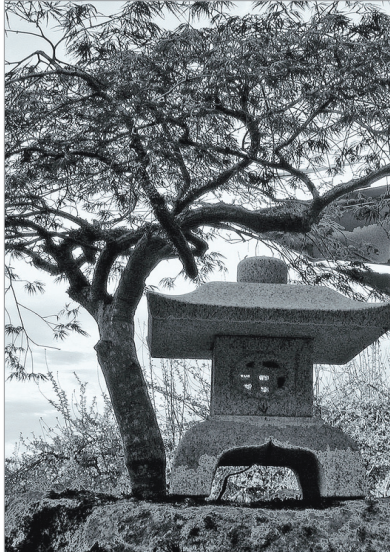


Awesome Uniqueness

by Lisa Wiebe, Portland OR

Awe. Life fills me as I gaze at a magnificent tree outside the window. In the midst of winter, I am rewarded with a view of the tree without its mass of foliage. Beads of water hang from the delicate lace of branches, creating a thousand points of reflective light that look like crystals. The strength of the trunk gracefully curves upward and outward towards the sky, and I am reminded of the movements of a dancer. I think of the life force within the trunk as I envision the roots plunging deep into the earth, absorbing nutrients that feed new growth that will bud forth in spring. I am reminded of my journey of deep reflection below the surface. The tree and I share a hidden reality.



All of my thoughts, feelings, images and ways of relating to others are held within me. Anyone looking at me would not know what was going through my mind or what images played in my visual catalogue. The depth of connection I feel with the tree is not visible but it touches deep into my being and makes me feel grounded. Within the walls of my body and mind, I experience the world in my own unique way. My past experiences create meaning for me as they shape my mind, body and spirit. I believe my inner life is the precious core of who I am, so I select what I am willing to share with others. I protect the very essence of myself and my experience of the world from those who would harm my truth, because I believe it is real. I realize I can't completely share my view of life because it is beyond words, deeply contained in my depth.

When I move into a room where there are others present, I see a roomful of individuals who have their own reality. They may know themselves deeply

or they may not. They may know their mind but not their being. They may believe in something greater than themselves or they may not. They may live consciously or they may not. They may take responsibility for their emotions or they may project them onto others. They may be open to differences between themselves and others or they may not. They may be open to learning from others, or determined that others will learn from them. Family, culture, education, class, and more, round out the list of fundamental differences.

The greatest challenge for us as individuals is to create space within ourselves to hear another's view and to ensure that shared meaning is developed. Meaning-making is demanding work. It requires us to explore the substance behind our words, uncover assumptions about values and principles, decipher learning styles, value differences, and realize that there are many roads to truth. In this rewarding but taxing effort, trust, safety and humility are foundational elements for understanding and explaining human behavior. These elements are essential for bridging the great divide of our awesome uniqueness. ■

Questions for Reflection

- When and with whom do I share my inner world?*
- What helps me to share the aspects of myself that I most treasure?*
- What are the benefits for me? For us?*
- Which of my positive qualities come alive when I listen to another's inner world?*
- What helps me be attentive to another's internal experience?*

In This Edition...

We explore the global challenge of creating unity in diversity. **Lisa Wiebe** (page 1) reflects on her rich inner world and the miracle of shared meaning. **Jennifer Thompson** (page 3) lives that miracle with women in Nepal, as does **Mary Kolb** (page 2) in an international gathering of PRH Educators. A vision of diversity as Humanity's gift and hope is promoted by the International André Rochais Foundation (page 3). And **Paula Evitts** (page 4) ponders how to harness our inherent sociability to address world problems.

Deeper than Diversity

by Mary Kolb, PRH Educator, Bellevue WA

Fumbling with French phrasebooks, pantomiming to patient Italians, and pleading “Does anyone here speak English?” are familiar to me from my occasional trips abroad. However I was unprepared for the profound challenges I encountered in an international gathering of more than sixty PRH Educators last year in Thailand. I was shocked by how language and custom divide us from one another.

Language barriers were particularly frustrating. During the formal meeting times, four of our colleagues sat in glass booths in the back of the room, serving as translators. Everybody wore headsets, that allowed us to select the language that would be quietly spoken into our ears: French, English, Spanish, or Flemish (due to the large contingent of Belgians). The translations were effective enough that I forgot at times that my comprehension of the proceedings pivoted on a tiny earpiece and a hard-working colleague in the glass booth. As soon as the headsets came off, though, Babel ensued. I found myself smiling awkwardly at the French woman beside me, unable to remember a single word of the French I had been studying for the past two years. In the lunch line, I tried to recall simple Spanish sentence constructions from college – Not “I like bananas,” but “Bananas please me.”

By necessity, the lunch tables were segregated by language. Only those with some proficiency in another language could share a meal with a broader circle of colleagues, unless one could persuade a multi-linguist to serve as translator. At one memorable lunch, I was finally shaking the rust off my Spanish as I conversed with Feli from Madrid (who also speaks French). I was delighted to find past tenses of Spanish verbs naturally rolling off my tongue, when I stopped short, unable to recall the word for “team”. After struggling for some moments, I turned to Maarten from Belgium (who speaks English, French and Flemish) and asked him in English to tell Feli the word for “team” in French. Feli could then translate “equipe”, and we proceeded with our conversation. How convoluted!

Needless to say, the potential for miscommunication, which is already high when we speak the same language, is amplified when we

venture into a second language. In my small sharing group, I was the only native English speaker; the others were from India, Switzerland, Belgium and Ukraine. No wonder, then, after I read a long analysis on my sensation of feeling fully “engaged,” my Ukrainian colleague needed to know what this word meant.

Nonverbal communication was just as tricky. Facial expressions like frowns or smiles meant something different in Thailand than in French Canada. Jockeying for a comfortable amount of personal space was like a dance. I was pegged as an American before I even opened my mouth because of my way of greeting people warmly and expansively upon first meeting. Over and over I caught myself in mistaken assumptions about people based on their facial expressions or mannerisms.

Daunting as the differences were, my experience of this gathering was that we connected deeply. It seemed that I was in training to observe from my heart. I could feel inflections of passion, hope, and needs for help – even when I couldn’t understand the words. More importantly, PRH writing and sharing methods dependably revealed the humanity beneath the differences. Our shared practice of PRH written self-analysis allowed us to know each other in our deepest senses of purpose and meaning, in all that enlivens and discourages us, and in the motivations that sustain us. The result for me was a confirmation that my international colleagues and I are more to each other than just people who do the same kind of work: we share a vision of – and a road toward -- what is possible for humanity when people experience and act from their beings. We are in it together. ■



PRH Creative Expression in Nepal

by Jennifer Thompson, PRH Educator, Helena MT

This past January, I had a personal experience of how PRH Education can be a bridge across cultures. I had completed a three-week Annapurna Circuit trek in the Himalayas with an all-woman company, **3 Sisters Adventure Trekking**. This company partners with **Empowering Women of Nepal (EWN)** to employ women in Nepal. The English language teacher for EWN invited me to teach creative expression to her students, sixteen young women in their twenties, who were in training to become porters and mountaineering guides.

Introducing the concept of Being across language and culture differences was challenging! I used analogies with nature because the Nepalese people that I met and hiked with on the Annapurna Circuit Trek were connected to their beings and to their environment. When I proposed *expressing* this “inner light” in line, color and form, it seemed foreign to them. I worked to get the idea of “expression” across to them through likening the human person to a tree and drawing an example of an “inner and outer landscape.” During the six hour workshop, they offered beautiful expressions of qualities of their beings, expressed in color and stories. I recognized many of the same positive qualities of being that I have witnessed in my groups in Montana: “I am strong, helpful, creative, loving, and generous.” In addition, there were a couple qualities of being that were new for me to witness, “*I am a Black Beauty*” and “*I believe in the power of women.*” One drawing that I will never forget is the illustration of Buddha on a lily pad entitled, “*I am a peaceful person and I am praying for peace for the people of Nepal.*”

To witness these Nepalese women expressing and articulating their beings was deeply satisfying, exciting and humbling. The articulation and sharing of inner beauty across cultures on the other side of the world imprinted in me the possibility of PRH Education as a world tool, to be shared on this precious journey of life together on Earth.

At the end of the workshop, one of the young women named Junu looked squarely at me and said, “*Jen, we cannot pay you. We can only see your love for us. We receive it and say, ‘Thank you. We love you, too.’*” I knew then I had imparted the heart of PRH Education in this exchange of love across cultures. ▣



Nepalese Women at Jennifer's Creative Expression Workshop

A More Human World

by Mary Kolb, PRH Educator, Bellevue WA

Are happiness, self-knowledge, and healthy relationships luxuries? Those who travel to “developing” countries in the Americas, Asia or Africa are often startled by the happiness of peoples who have few possessions and little economic security. In every society, there are those who already experience the assurance of their own deep goodness, their beings. And in every society there are those who need encouragement and education to discover and act from their beings. If only this education were available to everyone who wanted it, even in the poorest countries! If only people around the world could fully experience and express their goodness!

We are asleep on a gold mine,
on a wellspring of energy,
on a volcano of creativity,
on unbelievable reserves of genuine love.

Everything is there...
in the interior recesses of men and women
throughout the planet.

Everything is there
to form a more human world...

~ André Rochais

Making this a reality is the purpose of the nonprofit **International Association André Rochais (IAAR)**, which promotes PRH Education in economically disadvantaged countries. Specifically, IAAR funds translations of PRH workshops and texts into the local languages in Brazil, Haiti, India, Indonesia, Lesotho, Tanzania, Thailand, Papua New Guinea, Ukraine, and Zimbabwe. It offers scholarships to impoverished workshop participants and subsidizes educators in emerging economies. IAAR provided the means for PRH Educators to participate in the international PRH conference held in Madrid in May 2008. For educators in many countries, the costs of participating in this important training and research exchange opportunity were greater than a year's salary!

You may already have experienced some of the benefits of PRH Education: more harmonious relationships, improved decision-making, a clearer sense of purpose, and greater life satisfaction. What you may not know is that PRH Education has helped individuals and groups in thirty countries discover their inner resources and gifts, allowing them to make their full contributions to their relationships, their communities, and our world. PRH Education's simple, practical methods of personal development are effective in cultures as different from ours as the Papua New Guinea bush.

IAAR is made up of volunteers and financial donors from Argentina, Belgium, France, Ireland, Italy, Uruguay, and the USA. If you feel connected to people around the world who aspire to be their best selves, consider joining IAAR with an annual donation of 10€ or a one-time gift. ▣

In the U.S., contact Mary Kolb (marykolb1@hotmail.com) for more information.

A World of Creative, Compassionate People

Book Reviews

by Paula Evitts, PRH Educator, Great Falls MT

These three best sellers from diverse fields are strange “bedfellows!” I read them in rapid succession and felt that they supported my work as PRH Educator to guide persons to discover their positive, dynamic core – their being.

Social Intelligence:

The New Science of Human Relationships

by Daniel Goleman

New York: Bantam Books, 2006

Daniel Goleman presents the science behind our most basic needs and human relationships. It turns out that humans are designed for sociability. Our brains are wired for a “neural ballet” among primal empathy, listening, social cognition and self-awareness.

This author feels a sense of urgency, a collective awakening, reminiscent of Einstein’s assertion that the crucial challenge for this century will be to expand the circle we count as “us” and shrink the numbers we count as “them”. Our brain’s social wiring connects us all at our common human core!

Unbowed: A Memoir

by Wangari Maathai

New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006

Wangari Maathai’s memoir highlights these connections. Maathai was a Nobel Peace Prize winner in 2004 for her creation of the Green Belt movement in Kenya and internationally.

This work of engaging rural Kenyan women to plant trees has not only produced over 30 million trees and a greening of her country, but also contributed to the women’s movement and democratization in Kenya.

She pictures a three-legged stool to represent how any society

thrives. The first leg is democratic space for the encouragement of individual rights, responsibilities and care for the environment. The second leg is the sustainable and equitable management of resources. The third leg is respect for cultures through relationships of openness.

Her driving force towards peace emphasizes democratic governance, human rights, respect for the rule of law, and conscientious promotion of justice and equity.

The Iraq Study Group Report

by James A. Baker III & Lee H. Hamilton

New York: Vintage Books, 2006

This final text is another example of creative, compassionate people (a bipartisan group of nine senior public servants) who made an independent assessment of the war in Iraq. They examined the situation three years into the war, and offered some policy suggestions and advice focusing on both diplomacy and assisting the Iraqis to help themselves. The study group drew from many sources of information, including current and former, high-level U.S. and Iraqi government officials, military officers, academics, business executives, and service organizations. They offered suggestions in the areas of economy, reconstruction, military, security, and political arenas as steps forward.

Now, more than five years into the war, I believe that Maathai’s stool with three legs could be a sturdy framework to support the growth and development of a new, “relational” Iraq. As Goleman suggests, we are connected not just because of our common biology, but because we are hardwired to relate to one another! There is an urgency to live as one diverse, yet unified, creative people. ▣



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