



Seminary of the Street

Meet Us on the Corner of Love and Justice

October 29, 2009

Dear Nichola,

Have you ever felt as if real connection—with other people, with yourself, maybe even with the natural world—is too often just beyond your grasp, or as if there are pre-existing scripts that govern how we are supposed to interact with each other and with the world? Let's say you're in line with at the neighborhood coffee house, and the barista hands you your coffee, saying "Enjoy your latte." "You, too!" you chirp in response, and then realize that what you've said makes no sense. It's only when you flub the script that you realize you were following one.

I've been thinking about those scripts for a long time, and lately I've been coming to understand just how powerful they are in holding injustice in place. Our habituated ways of behaving, many developed in childhood and most reinforced by shame and the fear of humiliation, limit our ability to be present in this moment (including being present to each other) and to respond to what is really happening. They also often keep us from behaving in ways that might challenge the status quo. Among other things, they prevent us from entering into the conflicts that are usually necessary for real, honest relationship.

Over the next few months, [Seminary of the Street](#) will be offering a number of classes and workshops in which participants will have an opportunity to investigate some of those habituated ways of being and the effects they have on us, on each other, and on the social structures we create. One of those--addressing the ways that shame limits the ability of white people to address racism--is described below.

But first...

What Comes After Multiculturalism?

In a recent blog post, Seminary of the Street board member Rev. Lynice Pinkard writes about the limits of "multiculturalism" as a mechanism for transforming racism and as a vision for what comes after it. Instead, she points toward what she calls "interculturalism." In interculturalism, individuals would enter into real relationship across lines of difference, examining the structures that hold power and privilege in place (in ways, I would add, that harm white people as well as people of color) and then working in solidarity with each other to transform those structures. You can read Lynice's full post here: <http://www.tikkun.org/tikkundaily/2009/10/29/beyond-multiculturalism-the-new-life-before-us/>.

Last Chance at Humanity's Choice

Okay, that sounds a wee bit more dramatic than it actually is. What we really mean to say is that this Sunday, from 2:30-5pm, is the last session of Jonathan Sheff's fascinating class, "Humanity's Choice: The Torah's Vision of Global Transformation." Jonathan contends that, while we confront many technical challenges, the true remedy to the complex network of crises facing humanity is, at its root, profoundly

spiritual in nature. Healing this planet and building a world of peace, justice and freedom will require the transformation of us all—as a species, as nations, and as individuals. This class is about how we approach that spiritual challenge. These sessions have been getting very positive reviews. Don't miss your chance to be a part of this essential conversation.

Sunday, November 1, 2:30-5pm

Chochmat HaLev, 2215 Prince St.

Sliding scale fee: \$15-40, with 10% discount for members of Chochmat HaLev

Email our [registration desk](#) to sign up.

The Transforming Power of Forgiveness

What would it be like really to believe that you are forgiven? What might that make possible for you? And what would it mean to practice forgiveness in your life and in our social change work? Come explore these questions in community!

In a one-day workshop with guest teacher Rev. Scott Hutchinson, we will explore the meaning and substance of forgiveness in Christian scriptures, making concrete applications to our relationships, communities, and the deep needs of the world God so loves.

We will risk immersing ourselves in dynamic gospel stories that have the power to shake the very foundations of the world we live in, unleashing a creative power for life-giving change that is greatest when situations seem most hopeless and that transforms not only our experience of the divine but our experiences of ourselves and of one another. Jesus of Nazareth embodies God's forgiveness, sharing with us its liberating power and opening to us fresh ways of living and loving. The "new world" is revealed in the midst of the everyday. This dramatic shift is both deeply personal and inseparable from movements of social transformation and Jesus' proclamation of good news to the poor and oppressed.

Saturday, November 7 9am-5pm

First Congregational Church of Oakland, 2501 Harrison St.

\$60-120 sliding scale for others

Email ntorbett@seminaryofthestreet.org to sign up.

Shame and White Allyship to People of Color

Guilt and shame are common issues for white people seeking to acknowledge and address racism. White people's shame about racism often shows up as behaviors that reinforce racist dynamics, including denial, defensiveness, passivity and self-absorption, the calling out of which often serves to deepen shame and limit white people's receptivity. How can we respond with compassion to this shame without condoning the resulting racist dynamics?

On December 5, Vanissar Tarakali will offer a workshop that brings theory and embodied practice together to explore white people's automatic, shame-coping behaviors, and offers insights into why certain racist behaviors are so entrenched, even in well-intentioned white people.

This workshop, which draws on over a decade of research into the psychology of how white people unlearn racism, will benefit white allies seeking to strengthen mutual support and compassion for everyone working to transform racism. People of color seeking to interact with white anti-racist allies without caretaking may also benefit from attending. This workshop will help everyone recognize when white racial shame is operating and offer options and antidotes to support white allyship and accountability.

Saturday, December 5, 2009

10am-5pm

First Congregational Church of Oakland, 2501 Harrison St. in Oakland

Sliding scale: \$80-180

Email our [registration desk](#) to sign up

Dancing in the Gap of Uncertainty 12: Moving from the Heart

In our helplessness, grief, and confusion about the pain in the world, many of us struggle with anger, despair, and/or indifference. Each of these responses can be used to point the way toward the hope, joy and efficacy we yearn for. This workshop invites you into an approach to social transformation based on working towards a vision instead of against what we don't like, and relying on love rather than anger as the motivation for our work. Along the way, we can discover how to work with despair to deepen our connection to life.

For a full description of this class, visit <http://seminaryofthestreet.org/id4.html>.

Saturday, November 21, 9:30am-5pm

First Congregational Church of Oakland, 2501 Harrison St. in Oakland

Visit www.baynvc.org for information and to register. Those who live outside the Bay area will be able to take this workshop by telephone via NVC Academy:

<http://nvctraining.com/courses/telecourses/index.html>.

Collective Grieving and the Day of the Dead

Every spring, Seminary of the Street cosponsors a "[Funeral for the Empire](#)." We do this because we seek to overcome the denial and psychic numbing that most of us have developed in order to endure the pain of living in a world like this one. Opportunities for collective grieving allow us to connect with each other and renew our commitment to birthing a more life-giving world and more aliveness for ourselves.

In the fall, storytellers and ritualists Barry and Maya Spector host a Day of the Dead ritual that serves a similar purpose. Here is the information about that ritual. (Note that pre-registration is required.)

Barry and Maya Spector

with Bruce Silverman, Marcia Rayene, Larry Robinson and Maurice Wren

invite you to

Our annual Day of the Dead Ritual

Saturday, October 31st, 9:00-6:00

Hillside Church, El Cerrito (just north of Berkeley)

Whether or not we have recently lost loved ones, we all carry a heavy load of grief and stress simply by living in these times. When we can't find ways to drop the weight of this emotional burden, we can become hopeless, bitter or numb. Letting it go makes room for a new kind of imagination to enter. The release of these emotions requires a safe space and a caring community.

We will take a full day to help each other remember our ancestors and our personal and collective losses. It will be a day of mourning and

remembrance, but also of great beauty and celebration. There will be poetry, storytelling, drumming, altar-building and chanting from African, Celtic, Mexican and other traditions. We have facilitated this ritual for over ten years.

COST: \$30 if received in advance, \$50 at the door. Pre-registration required.

WORK SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE

Send your check to Barry at 3751 Bay Road, Menlo Park, 94025
650-329-1415

shmoover@comcast.net
www.barryandmayaspector.com

We Need Your Support

We have a policy at Seminary of the Street that we won't turn people away for lack of funds. We offer a range of work exchange and discount opportunities to attend our classes and events. We also make a point of promoting the good work of other organizations, even though some would say it's not in our "best interests" to send potential donors to other good causes. We believe that life is not a zero sum game, and that "We all do better when we all do better," as the late Senator Paul Wellstone used to say.

We are currently facing a number of large expenses and really need your support to make this work possible. Please consider sending a tax-deductible donation to Seminary of the Street, 329 41st St., Oakland, CA 94609. (One of those expenses involves getting a secure mechanism in place for people to make credit card donations through our website! For now, though, we are limited to old-fashioned checks.)

Volunteer Opportunities

We can always use help with set-up and clean-up before and after our events, and we also have periodic needs for office help.

Do you go to a lot of coffee houses, libraries, and other community spaces with bulletin boards? Would you be willing to help us post flyers about upcoming events? Reply to this email for details.

Wish list

Do you have something on the list below that you could donate to us? We'd be happy to provide you with a tax receipt for the value of the item.

Easel for flip-chart paper
Canopy for tabling at outdoor events

I hope you find these resources helpful. Your comments and suggestions are always appreciated, so send them our way.

Love and blessings

Nichola Torbett
Founding Director, Seminary of the Street

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To unsubscribe, email info@seminaryofthestreet.org with "unsubscribe" in the subject line.
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