

The Contemplative Net: Profiles

**Case studies based on interviews from the
Contemplative Net Project**

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The Center for Contemplative Mind in Society

PROFILES:

Case studies based on interviews from the Contemplative Net Project

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Whole People, Whole Communities

Greyston Foundation / Charles Lief

- The Greyston Foundation is probably the best developed model of a “Contemplative Organization” of those profiled in our study. For more than 20 years, it has successfully blended contemplative practices into the work setting and applied a contemplative approach to social change issues.
- Greyston was founded by a Buddhist priest and its inspiration came from Buddhist teachings about social engagement and personal transformation. It has since evolved into a secular organization that provides economic and social services to low-income residents of Westchester County, New York.

Charles’ Story

A passion for justice

Charles Lief’s life-long interest in community work and politics began in his hometown of Cleveland, Ohio. As a teenager, he coordinated youth volunteers during Carl Stokes’ mayoral campaign in 1967 [Stokes was the first African American to be elected mayor of a major U.S. city]. After receiving a B.A from Brandeis University and a J.D. from the University of Colorado School of Law, Charles practiced law in Boulder, Colorado.

In 1984, Charles moved to Nova Scotia, Canada, where he developed affordable housing, historic restorations and revitalization of old urban commercial areas in decline. Charles also has a great interest in food and cooking, and developed an award-winning hotel and restaurant in Halifax, Nova Scotia. He is the author of two cookbooks on Nova Scotia regional cuisine.

A different way of working

Charles began work at Greyston in 1992 as the director of the HIV/AIDS Housing and Health Care initiatives and become the first President of the Greyston Foundation when it was formed in 1994. He brings over 30 years of Buddhist practice to his perspective on the workplace. He said,

One of the things that people in the workplace frequently miss is the opportunity to very directly and very simply experience the world that they are working in. My view is that using contemplative practices to cut through the habitual patterns that we develop as professionals or employees in an organization like this provides an opportunity for some kind of fresh view. My experience in my own meditation practice is that any opportunity to have a gap is not a bad thing.

For Charles, one of the most worthwhile parts of his work at Greyston is having the “ability to watch peoples’ lives fundamentally change.” He said, “When I practiced law for ten years before I was doing this, I really felt that my spiritual practice was absolutely separate from what I was doing as a professional. The idea now that there is space for that exploration to happen is pretty exciting.”

In addition to his work as President of the Greyston Foundation, Charles is also a board member of the Naropa University and Chair of the Board of Shambhala International, an association of Buddhist meditation centers.

Personal contemplative practices

Charles became a student of the renowned Tibetan Buddhist meditation teacher Chogyam Trungpa, Rinpoche in 1970. His personal practice includes shamatha and vipassana meditation and various Tibetan Buddhist vajrayana practices. He is ordained as a lay teacher within the Shambhala Buddhist tradition as brought to the west by Trungpa Rinpoche and has taught in North America and Europe.

Organization Profile

Greyston Foundation

Founded: 1993 (Greyston Bakery was founded in 1982)

Sector: Community Development (social justice focus)

Location of work: Westchester County, New York

Staff size: 180 employees, 6-12 VISTA volunteers, 5-10 university interns and volunteers

Annual budget: \$13 million

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Key accomplishments

- In the last ten years, the Greyston Foundation has successfully developed \$30,000,000 of real estate projects in Westchester County and has another \$15,000,000 of projects underway. Greyston has successfully developed 176 units of permanent housing for families and single adults.
- Greyston has also developed non-residential projects, including an HIV health care program and a childcare center. The AIDS health center has the most comprehensive integrative medicine program in the country for low-income

persons living with AIDS, including acupuncture, massage therapy, reiki techniques, and herbal therapies.

- Greyston is probably the only community development organization with a full-time Vice President of Pathmaking Services whose job is to support the professional, personal, and spiritual journey of all the employees and those served by the organization.
- Greyston has won best practice awards for property management and supportive services.

In 1982, Zen Buddhist teacher Bernie Glassman founded the Greyston Bakery as a means to employ a small number of his students and to explore ways to apply Buddhist principles to social change. As the Bakery grew, Glassman and his wife, Greyston co-founder Sensei Sandra Jishu Holmes, expanded its mission to include providing jobs to residents of the neighboring inner city area.

Over the years, Greyston has developed into an integrated system of nonprofit and for-profit organizations that offer a wide array of programs and services to more than 1,200 men, women and children annually.

Greyston Foundation is the umbrella organization that coordinates and supports all the programs that comprise the Greyston Mandala of services. The Greyston Mandala is composed of

- **Greyston Bakery**, a profitable \$4.5 million dollar food production business that provides training to formerly “hard-to-employ” individuals. The bakery markets gourmet cakes and tarts to top restaurants and stores and works in partnership with Ben & Jerry’s to supply the company with brownies used in their products. A new 23,000-square-foot bakery, designed by renowned architect Maya Lin, is now in construction and will be ready for occupancy in early 2003.
- **Greyston Family Inn** provides permanent housing for formerly homeless and low-income families and offers supportive services, including counseling, childcare, and job placement.
- **Greyston Health Services** provides services to people living with HIV/AIDS. It operates the Maitri Day Program, an innovative social service and integrative health care program, and Issan House, a supportive housing setting.
- **Greyston Garden Project** Six community gardens engaging hundreds of local residents who plant vegetables and flowers.

- **Philipsburgh Hall** Twenty-eight apartments for low-income persons working in the arts, and a completely restored 6,000-square-foot ballroom operated as a community performing arts center in a formerly abandoned building in downtown Yonkers.
- **The Burnham Building** in the affluent village of Irvington, its first affordable housing project also housing the Irvington Public Library.
- **Ashbourne Hall** in the village of Pleasantville, now constructing affordable housing for low income seniors in a building which will also house a seniors' activity center.

The Sanskrit word *mandala* means “circle” and reflects Greyston’s commitment to develop services that address the needs of the whole community and of the whole person within it. Working from a mandala perspective, every part of the organization supports every other part. For example, the guiding principles of the Greyston Bakery state: “The bakery will actively integrate itself into the Greyston Mandala. Bakery management will work with the Greyston Foundation to give factory employees opportunities to take advantage of the Pathmaker, childcare, housing, and other services. In addition, the bakery will attempt to provide professional opportunities for individuals who enter Greyston through other parts of the Mandala.” Revenues from the bakery help to sustain the work of the entire Foundation.

As a socially responsible entrepreneur, Greyston values healthy individuals and communities as much as it does the financial bottom line. Using the Greyston Bakery as a model, Greyston creates jobs and gives transferable skills to formerly unemployed individuals, helping them on their path toward self-sufficiency.

Employees of Greyston’s programs come together for contemplative practice in various ways – small groups meet together regularly for meditation practice before or after the work day in both Buddhist and Christian traditions; meetings usually start with a few minutes of silence; council practice is sometimes used as a tool in meetings where difficult issues are discussed; and the entire organization closes down once a year for a staff retreat, during which a variety of contemplative exercises are shared.

But beyond the practices, an essential part of the Greyston ethos is being present, loving, and accepting to employees and service recipients alike. Charles told the story of woman who was a tenant in the housing program. He described her as “an extremely angry person, a single mother with a lot of issues with her children. Greyston became the embodiment of everything that was wrong, from her point of view, with her life.” The relationship between the woman and the Greyston staff, as well as other tenants, became very strained. As Charles said, “We had a community that was really in turmoil.” But the staff made a decision to stick with the woman and do whatever it took to keep communication open with her, even as they were honest with her about how her behavior was affecting people. It took “a couple of years of very painful work” for both staff and the woman, but through small incremental steps, she is now a leader in the community. Charles said, “It really had

everything to do with the fact that people acknowledged a level of commitment that I thought was extremely impressive. These were people who, from a professional point of view, would have been totally justified in giving up on a person.”

Another key aspect of the organizational culture is a commitment to reflecting on one’s own challenges. Charles said, “A lot of organizations talk about taking a holistic approach to the provision of services. [But] the personal exploration, personal confronting of our own habits and neurosis is often missing. Until that work is done, I don’t think you can truly have a holistic organization.”

Greyston’s view, according to Charles, is that “anybody who arrives at Greyston as an employee is arriving here as a part of a personal journey. We encourage people to capture that moment in time when they have actually made the transition and move from wherever they have been in to Greyston, and at the same time take a look at where their path or their journey within Greyston might lead.”

The role of the Vice President of Pathmaking Services is to encourage people’s exploration of their own journey. This might take the form of encouraging an employee to move on to another job, if that is in their best interest, even if the person is a very effective employee that the organization doesn’t want to lose. It may also take the form of helping an employee to figure out how to integrate their personal spiritual practice into their lives at Greyston. There is no requirement that workers have a contemplative or spiritual practice to begin employment at Greyston, but the organization puts “a lot of time and effort into giving people opportunities to take a look at a more holistic view of bringing their personal issues to the workplace.” There is also no pressure to adopt Buddhist teachings. Charles said Greyston tries “to encourage people [to return to] their own spiritual roots.”

Greyston is now at the point where it is considering how the lessons it has learned can be of benefit to similar organizations around the country. Charles said that Greyston grew up based on the specific needs of the Yonkers area it is based in, and though it has developed some overarching principles, he notes that “you just can’t clone an organization.”

The core questions that Greyston strives to explore, in Charles’ words, are: “How does an organization that professes to be built upon core spiritual values or values of engaged social action actually manifest? How is it any different from an organization that doesn’t make that kind of overt statement?”

Organizational challenge: Balance between spiritual and secular

“Working in the spiritual aspect of our mission to the rest of the life of our organization has always been the challenge.” With the goal of bringing spiritual commitment and contemplative practices made so explicit, Charles sometimes gets feedback that people “feel like if they are not wearing a contemplative discipline on their sleeve they are somehow feeling that they are not fully accepted here.” It hasn’t been “a huge issue,” But Charles wants to make sure that nothing feels coercive.

Organizational Contemplative Practices

- **Stillness Practices:** Employee meditation groups meet on a regular basis in the work setting; Buddhist and Christian contemplative practices are offered.
- **Relational Practices:** Council circle is used as a meeting tool when appropriate, especially when a “thorny issue” needs to be explored.
- Greyston shuts down completely once a year to have a full staff day; part of the day is spent working with a variety of contemplative exercises.
- Staff try to apply organizational values to their work and life within Greyston. Spiritual life is encouraged at Greyston through the attitudes of:
 - *Deep attention* that dissolves preconceptions in order to see situations as they truly are
 - *Exchanging self and others* as a way to bear witness to the suffering and pain of others while offering the benefit of one's own health and strength
 - *Compassionate action* as skillful ways to relieve suffering and promote growth

Secure Your own Oxygen Mask First!

Sustaining the Soul that Serves / Marian David

- Sustaining the Soul that Serves illustrates an emerging trend in an organization's primary mission/function—to help social activists to renew and sustain themselves in their work.
- Contemplative practice is used a part of a comprehensive curriculum to teach social activists how to take care of themselves: “Secure your own oxygen mask first!”

Marian's Story

Looking for a better way

Marian David, the founder and director of Sustaining the Soul that Serves, worked in public schools for over 12 years as a teacher and guidance/career counselor. During her time as the director of the Children's Defense Fund Freedom Schools, Marian kept hearing stories from young social activists who were doing wonderful work but were severely burned out. She had a vision of supporting them to find better ways to sustain themselves so that they could continue to do the work they cared so much about.

In 1996, Marian was selected as a Community Fellow in the Department of Urban Studies at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). There she worked to develop a project to incorporate spiritual renewal practices into youth programs. This became the foundation for her current work. She designed Sustaining the Soul that Serves with these young people in mind, but more seasoned leaders approached her and said, “We need it too.” In time, the workshops have become intergenerational.

Finding the light within

Marian has a gift for seeing contemplative practices from a broad perspective and translating them into a language that people from diverse backgrounds can relate to. She says, “When I think about contemplative practices, I think about it as whatever is the thing to get me in touch with me, with the light in me... When I'm trying to explain it to young people, [I tell them it's] whatever gets you to really look at the light, the who of who you are, the essence of yourself.”

In that same spirit, the curriculum for Sustaining the Soul that Serves was developed organically. Marian conducted interviews and focus groups to find out the kinds of practices that people were already doing to sustain themselves, and she wove these into the program. The first step in the training is to honor these practices. Participants are then

offered other practices to explore, but are always encouraged to find or design practices that will “speak” to them.

Marian values her work. “I might find myself as a facilitator, but I’m a learner all at same time. It’s never that I’m always giving, always receiving. I am always on both sides of it. The more I give, the more I receive.”

In her own life, Marian draws on a number of traditions of contemplative practice. “I feel like the program we’ve designed, the book that we’ve published, is written with my blood. It’s been a very personal journey. I thought I was doing it for the young people, but it has been about so much of my life.”

If I could transmit a message to the whole world, I would say, ‘Be sure to secure your own oxygen mask before helping others.’ And that means, find practices so that you can sustain yourself in your work. Because if you’re here in this world, then that means you have a divine purpose. And if you’re going to know what that purpose is, you’re going to have to have some practices so that you can stay tuned.

Personal practices

Marian draws broadly from traditions to which she has been exposed in her life, including African and Native American traditions, and early church experiences (she was raised as a Methodist). Her specific practices include:

- Wakes up at 4 am for meditation, prayer, and quiet time. “It’s a beautiful time of day—everything is a new beginning, all is forgiven, and I feel pure love.”
- Time in nature early in the morning and at sunset. “Nature teaches me. There are different lessons that come from nature and they’re always something that I need. Grass reminds me of patience; flowers look so delicate—a rose might look like it would blow away in the rain, but it looks even more beautiful after the rain.”
- Journaling
- Yoga, walking, exercise
- Listening to inspiring music

Organization Profile

Sustaining the Soul that Serves

Founded: 1997

Sector: Leadership (social justice focus)

Location of work: national

Staff size: 1.5 paid staff, 12 volunteers

Annual budget: \$167,000

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Key accomplishments

- In its short history, Sustaining the Soul has become a nonprofit organization and its program has been piloted with over 600 emerging and seasoned leaders, all of whom work for social justice and peace in their communities.

- Participants come from culturally diverse communities, faith traditions, education levels, economic backgrounds, and sectors of community service. Some of the organizations they are affiliated with have included:
 - Children's Defense Fund
 - Tent City Latino Community, Boston, MA
 - The National Indian Youth Leadership Project, Gallup, NM
 - Educators for Social Responsibility and Resolving Conflict Creatively, Alaska
 - Black Male Youth Conference, Clover, SC

- An extensive evaluation of the program conducted by the Kellogg Foundation revealed that 90% of the participants felt that they had improved the way they managed stress in their lives. Most discovered or rediscovered a connection between their service work and spirituality and commented that their spirituality gave them the clarity and passion to engage in service work.

Sustaining the Soul is a nonprofit organization which provides educational programs for service leaders. The mission of the organization is "to provide educational programs for emerging and seasoned service leaders that will support them in renewing and strengthening their inner spiritual foundations and help sustain them in their work for social justice and peace."

Launched in 1997 and established as a nonprofit in July 2000, Sustaining the Soul invites leaders to explore meditation, journaling, nature, prayer, music, and other creative expressions as tools to nurture and sustain themselves in their work. While initially focused on meeting the needs of emerging leaders (ages 15-30), the program has expanded to include seasoned leaders age 30 and above who work in the community and on behalf of children and youth.

Sustaining the Soul is based on the assumption that by enabling leaders to care for themselves, they may better serve others. The overarching goal of the project is to facilitate the development of a more sustained, productive, and spirituality-centered cadre of youth leaders and community activists.

Sustaining the Soul offers its program to a broad audience through one- to three-day retreats, workshops, conferences, and training of facilitators. In addition to youth leaders, the program is suited for educators, parents, women groups, social activists, and an array of people who touch the lives of others.

Sustaining the Soul trainings are structured around a framework of “four journeys”:

- Journey to the Inner Self
- Journey to the Physical Self
- Journey to the Creative Self
- Journey from Self to Community

Activities in each of these pathways lead the participants to greater insight, inner strength, creativity, and interconnectedness.

At each training, at least one trainer is representative of the cultural background of the majority of the participants. Participants in these sessions have stated that they have never experienced more respect for their own heritage in a training and that this has allowed them to see the power of coming together at a spiritual level. Trainers are also diverse in respect to age, and comprise an intergenerational cadre of leaders.

As a relatively young program, one of the organizational challenges is to build an infrastructure that will support the program. Marian also notes that working with the financial side of the organization can be challenging - “I am good at program design and my heart is in it. But the other side of that is that you’ve got to handle the money and you’ve got to manage the organization while you’re nurturing the growth and the vision of the program. It really is a lot to do.”

Eventually, Marian would like to see colleges, universities, and national youth organizations using the curriculum and training she has been instrumental in developing. “We could work on the front end of going into the colleges of social work, before young people enter the field.”

Organizational Challenges

- Building an infrastructure to support the program
- Fundraising and finances

Organizational Contemplative Practices

- **Stillness Practice:** Silence at the beginning of meetings and conference calls (staff and volunteers aren't often in the office together at the same time).
- **Generative/Devotional Practice:** Having a reading and quotes at the beginning of a meeting or planning session to help everyone focus. Readings used have included Alice Walker's story "Finding the Greenstone." Marian especially appreciates quotes from Howard Thurman (minister, educator, and civil rights leader) and this one from Mother Teresa: "In order to keep a lamp burning, you have to keep putting oil in it."
- **Relational Practice/ Stillness Practice:** Staff and volunteers come together a day before trainings to have time to center themselves together. They stay for one day after the retreat to reflect on their work together and to nourish and replenish themselves.

Speaking Truth to Power, with the Help of Silence

New York City Jobs With Justice / Simon Greer

- New York City Jobs With Justice is a 10-year-old secular organization focused on economic justice issues
- Simon Greer's life and work as an example of holding the tension between contemplation and action
- Contemplative practice as a way to resolve personal crisis: sustaining social justice work from a place of love and compassion, not anger and hate
- Contemplative practice as a tool to find the wisdom and humility needed to address and hold the tensions that can exist across ethnicity and class groups

Simon's Story

A personal crisis

From standing along front lines and working for "Solidarity" in Poland to helping tourism industry workers on Hilton Head Island demand living wages and dignity on the job, Simon Greer has taken part in the fight for economic justice around the world. But after six years of organizing, four of them in South Carolina, Simon began to face a personal crisis.

Reflecting on his work, Simon remembers that he was quite effective at applying nonviolent tactics to put pressure on companies and that the coalitions he worked with won many labor battles. But, he said, "I was pretty mean by the end of it. [I] had come to a place where I was doing the work out of anger and out of hate, not out of love or even compassion." Now, six years later, he recalls how he saw people his own age dropping out of the work and many of the older people who stayed in "got to be pretty mean-spirited."

After his time in Poland during the Solidarity movement, in South Carolina doing union and community organizing, and a few years working in Washington DC as the Program Director at Jobs with Justice, he was struck by the words of a seasoned organizer who told him: "The tragedy with all this is that even if we win, we'll lose." Simon realized that "the people in power might be different, but the way we treat people wouldn't change. Certainly our policies would make a world of difference for many people, but how we behave might not change significantly enough to affect the change we seek." He felt called to learn how to "transform how we do this work."

Realizing that he was already “hardwired” to aggressively organize with people to build more power, Simon discovered that what he really needed was an “effortless, open, quiet, and humble” way of working. While living in Washington, D.C., he returned to a long-lost yoga practice and explored his relationship with Judaism. He also re-connected with the work and vision of Abraham Joshua Heschel, a conservative Jewish Rabbi and ally of Martin Luther King, Jr. in the Civil Rights Movement. After taking a class on Rabbi Heschel’s visions about both prayer and social justice work, Simon had a strong feeling that “these things have to connect. If they connected in this great man, they’ve got to connect in this work. I don’t want to do my work and.. leave it at the office when I go to yoga or when I go to synagogue. And I don’t want to leave behind the feeling I have when I meditate or when I’m reading sacred text when I go to the office.” Simon now sees this as a turning point in his life: “I don’t think I would have made it [in organizing work] five more years if I hadn’t gone this route.”

New beginnings: Jews United for Justice

Simon continued to work in and around the labor and social justice movements and looked for ways to bring spiritual practices to the workplace. In 1998, he founded Jews United for Justice (JUFJ) where he began to create the organizational and personal space to introduce contemplative practices and philosophy into his social justice work.

JUFJ’s purpose is to bring a visible Jewish presence and take action for economic and social justice in the Washington, D.C. area. As the mission statement says, “Jews United for Justice provides Jews with an opportunity to weave together their Judaism and activism, and creates a community in which they can explore and strengthen their commitments to both.”

Simon describes JUFJ as residing in the tension between the increasing affluence of a large part of the Jewish community with work that feels “more foreign to the daily life of that community.” Simon sees the increasing gap between rich and poor as one of the defining problems of our time. He says, “I think there’s nothing short of a calling for both organizations [JUFJ and JWJ] to really rise to the challenge of leveling the playing field in terms of the power that the very wealthy and the mega-corporations hold as opposed to the power that people hold.”

Living in the space between opposites

Not one to be satisfied with either-or solutions, Simon thrives in living in the space of tension between apparent opposites:

Often I find people who [are] moving away from confrontational politics, moving to more mediation, dialogue, spiritual healing, and mindfulness... I think we could all meditate and, you know, the CEO at Monsanto started to and it didn’t matter. So I have this tension in me: how do we maintain that there is a struggle in the world for power between the very rich and everybody else and also that the way we tend to do that struggle sometimes

hurts the people we're engaged with, but it doesn't transform the world the way we want.

So I think the first calling is to do the work in terms of fighting for justice and the second one is to figure out how we bring a real mindfulness, a deep presence, faith in God, to the work that helps us do it in a different way.

Simon understands the strategic importance of nonviolence in fighting for justice and the role that his own contemplative practice has played in carrying this out. In 2000, he was in charge of security for the World Bank/IMF protests in Washington D.C. At the beginning of the protests, JUFJ put together a *haggadah* and a “global freedom seder.” This proved very inspiring to both Jews and non-Jews looking for some deeper grounding and motivation as they went into what could easily have been a very tense and confrontational situation.

Simon told the story of an emerging confrontation between protesters and police at the march. He put a line of peacekeepers in between the two groups. The tension was mounting and one of the protesters lunged at the police.

Then it dawns on me, from the deepest wisdom, that we're all lined up facing the protesters, which makes it look like we're protecting the cops. So I instruct everyone to go front to back so every other person is facing forward. Half of us are now facing the cops, half are facing the protesters. I start leading this chant: “Whose streets, our streets,” which is saying to the protesters and to the police that we control the street. Three or four minutes of this and the police fall out and the protesters get bored and move on.

If I did not have the practice I have, I wouldn't have had the wisdom to line people up that way... If that had turned into a violent confrontation and something really bad had happened, that would have been the story. The 25,000-person march would have been forgotten.

Simon recently left Washington D.C. after five years to become the new executive director at New York City Jobs With Justice. He says, “I hope that my work in New York will help model how you bring [contemplative practice] in. I think we could double our budget and double our staff and build that much more political power, and we'll still grind people up unless we find some way to create a space where everyone can figure out how they want to have a contemplative practice.”

Personal contemplative practices

- Says a mantra to himself before “every significant leadership opportunity.” The mantra, rooted in his Jewish practice, is: “Shema Yisrael, Adonai Eloheynu, Adonai

echad.” Simon translates it as: “Listen people, the infinite and the individual are one.” He notes that it helps him to be present to every phone call, e-mail, and conversation. “It helps me remember when I’m really being a leader and when I’m just marking time. It also is disruptive, in a good way, of the pattern of work in modern Western culture. Usually I’m a multi-tasker, so I’m doing an e-mail while I’m reading a fax while I’m dialing the phone. It’s hard to get present for three very different things, so it breaks you of some of these habits.”

- Personal yoga practice
- Personal meditation practice

Organization Profile

New York City Jobs With Justice

Founded: 1992

Sector: Social Justice/Economic Justice

Location of work: New York City

Staff size: 8 staff and 3000 pledgers; dozens of volunteers

Annual budget: \$350,000

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Organizational Challenges

Individual members and organizers come initially with narrow organizational self interest.. the challenge is to overcome this self-interest and being able to “connect to a larger whole,” to be part of a larger coalition.

Organizational Contemplative Practices

Relational Practice: Sacred text readings.

Jewish and other spiritual texts are integrated into staff meetings, retreats, and organizational trainings as a starting point for discussions. For example, Simon presented a session on the idea of delegation by noting that it’s not just “a new management term; it’s an age-old concept. The fact that there’s just this one little me and I can only do this little bit. I think Judaism really prepares us for that with this notion that God is everything out there that we can’t understand.” In addition, Simon invites others to bring in readings: “I

don't care if it's Exodus and Martin Luther King Jr.'s Letter from the Birmingham Jail, but some text that grounds us in the deeper meaning of the work."

Stillness Practice: Silence

Organizational meetings start with a few moments of silence.

Generative and Relational Practice: Poetry

The JWJ field director wrote a poem based on the Jobs With Justice pledge that was read aloud at a conference. Simon said, "The 'I'll be there pledge' resonated because it *is* a spiritual tool. People see that it's not just about 'my little fight.' It's about all of us together. When she wrote the poem, it wasn't that she had stolen a Jobs With Justice concept and made it spiritual; she had just given language to people who knew this *was* a spiritual experience."

Relational Practice: Increasing awareness

Simon uses management/supervision settings to introduce practices that help staff increase their awareness of how they work with their power and their time.

Ritual/Cyclical Practice: Shabbat

Simon helped to introduce the practice of Shabbat (the Jewish practice of setting aside one day of rest each week) to the JWJ annual conference, with 700 people in attendance. Simon remembered:

We brought a rabbi to help lead the Friday evening opening piece of the conference. Rather than what I've seen at a lot of places where religious people are given a room off to the side, or Jews are given a room to go pray, this was done centrally. Before the whole crowd, he talked about Shabbat. He had everybody look into each other's eyes and I thought "This is the worst move of my entire career; what a disaster." You could feel the tension in the room and he just kept moving right through it.

During the course of the weekend, I have one memory of a couple of African-American college students standing in a corner. As I walked by, I heard them singing "Shabbat Shalom," and I thought, "I guess it worked." I think that would be the largest scale effort to put the Shabbat stuff right in people's faces at a mostly labor conference, where this should not be done!

Simon feels that the practice of Shabbat was a "powerful addition" to the conference and to the organizers' work. "I think the more we can free people who fight for justice from feeling overworked, the more we create a space for them to find a way to heal themselves, separate from their work."