewing, especially an intercultural interview, requires more concentration than an ordinary conversation. Pay attention to details; be sensitive to phrasing and language. If your subject is not understanding the question, rephrase it; ask it more simply. The word “why” or the expression “can you tell me more” often elicits useful information.

- Ask only one question at a time, more may confuse the subject. If an important question comes to mind while the subject is speaking, write it down and ask it when you get an opening. Don't interrupt your subject's flow of thoughts or memories.
- An interview should not continue for more than two hours. Both you and your subject will tire and lose concentration.
- Don't show the questions in advance. Spontaneous responses are usually more telling than overly calculated one. Also a warm, supportive tone may encourage the subject to talk about matters he or she might otherwise consider "difficult", "painful" "awkward" or "inappropriate"
- Don't lead the respondent or try to put words in her mouth. Allow the respondent to tell her or his story in their own style and language (if possible).

### **Break --**

### **3. Preparatory Practice with Interviewing. (10:05 - 11:00 )**

- Pair Off and find a comfortable place to settle in for an interview session.
- Begin by testing your recording with the Opening Preamble --What's in a Name.
- Then decide who is going to try the role of "Active Listening" first and select a two or three parts from the five stages of our journey below to focus on.
- After about 40 minutes of active listening, take a few minutes of quiet time independent time to reflect and write about your experience of listening if you are interviewing or of answering questions if you were the subject.
- Be prepared to report on your experiences to the full group.
  - a) What was it like to actively listen for this extended period of time?  
What reflections do you have on the meaning of what you heard?
  - b) What was it like to be heard?  
What discoveries occurred to you as you were sharing?

### **4. Interview Questions.**

#### **Part 1: Early Life -- Family of Origin.**

- 1) What would you consider your culture(s) of origin? What do you know about the cultural origins of your parents? Through what family or community traditions were these origins made evident? Can you share a story about one of these traditions and how it is meaningful to you?
- 2) What kinds of expectations did your parents have of you as you were growing up? What kind of person did your parents want you to be? Were there other members of your family who were particularly important in shaping your sense of self as you were growing?

#### **Part 2: Our Early Friends, Neighbors and other Community members.**

- 1) Who were your best friends as you were growing up? Where were they from? Did they have any cultural traditions or practices that were different from your families' traditions or practices? Can you tell a story about how they shared this practice with you and its impact upon you?
- 2) What are your earliest memories of engaging with another person who was notably different from you -- perhaps because they or their parents were from another community, state or country. Tell a story about one of your experiences together and how it impacted the two of you.

**Part 3: Mentors on your journey.**

1) If you were to create a list of those people who planted “seeds of curiosity” about other places in the world or introduced you to different ways of thinking and doing things who would be on your list? Why? Can you pick one or two and tell a story about which illustrates who they have impacted you and your thinking?

**Part 4: Critical Junctures and Our Adopted Culture(s)**

1) What one or more cultures, other than your culture of origin do you feel you understand well? How did you develop this understanding of this culture? Who helped you gain that understanding? How did they help you?

2) If you have intentionally immersed yourself in another culture other than your culture of origin, what was this experience like? Can you share a story that illustrates how this experience impacted you? Have you incorporated practices from that culture into your life?

3) What other culture have you always been interested in learning more about? Why?

**Part 5: Who are we as intercultural people in our adults lives?**

1) Think about the diverse spheres that you inhabit in your daily lives. (Neighborhoods, Schools, Work environments, places of worship, entertainment, gyms/clubs/organizations). What are the cultural backgrounds of the people in each of these spheres?

2) What intercultural experiences do you have moving through your daily life which impact your thinking or ways of doing things? Can you share an example of an intercultural misfire or misunderstanding? Can you think of another intercultural engagement that may have been initially dissonant but resulted in significant intercultural growth and learning?

3) Given the opportunity, what intercultural connection would you like to deepen? Why?