

Taking America (USA) Beyond the Legacy of Enslavement

COMING TO THE TABLE

Youth Initiative

Coming to the Table's Organizing Office is working intently on developing a youth initiative that will explore our approach and support youth-oriented dialogue about racial issues plaguing the nation.

Several stages have been completed including creating a conceptual idea, intended outcomes and developing key relationships. There is still a great deal that needs to be done, but we are excited about the shape this initiative is taking.

This youth process will be done in conjunction with the 50th year anniversary of the freedom rides that will take place in Jackson MS May 2011. For more information about this please visit the web site [here](#).

The most important part of our creative process will be happening in the next few months as we venture to Mississippi to meet with several groups of youth to gather their ideas about what the project should look like.

Please stay tuned for future updates as this project unfolds.

Also if you have any connections to youth groups in Mississippi that we should reach out to please send those suggestions to cttt@emu.edu.

A Letter from the Director

December 2010



Photo of Robert Roche

Dear Reader,
Roche

I am pleased to welcome you to the second edition of the CTTT newsletter!

It may be strange not to see Amy Potter Czajkowski writing you this newsletter. Amy gave birth to a healthy boy, Alexander Judson Czajkowski, on October 23, 2010 and she is now on maternity leave. On behalf of CTTT, I would like to extend a warm congratulations to Bart and Amy.

Before I jump into what has happened lately programmatically, I want to take a moment to say I am excited to be a part of the program. Stepping into Amy's roomy shoes, I am struck by the dedication, passion, and willingness of the community to embody the holistic CTTT approach - history, healing, connecting, and action - to address the legacy of slavery and its aftermaths. I look forward to leading the CTTT community in its efforts to interrupt the intergenerational transmission of trauma from slavery. Together, we can make a difference on many levels.

Since our last newsletter many activities have transpired and I would like to highlight a few.

The redesigned social networking site is up and running. Hooray!!! The site is intended to support individuals who are interested in exploring resources, sharing stories, writing blogs and connecting with others in the racial and social justice community. If you haven't done so yet, you can join the network [here](#).

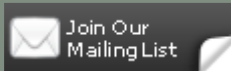
In October, CTTT offered its Healing Historical Harms training in Memphis, TN. The training was led by David Anderson Hooker, CTTT Research and Training Director. Participating in the training was practitioners from around the country who are involved in different aspects of the racial and social justice field. The participants have taken the information presented in the training and have begun testing the usefulness of the CTTT approach in their own contexts. CTTT is anticipating offering another training in the New Year.

Four out of six CTTT mini-projects, which also explore the CTTT approach in the contexts of CTTT members, are complete. You can read the project leaders' updates below.

In November, David Works and Shay-Banks Young, members of the CTTT community, were honored at the Annual Common Grounds Awards for their strides in bridging the racial divide in the Jefferson-Hemmings family. Well done David and Shay-Banks for continuing to

The Community Network has seen some exciting growth in the last few months. Please continue to keep that space active by sharing there and also inviting others.

[Visit Site](#)



bridge the gap!

As another year comes to a close, continue to monitor our website [here](#) - for significant updates. Expect to receive this newsletter on a quarterly basis with information about ongoing and upcoming initiatives. Lastly, I want to thank the dedicated CTTT staff and volunteers who have been working actively towards the development of the program.

Until next time enjoy the holidays and have a happy New Year. . . .

Robert L. Roche
Interim CTTT Director

Community Project Spotlights

MESSAGE

MESSAGE is the acronym for Multi-ethnic Eastern Shore Spirituals and Group Ensemble. This is a volunteer Eastern Shore of Virginia community Spirituals youth choir, whose two co-directors teach the songs and music of the old Negro Spirituals. To date 42 folk have participated in rehearsals and 3 recitals. 15 have been youth and 27 have been adults.



Pictured: Art Carter
Credit: TJL

What I may be learning:

As the choir participants get to know each other better, they appear to be more comfortable sharing their stories with each other, enjoying each other's company more and working with each other more during the daily travails and joys of life.

Word of mouth and having previously had a working relationship with the choir co-directors appears to have been the most effective for recruiting, rather than posters and flyers.

Newspaper promotions appear to have been the second most effective for recruiting.

How the approach was used:

At some the rehearsals and performances the historical origins of the Spirituals were brought up, i.e. that these were the songs of enslaved Africans and African Americans during the 17th, 18th and early 19th centuries.

Again using our local hamlets and nearby still standing enslaved labor houses and farms, at some of the rehearsals and performances, I took the lead by talking about my family's connection to those properties and to the institution of enslavement itself.

At some the rehearsals and performances I talked of my enslaver and enslaved ancestors and their progeny experiencing mirror image trans-generational trauma from the American institution of enslavement. And part of my transformational healing has been to acknowledge and embrace all of my ancestors and cousins as family.

At some the rehearsals and performances I speak to our actions and

ask, how do we interact with folk who may look differently, may have a different religions or may be of another socio-economic class or group than us.

How others might find a project of this sort useful:

Song itself can be healing and universally connecting. Service to one's community by singing at free public offerings, revivals, nursing homes and to terminally ill folk, among others, may be extremely useful for the healing of one's self and one's community.



Pictured Phoebe Kilby
Credit: Eastern Mennonite University

"Our Shared History" Dialogue

In 1831, the Virginia General Assembly outlawed the education of slaves. One-hundred-and-twenty-seven years later in 1958, the Governor of Virginia closed Warren County High School, the only county high school, to prevent African Americans from attending with white children. Fifty-two years later in 2010, members of the community, black and white, were finally ready to sit down together and talk about this.

Phoebe Kilby, a member of CTTT, organized a community dialogue project in Front Royal, Virginia, to encourage sharing of personal histories from the school de-segregation period and its aftermath. The goal of the "Our Shared History" dialogue was to increase racial understanding and provide opportunities for joint actions to bring this shared history to light and foster community healing. She worked with a local group led by James Kilby, and other members of CTTT, Betty Kilby Baldwin and Racquelia Kilby, her linked descendents, and facilitator Belinda Reed to host six sessions on Saturday mornings from July to October.

The gathered group used circle process to tell our stories, a process that encourages deep listening as each person speaks one at a time around the circle. Opening and closing rituals incorporating poems, songs, and prayers created moments of connection and healing. And at the end, we created a priority plan for action:

- Erection at the school of a roadside marker telling the desegregation history for all passing children to see
- Creation of a student-friendly web-based resource center on the history of the era
- Organization of a speakers bureau for classroom and public presentations
- Hosting of a public event of reconciliation and apology

Lessons learned: a local sponsoring group is key to success; the most difficult task in engaging people in a deeply wounded community is getting them to agree to participate; involvement of a representative

sample of the community is essential; a circle process with meaningful rituals is a powerful tool for healing and creating solidarity for action.



Photo of Susan Hutchison

Bridging the Gap - Linked Families Project

This past August CTTT supported me to attend a family reunion in Mississippi of descendants of a man who had been fathered and enslaved by my great-great-grandfather. I was invited to attend and be part of a presentation about our family history after I replied to a posting on the internet and made contact with a new African American cousin and "linked descendant."

At the reunion I hoped to build relationships, learn about their family history, share with them as much as they wanted to know from my genealogical research, and hopefully be part of some healing.

The reunion organizer made "Bridging the Gap" the theme for the reunion. The reunion t-shirt reflected the theme in a powerful visual of two hands - one black, one white - reaching out from opposites of an incomplete bridge, a burst of light erupting where their fingers touched in the middle.

At the family history presentation Saturday night I talked about the painful truth of our shared history. Even though it was a sobering moment, all of the feedback I got was positive. One man came up to me afterwards and said "Keep doin' what you're doin'!" One woman has since been asking relatives about their family history.

As part of my initial plan, I've just completed a website to share photos, my reunion story and some family history with black and white family members. I hope to raise awareness among my (white) relatives about our family connections to slavery and our connections to these cousins, and ultimately hope to pave the way for future contact between more white and black family members.

Next I plan to publish an article or blog about my experience on the internet. I hope that my story might encourage others to learn more about their family history, reach out to build connections across racial divides, engage in healing, and take action to repair past harm and current injustice.

Community Practice Board Update

By: Susan Hutchison (Community Coordinator)

News from the Community Coordinator

Our Community Network has been growing steadily. We now have 83 members from around the country. The member profiles and thoughtful blog posts are inspiring to read. On the Network you can also find occasional book reviews, links to relevant news articles, and discussions.



Pictured: Susan Hutchison

Credit: Laurie Rhodes

Since our last newsletter, there have been four conference calls for Community members on topics of repair, motivations, wealth and class, and "going against the grain." These conference calls usually have 5 to 8 callers, and are open to and facilitated by Community members.

Two new conference calls have been scheduled for January to discuss local and regional gatherings of CTTT Community members and like-minded others. (Look for more information elsewhere in this newsletter.) If you are not a member of the Community Network and would be interested in being part of a gathering near you, and/or helping to organize one, please contact me at ctttcommunity@emu.edu.

The Community Practice Board, whose role it is to support the growth and activity of the CTTT Community, enthusiastically welcomed two new members recently, Ken Collier and Raquelia (Rocky) Kilby. Many of the CPB members have been working hard on the mini-projects supported by CTTT.

On November 11th, two CTTT community members were among those honored at the 2010 [Common Ground Awards](#). The Common Ground Awards are presented annually to honor outstanding accomplishments in conflict resolution, negotiation, community and peace building. Shay Banks-Young, Community Practice Board member, and David Works, long-time CTTT Community member, joined with their cousin Julia Jefferson Westerinen in accepting the award on behalf of a community of descendants of Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings, for their work to bridge the divide within their family and heal the legacy of slavery.

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