

Whole Thinking Journal

STORIES FROM THE 2005 RETREAT SEASON



CENTER FOR WHOLE COMMUNITIES



Whole Thinking in Practice

Peter Forbes and Helen Whybrow, Co-founders

When we think about the destiny of land and of people, there are some questions we need to ask ourselves.

What do we care about enough to protect? For whom does our love extend? Is our vision motivated by fear or by love? What are we willing to give up and, perhaps, to receive, in order to be whole? How do we want to live? Who do we want to be?

This summer, Center for Whole Communities awarded fellowships to 98 individuals representing more than 60 organizations from Sitka, Alaska to San Juan, Puerto Rico. All of them dug deeply into these questions during their week-long retreats as they faced one overarching theme: “What is a whole community and how do we get there?”

We create this publication every year to share with our alumni, funders and friends the seeds that were planted at Knoll Farm for new ways to live and to lead. This summer, we hosted three Whole Thinking Leadership Retreats and two special retreats—one to nurture a meaningful exchange in leadership between the generations of our movement, and the other to introduce an advanced curriculum to our alumni. We want to spread the story of what we learned together in each of those retreats so that the strength of this work will grow. For

our funders, this is a way of showing you the products of your investment in our work. For our alumni, these pages are a way to re-member and re-connect with your experience at Knoll Farm. We hope they will remind you of the conversations and thoughts you had while here and reveal to you some that you may have missed. For the larger community, this is one step we take to share and build upon the learning that occurs during these retreats.

We gathered the themes of this essay from our notes of the summer’s dialogues and storytelling sessions, as well as from correspondence with alumni since then. We have tried to produce as complete and inclusive a view as possible of the learning that took place at Knoll Farm this retreat season. Nevertheless, we ask your forgiveness for offering what we acknowledge can only be a limited personal perspective on these gatherings.

A Word About the Retreats

In this time of shifting ideals and fractious debate, we see the imperative of taking the time to hear one another's stories and understand the true emotional depths of feeling about environmental causes as represented across generations. We see the need to come together in a different way.

The Whole Thinking Retreats have become a home for the respectful re-invention of the environmental movement. We teach a practice of conservation in which people matter, and in which the relationship between people and the land matters most. At Knoll Farm, we explore the power of the land, and the power of our land activism, to heal the dividedness in our lives: the separation between races, between rich and poor, between young and old, between people and nature. We help individuals find and express values that might guide the movement toward nurturing a truly healthy American culture and a more compelling and authentic story about people and the land. Together we seek a new practice of land restoration that is tolerant, connects the whole landscape, thinks out of the box, and is courageous about addressing the larger issues of the day.

At the Whole Thinking Leadership Retreats, we aim to inspire action, not demand it. We help find the common courage to tell stories that reflect our real values. We open leaders to the generative power of the land and the power of their own stories. We try hard to build bridges in a world filled with divides. And we share new tools that help groups collaborate, innovate, and respond to the diversity of people and politics in America.



Our theory of change is simple: dedicated people, when given the time to fully consider a problem, will always come up with a more inclusive, lasting and effective response than their previous strategies and tactics have allowed. Based on this theory, we help people and organizations look beyond their boundaries to see and respond to problems with deeper wisdom.

Finding Our Collective Heart

Death of Environmentalism and *Soul of Environmentalism* have been the in-breath and out-breath of the year. Taking in these writings, we asked ourselves this summer, how then do we act? How do we convincingly explain the connection that we feel to land and community? How do we talk about environmental problems in a way that engages the public around their own



concerns? Answering these questions, and others like them, has enabled many of you to take firm positions on the precarious edge of important change. One of the collective insights of the summer was that narrow definitions of environmentalism are no longer useful. As one of you commented, we must remember Henry David Thoreau for "Civil Disobedience," not only for *Walden*.

This essay organizes into themes the "collective heart" that we felt beat stronger and stronger through the summer, as five different groups of twenty people came to experience Knoll Farm. In addition to these themes, which arose in each retreat, we also heard clearly, almost as musical notes, two central ideas that many seemed to share:

- Replace *hope* with *intention*. Though hope has always seemed important, people expressed the fear of hanging on to that thread, and the need to replace hope with something more powerful. Hope requires expectations about the results, while intention is doing what you know to be right and necessary with no expectation about the outcome. Dr. King knew he wouldn't live to see the future he was dreaming about, but he still took action to fulfill that dream. Intention is living skillfully and courageously, while hope—more passive—can be a setup for sorrow.
- *We are all children of a broken lineage*. Many of our fellows spoke of their grief over not having mentors, teachers, direct experience of the land, and direct relationships with one another. Disconnection, alienation and fear are present in some measure within all of our lives. Much of our dialogue and experience together was in seeking to recover our capacity for connection and joy.

Race, Class, Power and Land

Each season, we seek a deeper understanding of the ways racism, classism and class-based poverty affect whole communities. The widening racial and financial divides of our country are intertwined with the story of the environmental movement, and of a disconnected society. Today, if we are not explicitly, intentionally building bridges, then we are probably creating divides.

Much of land conservation and environmentalism has been in favor of one class of people. Success for that one class has often meant failure for another; some acts of land conservation and environmentalism have directly displaced people and taken their land. No land, however, will survive a suffering humanity.

We may not be able to entirely resolve problems of racism and classism created long ago, but we can grapple with our personal connections to them wherever we live or work. And we can strive at all times to live and work differently. We will never achieve whole communities until we fully understand our personal relationship to these problems.

Each week during the Whole Thinking Leadership Retreats, we set a table for people of varying backgrounds, experiences, and races. Though much effort goes into creating a safe harbor for all, we do not yet meet our own goals for diversifying the retreats and are in a constant process of learning, reaching out, building trust and learning more. We recognize that our capacity to help others to practice “whole thinking” depends entirely on the trust we build and the diversity of people who come.

This summer, each group experienced the impossibility of creating a new story of whole communities before this older story about race, privilege and the land has been fully acknowledged. What we’re attempting to do in the retreats is much more difficult than claiming our own stories; it involves hearing and truly absorbing others’ stories. This is a much harder task for all us, regardless of race or wealth. How open can we be to the pain of the past? One participant put it this way: “The great fear I hold is that we won’t be up to this task of healing.” And yet, the healing begins with listening. We see in these retreats the impossibility of achieving our vision by leaving someone out, or expressing a larger vision when someone’s basic needs are unmet.

Many participants expressed the deep intention to create a *moral landscape*, where people are treated fairly and where other species are treated fairly. There was an emerging understanding that a moral landscape creates a moral culture. Conversely, a landscape conserved or protected without intention toward equity and fairness can never really create a civil society. This season had participants asking themselves, “Is my relationship or my organization’s relationship to the land fair to others? If not, what’s my personal connection to that problem?”

Boundaries Between You and Me

We took aim this summer, despite being in his country, at Robert Frost’s notion that “good fences make good neighbors.” Boundaries are everywhere in our culture: property lines, geographical and geopolitical lines, the divide between rich and poor, between white and black. These boundaries are both on the land and deeply ingrained within our minds, and are symbolized most graphically today by the *No Trespassing* signs found on almost half the private land in America.

Boundaries, by intention, divide us. And a world filled with lines and divisions only leads to fragmentation—the sense of alienation, disconnection and domination that contributes to our culture of fear and violence. More than in past years, participants spoke of feeling this fear in their daily lives. And



more pointed to this “culture of fear” as the primary challenge to fulfilling a positive vision of the world.

These boundaries become amplified within our organizations. The environmental movement is more fragmented than ever before, divided into thousands of organizations working with different strategies and tactics. Specialization within the environmental movement can be good, if it comes with a high degree of integration, collaboration and partnership. But many powerful forces, including our funders, encourage us to specialize, to differentiate ourselves, to stick to our core competencies and not reach out beyond them. Too much specialization has made our environmental movement isolated, competitive and unable to tell a compelling story to the American public. Buried deep within our own silos, we can’t see the nature of the problem.

Conservation organizations control significant resources—both land and dollars—and their choices can have significant effects on a wide range of community benefits, from food security to child development to housing. But if conservation groups are operating only within their own narrow definitions of “saving” land, the benefits and the messages of the land will be inaccessible to larger groups of Americans.

Holding the Tension

One good reason to stay in a specialized silo is that it feels familiar. But it also could be “hiding your head in the sand.” This summer, we explored how *true* safety and organizational health is achieved through taking the risk of holding the tensions between ideas, people, and organizations. Though tension rarely makes us comfortable, we saw the ways in which it can lead to meaningful insights and solutions.

The most valuable moments in the retreats this summer came from the self-awareness and compassion that brought the groups in and out of conflict.

The same is true for conflict. The purpose of the Whole Thinking Leadership Retreats is not to find ways for people of diverse backgrounds merely to be nice to one another, but to explore how to engage and then re-emerge from conflict, sorrow, past history. The most valuable moments in the retreats this summer came from the self-awareness and compassion that brought the groups in and out of conflict. These retreats are not exercises in conflict resolution, but efforts to practice how a deeper understanding and appreciation of shared values can sustain a diverse group and help it find shared solutions.

Reciprocal Questions

Why do we need to work together? Why do I need you? Why do you need me? Why shouldn't we just go back to doing our work the old way? After all, we know what we're doing.

These are the critical personal questions that emerge, as if from the background, into the forefront of dialogue in each retreat. Center for Whole Communities has a growing understanding that these reciprocal questions are fundamental to the future effectiveness of what is called the environmental movement.

One of the most important results of these leadership forums is an understanding that we cannot be successful at addressing root problems in our society without collaborating with people and organizations very different from our own.

Whole Thinking

A primary objective of these forums is to practice “whole thinking,” which we define as “acting from and for the whole.” As an effort to defeat the fragmentation in our lives and within our work, whole thinking asks participants to re-examine the problems they are addressing and the leverage points they are using. Each group is given the time and the

safe space to re-imagine the scale of the challenges facing their work. The result is often a shift from narrowly directed tools to broader, more holistic tools.

For example, we come to understand the role of vibrant livable cities to the health of rural and wilderness areas, and this in turn focuses attention on good education systems and positive race relations. Therefore, among the most important leverage points to those concerned with healthy biodiversity and wilderness are efforts that will support good education and positive race relations in urban areas. Seeing this connection through whole thinking helps land organizations to re-think the promise of their work and releases them from incomplete solutions.

“[The retreat] made me more determined than ever to reach across race and class to include all communities in our discussions of food and farming issues...and to model this inclusiveness in all our publications and stories about our work...You surrounded us with history, intention and time—all needed and received. It was one of the most wonderful experiences I've ever had.”

—2005 retreat participant



Movements and Social Change

Whole thinking leads us away from talking about the “environment” as something separate from the whole of our daily lives. And when we see it as a more inclusive, overarching idea, we begin to shy away from the phrase “environmental movement,” because it has made divisions between people and ideas. What do we call this work, then? Are we a movement, or are we people moving toward common goals? One thing is for sure: we’re changing the basic framework of our lives.

We’re trying to evolve that framework for both people and organizations. Those of you who come here are held together by a common desire to help enliven and enlighten institutions and communities today. You spoke about how love, self-awareness, courage and compassion are needed to bring such intelligence out of a community or an organization, inspiring it to be present for the work that must be done. Some find this deeply threatening and call it “mission creep.” Others call it finally creeping into our mission.

The Whole Thinking Retreats are trying to give this new energy a voice. The vision is emerging from experienced people who are self-aware enough to know they can make bad decisions, and who want to be guided by their questions rather than by their answers. This movement is a series of questions:

- What is the role of land and land conservation in building bridges and creating divides?
- How can we build stronger collaborations between those groups working to conserve and restore the land and those working to create healthier, more just, and vibrant communities?
- How do we help each other recognize and transcend the silos—both mental and organizational—which so often define and limit our work?

“I really got it [a whole thinking approach to conservation and social justice issues] at a deep level through the experience...I believe in order to work with others to facilitate change, you’ve got to walk the talk—you’ve got to know what that means for you. And I GOT IT...The connection between myself and the ideas I try to understand and share in the world...I finally understood, like “BAM.” Suddenly the work comes fully from the heart and is more holistic...This was a life-changing experience for me.”

—2005 retreat participant

- How do we help those of us working with, for and on the land to describe and measure our success in restoring a sense of commonwealth?
- Why was the sense of awe and connection lost in our movement and how can we recapture it?

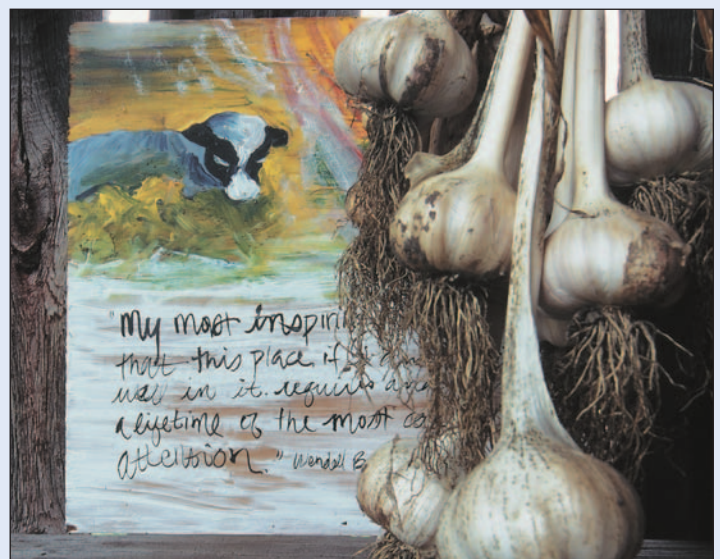
Language, Story, and Leadership

The Nigerian novelist, Ben Okri, reminds us that nations are made up of the stories they feed themselves: “Stories are the reservoirs of our values. Change the stories and you ultimately change the people and the nation.” Much of the work of the Whole Thinking Leadership Retreats goes into evolving the stories you as leaders tell about your purpose and vision, thereby changing the nature of your leadership.

A good story goes beyond facts and figures to make its point through image, metaphor, analogy, emotion and meaning. It both reflects and pulls us toward our most authentic selves.

One of our participants this summer said, “Maybe we need to start losing the language that’s been so comfortable to us.” Every time we use a word, a whole set of associations comes to mind. For example, *health* raises a different set of associations than does *environment*. Our goal is to revive a more common language about health, fairness and relationship.

Knowing how to tell a powerful story is best accomplished through listening well and walking among different people. Another key ingredient of a good story is sensing the ending and when to leave the stage; being the vehicle rather than the main player. These characteristics of good storytellers are the same qualities we need in our leaders today: compassion, tolerance, intuition, humility.



Shared Values and Common Courage

Each group this summer asked itself, “What are the values we hope to bring into this world?” Peace and beauty, making it possible for the Seri women to sing to the waves, respecting the complexity, holding the tensions, reverence for life, relationship, joy, knowing that there’s more to life than making money, respect, humility, patience, care, understanding. These are some of the answers we heard.

But whose values are we talking about? Some white conservationists are “following their bliss” and saving places they love. This might be a nice idea, but what about the fact of black family land loss? “Saving land” is a powerful logic, but is it always the right thing for us to do? We may also need to give up control to others and see what happens.

We can argue about our positions, but we rarely argue about values. Values often hold us together where strategies and tactics divide us. If we take the time to understand what we do hold in common and what this can produce, we’ll have more common courage to survive the differences in our positions.

Generative Power of the Land

A profound teacher at the Whole Thinking Leadership Retreats is the land itself, which we experience through food, sun, rain, wind, fire and stars. We talked about how the lessons of the land are critical to finding wholeness within ourselves and our communities, while acknowledging that this is problematic if we carry a narrow definition of relationship to land: not all people have histories which allow them to feel positive

The rewards of a life lived in some relationship to the land bestow internal rewards of a rich vocabulary, durable skills, and eyes that truly see.

connections to land, nor do all people have the opportunity to have a connection at all. In our definition of land we talked about urban spaces as well as rural, abused places as well as those that have been left alone. We talked about how inherent in our relationship to land, wherever we find it, are basic human values such as health, interdependence and fairness.

In our connection to land we also see something less intellectual, more physical, about the rewards of life itself. Much in our culture conditions us to seek external rewards of wealth, security, status. The rewards of a life lived in some relationship to the land bestow internal rewards of a rich vocabulary, durable skills, and eyes that truly see.

“[The retreat] clarified for me the necessity of linking work in conservation with work in social justice and economic reform. It confirmed my commitment to seeking out the common ground shared by all those working for a just, peaceful, humane, and sustainable society...In addition, the link between head-work and hand-work, between eating and caring for the land, between spiritual inquiry and political action were all dramatized by our daily practice at Knoll Farm.”

—2005 retreat participant



“The retreat has fine-tuned my eyes to look for systems, people, organizations, and communities that are holistic in their thinking and connected to the earth...It has helped ground me in place and commit to the importance of naming, honoring, and bringing to light in conversation that relationship and place between humans, communities and land are one and the same. [Thinking of] the retreat always brings me back to land.”

—2005 retreat participant

Relationship and Place

We note every year how the movement to protect land and people has been fairly good at protecting the land but less good at protecting people and their relationships to land. And yet, one of the understandings with which most leave Knoll Farm is that relationship is more fundamental than places or things.

When it comes to the relationship between land and people, the sum is always greater than the parts.

When it comes to the relationship between land and people, the sum is always greater than the parts. Neuro-scientists understand the separate workings of the brain but can't explain music or love because it is the *relationships between* those parts that create the possibility of love. The

emergent properties that come out of people when they have relationships to each other and to the land are equally unpredictable. In fact, that's how most social change has occurred. As one participant asked, "What is the emergent potential of the gathered courage of a group willing and able to face fear?"

We are fortunate to witness this emergent potential with each group here at Knoll Farm. And we hear back from many of you that when you convene people in your own organizations and communities, you are finding new ways to speak and listen, to invent and restore, to keep the conversation returning to what matters most.

We hope you will find some new stories and old memories in these pages, in the alumni essays and quotes that follow, and in photographs many of you took while at Knoll Farm. We are grateful for the work you are all doing, which continues to be the energizing fire behind all we do here. Stay in touch.



"[The retreat] knocked another piece of the foundation out from under any lasting belief that land can be protected from, or without, people...My thinking shifted more completely away from the either-or perspective on people and land."

—2005 retreat participant

Voices from Summer 2005

At our Whole Thinking Leadership Retreats, we strive to provide a forum in which all voices at the table—or in the yurt—can be heard. Reviewing our notes of this summer’s dialogues, we discovered that not only did those voices define the problems we face, they also spoke clearly of the solutions we need. Here are some of the statements we heard.

Problems defined

- Isolation has given rise to the transfer in people’s minds between health and wealth. We’ve lost health and traded it for wealth.
- The whole world has become obscured; we don’t see the connections in our lives or where we get the things that feed, clothe, shelter us.
- In my part of the world, there’s no effort made in hearing or sharing each other’s truths.
- We live in a zero sum society. You root for one side, not the other.
- We have an artificial limitation of choices. We’re not given the full range of choices.
- The biggest challenge is appetite: For prestige, for strawberries in winter, for more of everything.
- We’ve been caught up in a story that, in the end, isn’t true and never really served us.

Solutions articulated

- Social fabrics and relationships are what’s most critical.
- Relationship is more powerful a force than isolation.
- Create places where people can have authentic relationships.
- I don’t want to protect people from my blackness. Create more spaces where people can be authentic.
- I want to set more tables, just put people in front of one another.
- We can’t just talk about healing the land without talking about healing people.
- What I’ve really learned this week is that if any group of people can come together and really hear each other’s stories, then community arises.
- Find what is broken and make it whole again.
- If you’re fully alive and seeing, you’re going to see the connections.
- The power of hopeful, honest, caring dialogue.
- One day on the river meant they would never think of a river in the same way.
- The global “Aha!” takes bringing together the different voices; seeing and hearing each other’s humanity.
- We must open our lives more to people who will challenge us.

Courage called for

- Courage to talk about the really difficult issues of race and class.*
- Courage to talk about difficult things with kindness.*
- Courage to lose my membership.*
- Courage to meet power with detachment.*
- Courage to engage power with my own power.*
- Courage to lose, and experience loss.*
- Courage to know we can’t do it alone.*
- Courage to see that all we need is already at hand.*
- Courage to simply be present, engaging fully.*
- Courage to have the conversations that create new opportunities.*
- Courage to tell the stories that reflect our real values.*
- Courage to earn more influence and courage to give it away.*
- Courage to not always put the function or the future of the group ahead of speaking the truth.*
- Courage to work with others and trust something will get done.*
- Courage to ask myself, “Am I really doing it?”*
- Courage to come from the core.*
- Courage to resist, with my heart, business as usual.*
- Courage to live more modestly and fairly.*
- Courage to speak of a different American dream.*
- Courage to go toward, not from.*

- I need to hold something new: “loving the land” and “loving the people.” It’s the idea of synthesis. Loving people is really exciting and really hard.
- We need to be at the crossroads of the environmental movement and the social justice movement, and to get to those crossroads we’ve got to be more inclusive. The possibilities are unlimited, but we have to be willing.
- If you help people to feel that they deserve a better world, they will work toward that better world.
- I have great faith in the arts as a way to help us think of the possibility of life.
- Replace “saving,” “conserving,” “preserving” with “sustaining,” “cultivating,” “nurturing”. We don’t want to talk about “pickling” anything.

A Movement with Heart

James Honey

My invitation to Knoll Farm came to Sustainable Northwest, where I work to “achieve ecological, economic and community vitality and resilience” in the rural communities of the Pacific Northwest. As I read it, I thought I already understood “whole thinking” for conservation. I wondered what I had to learn.

A few months later, I left the Mad River Valley with powerful teachings. Each day that I climbed from the barn to the yurt at Knoll Farm, I descended from the shaky heights of familiar thinking to the rooted power of my forgotten heart—relearning Care and Community as vehicles for social change.

I relearned Care through gifts. Gifts of a deeply-crafted learning experience, of beautiful food, of space for personal reflection, of contemplative silence and slowing in a dizzying world, of healing for tired bodies, of stories, of a cool pond on a hot summer day.

As I received, so I began to give. On the third day, my “chore” of sweeping the barn transformed from a mental exercise to achieve the maximum cleanliness with the minimum of effort to something more meaningful. Sweeping became an opportunity to care for the old building that housed our meals and stories, and for the group of people that met there everyday.

And I re-learned Community, without hearing an instructional word. Instead, a space was opened, modeled and maintained in which the significant differences among individuals could be fully expressed, listened to, and held. We didn’t have to reconcile, and we didn’t have to resolve. A community emerged—in six days.

I contrast that experience with the angry, divisive voices I have heard for over a decade from both progressives and conservatives. How easy to know we are right, and to blame others. How difficult to feel we might not yet fully understand, and to hold a space to listen to our enemies. At Knoll Farm, I resolved to build community. I know I can’t solve a problem by myself, but a community can.

So, how do care, attention, listening, and other similarly ineffable things translate into the “real world” of western natural resource conflicts and struggling rural communities?

Last week I was at a conference of federal natural resource managers. The goal was to teach what collaboration is, and why to do it. For the better part of a day, numerous PowerPoints outlined all the technical elements of, resources for, and quantifiable outcomes of collaboration and whole thinking. At every juncture, the group grumbled and debated: How could a range conservationist be expected to do something about economic issues affecting ranchers? Collaboration was such a fuzzy concept, how would it be recognized and paid for? The message behind the questions was clear: this is impossible.

On the second day we put away the PowerPoints. Six of us who have worked in one of the West’s most contentious places sat in a half-circle. Our instructions were to teach the “steps in planning a community-based collaboration,” but we threw away the script. Instead a rancher told of how she braces for violence each time there is an Endangered Species Act hearing in her community. An “expert” in collaboration told how people had walked out of her meetings over and over, but how things have changed as our commitment to true listening becomes evident in the area. We spoke of values, not strategies. We watched as tears welled up in the eyes of several men in the crowd.

When we were done, there was total silence. For the first time, no statements about why it couldn’t work. The lessons were learned, not from the head, but in the heart. Next, two of the country’s highest ranking resource managers said that they would do what they could within their power to keep this work alive, because it mattered.

Finally, one of them—a veteran of hundreds of public meetings and scores of congressional hearings—said, “Hearing you all, I am reminded about the power of storytelling. I think we need to do more of it.”

The lineage of gifts is growing.

James Honey is a Program Officer at Sustainable Northwest, a rural sustainable development organization in Portland, Oregon. There, he directs the Ranchland Renewal program, which works to encourage conservation and social and economic resilience of Western ranching and rangelands. He also works in Oregon’s Upper Klamath Basin, helping to reveal common ground and specific solutions to issues that have divided ranchers, Native Americans, environmentalists and government agencies for the past decade.



Creating Opportunities for Wholeness

Irene Shen

My first visit to Knoll Farm in August 2004 brought me back to New England's green landscape for my first week-long stay surrounded exclusively by nature since I had graduated from high school 13 years before. The natural environment of Vermont was one familiar to me from my childhood and teenage years, which I spent mostly in the suburbs and rural areas just outside of Boston, Massachusetts.

None of societies' big challenges are resolved after a week together, but glimpses of possibilities and next steps exist where awareness is broadened, souls are renewed and relationships are built.

For the last 13 years, I have lived in New York City, surrounded more by concrete blocks than grassy fields, walking between more high-rise buildings than maple trees. Knoll Farm's emphasis on the search for relationship between people and the land reminded me of my own connection with the bullfrogs my brother and I would catch in Mr. Hammer's pond next door and with the rainbow-colored leaves I collected in our yard during the fall. While in Vermont, I realized the extent of my disengagement from the natural world, once so familiar to me, since planting myself in the urban landscape of New York City for my adult life.

While New York has not provided me with many opportunities for connecting with green spaces or diverse ecosystems, it has given me the opportunity to do incredible environmental justice work. The community where I work is a working-class immigrant community of color, heavily overburdened with polluting facilities, poorly planned and greatly under-resourced; a typical environmental justice community. We are working toward greater community ownership, environmental remediation and models of sustainable development. Each of these goals provides more opportunities for people to experience and connect with the earth, a connection I was reminded of while at Knoll Farm. Members of environmental justice communities—poor people, people of color, immigrants—often have deep historical ties to the land that

become lost as they find themselves in urban environments. It's easy to forget that fighting for cleaner air and greener spaces is not just about reducing polluting emissions or having a place to play ball. EJ has everything to do with creating opportunities for finding those relationships between people and the land.

The combination of dialoguing, storytelling, meditating, eating locally grown food, doing our daily chores and being surrounded by the natural beauty of Knoll Farm encourages the power of connection to a place and requires us to be present as people who love the earth and who are invested in her sustenance and the survival of all of her peoples. As in EJ work, we reach for each other not through offices and titles, but through building community while sitting around the yurt, eating dinner in the barn or carving our spoons by the pond. None of societies' big challenges are resolved after a week together, but glimpses of possibilities and next steps exist where awareness is broadened, souls are renewed and relationships are built.

When I returned to Knoll Farm in September 2005, Peter exclaimed, "Irene, welcome home!" Yes, Knoll Farm is a home for me. It's a place that has reconnected me to the natural world and reminds me of an essential piece of what I do now, the creation of opportunities for people to build relationships with each other and to the land again; to become whole.

Irene Shen is the Environmental Justice Programs Coordinator at UPROSE in Sunset Park, Brooklyn.



Centering for Whole Communities

Jad Daley

I still recall the discussion on the first evening at Knoll Farm. We all sat around like uncomfortable teenagers on a church youth group retreat, trying to summarize for each other why on earth we had dropped everything in our lives to come. For me, that explanation was pretty complex.



I was coming to the end of the most successful year of my professional career, a time when all the lessons I had learned were beginning to shape an effective approach to designing campaigns and creating change, confirmed by outside affirmation. On the other hand, like any good drug my year of ecstasy had also nearly killed me. I was late in arriving to Knoll Farm from my home just an hour away because I had been working to slam in a last minute grant proposal that I had not expected to write. This little vignette captured well both the overload of my life and my increasing inefficiency as the wear of that overload began to show.

So I arrived looking for a little magic, a bolt of strategic realization and professional development that would somehow pierce the fog of my unmanageable non-profit life and help me continue to do great things while also finding time to sip piña coladas on my deck. It didn't happen.

In truth, my experience at Knoll Farm did not change my strategy, approach, or chosen campaigns. I came to Knoll Farm already committed to fostering innovative and community-led conservation through the Vermont Town Forest Project and other place-based initiatives. I probably could have written "The Death of Environmentalism" if I had ever taken the time to transcribe my diatribes against the blindness of the mainstream conservation community.

I chose instead to drink from the other pond at Knoll Farm—enlightenment and self-realization—and it has profoundly changed my life and raised the quality and effectiveness of my work. Throughout my adult life I have rubbed elbows with the foundations of a centered life and a positive state of being. Unfortunately, all of those good pillars had long been eroding under the weight of my steadily advancing career to the point where they were starting to give way.

Through storytelling with Scott Sanders, I regained the ability to speak from my heart. Through meditation with Cynthia Jurs I found a durable way to capture the inner calm and control that has always eluded me and compromised my effectiveness. Through dialogue with Peter and Helen I realized that I long ago had stopped listening to anyone. Through the gifts of my fellow participants, I realized that I needed to open my estuary to more inflows from outside to remain vital.

When I walk into a meeting or event now I am rarely thinking about what I am going to say or how I want the day to flow. Instead I think about my state of being, about projecting a joy and confidence in the rightness of our work that will lift up the others in the room and help us collectively achieve great things. I challenge myself to speak from my heart. I have never felt more in my power as a leader than I have since Knoll Farm, thanks to regaining the inner light that

I have never felt more in my power as a leader than I have since Knoll Farm, thanks to regaining the inner light that had been extinguished by the crush of my professional life.

had been extinguished by the crush of my professional life. It is hard to imagine anything that our movement and its people need more profoundly.

Jad Daley directs the Eastern Forest Partnership and also serves as Campaign Director for the Northern Forest Alliance. He lives with his family in Hardwick, Vermont, where he can be found exhausting himself running, snowshoeing, and cross-country skiing during every free moment.

Alumni of 2005 Retreats



Will Abberger, Tallahassee, FL
 Joni Adamson, Tucson, AZ
 Michael Andrews, Durham, NC
 Ernie Atencio, Taos, NM
 Peter Bergh, New Castle, NH
 John Bernstein, Washington, DC
 Scott Boettger, Hailey, ID
 Tom Brightman, Kennett Square, PA
 David Brynn, Bristol, VT
 Len Cadwallader, White River Jct., VT
 Jared Cadwell, Waitsfield, VT
 Annie Cheatham, South Deerfield, MA
 Mark Coleman, Mill Valley, CA
 Mike Connelly, Klamath Falls, OR
 Bill Coperthwaite, Machiasport, ME
 Richard Czaplinski, Adamant, VT
 Becky Daggett, Flagstaff, AZ
 Jad Daley, Stowe, VT
 Matt Daly, Jackson, WY
 Felicia Davis, Atlanta, GA
 Christopher DeForest, Spokane, WA



Cindy Delpapa, Boston, MA
 John Elder, Bristol, VT
 Torri Estrada, Essex, NY
 Nancy Everhart, Montpelier, VT
 Carolyn Finney, Atlanta, GA
 Cheryl King Fischer, Montpelier, VT
 Deborah Fleischer, Mill Valley, CA
 Gloria Flora, Helena, MT

Christian Freitag, Bloomington, IN
 Rupert Friday, Narragansett, RI
 Iantha Gantt-Wright, Fort Washington, MD
 Louise Gratton, Sutton, Québec
 Richard Halsey, Escondido, CA
 Krista Harness, Plainfield, VT
 Olivia Hoblitzelle, Waitsfield, VT
 James Honey, Portland, OR
 Steve Horn, Oakland, CA
 Melanie Ingalls, Sharon, MA
 Julie Isbill, Brunswick, ME
 Hazel James, Flagstaff, AZ
 Wendy Johnson-Rudnick, Muir Beach, CA
 Cynthia Jurs, Santa Fe, NM
 Marion Kane, Boston, MA
 Stephanie Kaza, South Burlington, VT



Joseph Kiefer, Montpelier, VT
 Wayne Klockner, Boston, MA
 Jon Kohl, Washington, DC
 Hank Lentfer, Gustavus, AK
 Christopher Littlefield, Block Island, RI
 Gil Livingston, Richmond, VT
 Skye Maher, Portsmouth, NH
 Jennifer Marlow, Fairport, NY
 Lucy McCarthy, Vinalhaven, ME
 Kevin McGorty, Tallahassee, FL
 Brian McNitt, Sitka, AK
 Linda Mead, Princeton, NJ
 Curt Meine, Prairie Du Sac, WI
 Florence Miller, Montpelier, VT
 Roger Milliken, Jr, Cumberland, ME
 Andrea Morgante, Hinesburg, VT
 Sandra Neily, Greenville, ME
 Wendy Ninteman, Missoula, MT
 Doug Nopar, Winona, MN
 Chris Paterson, Montpelier, VT
 Kinny Perot, Warren, VT
 Robert Perry, Manteo, NC
 Andy Pitz, Media, PA
 Swati Prakash, New York, NY



Leslie Ratley-Beach, Montpelier, VT
 Janisse Ray, Brattleboro, VT
 Bettina Ring, San Francisco, CA
 Kieran Roe, Hendersonville, NC
 Carmelo Ruiz, San Juan, Puerto Rico
 Enrique Salmón, Palo Alto, CA
 Scott Sanders, Bloomington, IN
 Lauret Savoy, South Hadley, MA
 Timothy Schaefer, Middlefield, OH
 Deb Schoenbaum, San Rafael, CA
 Lisl Schoepflin, Oakland, CA
 Carolyn Servid, Sitka, AK
 Irene Shen, Brooklyn, NY
 Mary Margaret Sloan, Charlestown, NH
 Vicki Smith, Hanover, NH
 Marion Stoddart, Groton, MA
 Erik Tamez-Hrabovsky, Pullman, WA
 Liz Thompson, Burlington, VT
 Tara Tracy, Kennett Square, PA
 Nancy Turkle, Groton, MA
 Abigail Abrash Walton, Keene, NH
 Joan Weir, Brattleboro, VT
 Tom Wessels, Keene, NH
 Courtney White, Santa Fe, NM
 Cyndy Whiteford, Afton, MN,
 Dahvi Wilson, New Haven, CT
 Diana Winston, San Francisco, CA
 Sandy Wright, Lake Oswego, OR
 Marci Young, Waterbury, VT



With Thanks to Our Funders

We know now from a third season of leadership retreats that *our work is making a difference—in the environmental movement and beyond*. Over and over again we hear evidence that our curriculum is helping people and organizations to see the big picture of their work, to connect the dots between the health of the land and the health of society, and to build whole communities through open dialogue and values-driven initiatives.

Our alumni are collaborating in courageous ways to green cities by converting polluted land into parks, urban gardens and greenways. They are protecting land by ensuring that the people who love that land can afford to live there. They are protecting farmers' markets and CSA farms that link rural, suburban and urban populations and connect people with healthy food and water supplies. They are protecting biological diversity by helping to ensure that people are healthy and secure. They are confronting human intolerance by making

their own work more fully open to the claims of others. This is the work of change that is being nurtured at Knoll Farm.

We would like to express *deep gratitude* to the funders who have made it possible over the last three years to offer tuition-free retreats at Knoll Farm:

*Ann Day Family Fund
Compton Foundation
Educational Foundation of America
Ittleson Foundation
Merck Family Fund
New Castle Fund
Surdna Foundation
Anonymous foundation*

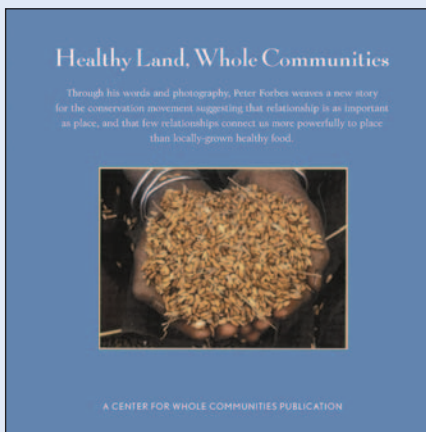
And more than 80 alumni who gave generously to make it possible for others to attend.

New Publication: Healthy Land, Whole Communities

A presentation by Peter Forbes on DVD

In February 2005, Peter gave a keynote address at the Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont's annual conference. Through words and pictures, he wove a new story suggesting that relationship is as important as place, and that few relationships connect us more powerfully to place than locally-grown, healthy food. A DVD of this presentation, as well as all of Center for Whole Communities' other publications are available for purchase on our website.

To find out more and download order forms, visit www.wholecommunities.org/pubs.html.



Notes from the Farm

2005 was a big year for us on the land. This spring, we finished our bath house—a solar-powered structure made of cob (a mixture of earth and straw), stone, and native wood that was a collaboration between many builders, designers, and artists from our community. With the help of Chris Eaton, Hannah Morrill, Brandon Proia, Rick Thompson and many others, we built seven more tent platforms, turned a new vegetable garden, planted fruit trees, added new windows and a finished floor to the barn, and improved the library. This year the land provided more lamb, blueberries, eggs, and produce for the retreats than ever before, and we have plans to expand the gardens again this coming spring. Thank you for all the ways you nurtured the land while you were here.

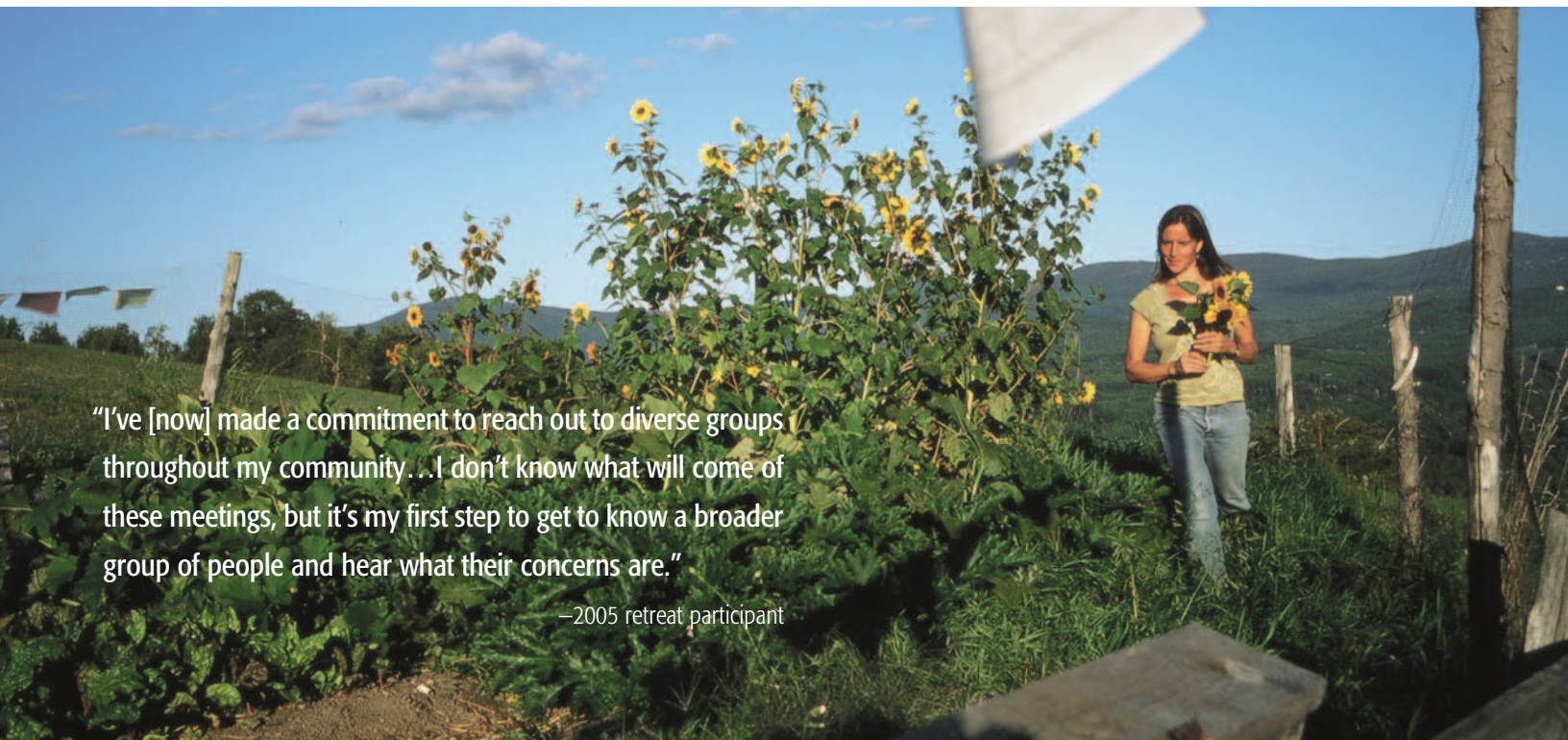


Our Alumni Represent the Following Organizations

Alaska Rainforest Campaign – Antioch New England Graduate School – Appalachian Mountain Club – Association of Vermont Recyclers – Barr Foundation – Baskahegan Company – Berens River First Nation – Bradford Conservation Commission – Brandywine Conservancy – Brooklyn Bridge Park Coalition – Building for the Minds, Gardens for the Soul – California Coastal Conservancy – Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy – Chelsea Flower Gardens – The Christensen Fund – Commonwealth Conservancy – Community Food Security Coalition – Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture – Connecticut RiverFest – The Conservation Fund – Conservation de la Nature Canada – D&R Greenway Land Trust – Dartmouth College – Eddy Foundation – Environmental Justice Solutions – Farm and Wilderness Camp – Five Valleys Land Trust – Food Works – Friends of Flagstaff’s Future – Friends of the Highline – Friends of the Mad River – Garrison Institute – Gathering Waters Conservancy – Georgia Conservancy – Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation – Global Living Project – Green Impact Environmental Consulting – Greenfaith – Highfields Farm – Hill Country Land Trust – Indigenous Community Enterprises – Inland Northwest Land Trust – Innovative Natural Resource Solutions, LLC – Institute for Human Rights Study and Advocacy – Institute for Social Ecology – International Crane Foundation – Intervale Foundation – Island Institute – Jade Design/Build – Just Food – Kenian Group Diversity Consultants – Klamath Basin Ecosystem Foundation – Land Trust Alliance – Land Trust for the Little Tennessee – Liberation Park – Mad River Planning District – Maine Coast Heritage Trust – Maine Land Trust Network – Marin Agricultural Land Trust – Marin Conservation Corps – Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation – Massachusetts Riverways Program – Mesa Land Trust – Middlebury College – Midwest Organic & Sustainable Education Service – Moosehead Region Futures Committee – Mount Agamenticus to the Sea Conservation Initiative – Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust – Mount Holyoke College – National Park Service – National Park Service Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance – Natural Lands Trust – The Nature Conservancy – Neighborhood Gardens Association – New England Grassroots Environment Fund – New Hampshire Charitable Foundation – New Mexico Farmers’ Association – New Hampshire Project Learning Tree – Northern Forest Alliance – Northern Forest Center – Open Way Sangha – Panta Rhea Foundation – Peconic Land Trust – Puerto Rico Project on Biosafety – Quebec-Labrador Foundation/Atlantic Center for the Environment – Quivira Coalition – River Fields, Inc. – San Francisco Bay Area Open Space Council – Savory Thymes – Science and Environmental Health Network – Shelburne Farms – Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests – Southern California Chaparral Field Institute – State of Vermont – Student Conservation Association – Sustainable Northwest – Sustainable Obtainable Solutions – Sycamore Land Trust – Tall Timbers Research Station – Tanglewood 4-H Camp – Taos Land Trust – Tapestry – Three Rivers Conservancy – Town of Hanover – True Nature Consulting – Trust for Public Land – The Trustees of Reservations – United Puerto Ricans Organization of Sunset Park – University of Arizona – University of Vermont – UPROSE – Urban Ecology Institute – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – Vermont Earth Institute – Vermont Family Forests – Vermont Housing and Conservation Board – Vermont Institute of Natural Science – Vermont Land Trust – Vinalhaven Land Trust – Vision Arrow – Vital Communities – Vox Biologica – Vermont Youth Conservation Corps – West Harlem Environmental Action – Wilderness Center, Inc. – Wilderness Guide – Wood River Land Trust – Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies – York Land Trust – Yurt Foundation

“I’ve [now] made a commitment to reach out to diverse groups throughout my community...I don’t know what will come of these meetings, but it’s my first step to get to know a broader group of people and hear what their concerns are.”

–2005 retreat participant



Measures of Health

What we measure often determines what we pay attention to. We and a growing number of conservationists view traditional measures of success in land conservation—acres and dollars—as increasingly inadequate measurements of our higher aspirations: to have the restoration and conservation of land help re-create and sustain whole communities.

To address this gap in our tools, we have been developing *Measures of Health*—an ethical standard for describing the wide range of impacts land conservation and restoration can have on communities. In March 2006, we will convene a diverse group of 35 leading practitioners and thinkers at the Penn Center in South Carolina to explore the role of land in creating whole communities, the ways to build more effective bridges between conservation organizations and others working toward healthy communities, and the ways we can improve and use *Measures of Health* to enhance this work. The results of this dialogue, along with feedback received from alumni and the results of pilot efforts in using the tool, will inform a significant revision of *Measures of Health* as we prepare for a major release later in 2006.

For a free download of the current version of *Measures of Health*, please visit our website at www.wholecommunities.org/measures5.html. To learn more about our *Measures of Health* program, please contact:

Chris Paterson
Center for Whole Communities
chris@wholecommunities.org
802-496-5690

Vision and Values Workshops

Did you know that Knoll Farm can come to you? We take our Vision and Values workshops to our alumni's organizations around the country, introducing their staff and colleagues to the concepts of whole thinking, the value of storytelling and our *Measures of Health* tool. Over two-and-a-half days, participants explore the role of land in shaping healthy and prosperous human communities, consider new theories of how broader, societal change occurs and examine the role of conservation and education in fostering positive change. They also receive training in the uses of *Measures of Health* as a project selection and evaluation tool, and as a process for overall organizational change. For more information, email or call:

Flo Miller
Center for Whole Communities
802-496-5690
flo@wholecommunities.org



“I think the most powerful intellectual experience of the retreat for me was having the opportunity to interact with people working in very different arenas from my own and confronting very different environmental and social problems. It gave me a chance to remember very important larger truths about the deep environmental injustice in our country and the continuing environmental racism and classism, albeit unintended, of the mainstream conservation movement. In that sense I regained perspective on where my work within conservation fits into the whole spectrum of social and environmental change.”

—2005 retreat participant



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*History says, Don't hope
On this side of the grave.
But then, once in a lifetime
The longed-for tidal wave
Of justice can rise up,
And hope and history rhyme.*

*So hope for a great sea-change
On the far side of revenge.
Believe that a further shore
Is reachable from here.
Believe in miracles
And cures and healing wells.*

*Call miracle self-healing:
The utter, self-revealing
Double-take of feeling.
If there's fire on the mountain
Or lightning and storm
And a god speaks from the sky*

*That means someone is hearing
The outcry and the birth-cry
Of new life at its term...*

—Excerpted from Seamus Heaney,
The Cure at Troy (Noonday Press, 1991)

