



[Click to view this email in a browser](#)



Theory in Action - Supporting Emerging Leaders in Rainier Valley through Strategic Partnership

By Shelly Najjar

For the past two years, the Center for Ethical Leadership has been working with [Rainier Valley Corps](#) (RVC) to raise up the next generation of Seattle's nonprofit leaders in the RVC Fellowship Program. The program develops emerging leaders of color, through training and placement in community-based organizations in the Rainier Valley, where they work to build organizational capacity. The Center consults on the program's curriculum design, development and delivery of its four major training areas: Leadership Development, Nonprofit Management, Advocacy, and Cultural and Community Dynamics.

"Leadership development is the key area in which the Center has really influenced and shaped the concepts, practices, and skills-development" of this program, says Waing Waing. "It focuses on cultivating culturally fluent, inclusive leaders, and in particular, we used the Center's [Collective Leadership Framework](#) to establish strong collaborative working relationship and trust among the fellows. The collective leadership process helps to build a resilient support network for the fellows, which is a valuable component of our approach to building capacity for social change." The Center's place-based learning pedagogy and leadership philosophy are also clearly seen in the cultural and community dynamics aspect of the curriculum, focused on understanding the power of place, culture and history of the Rainier Valley. "We've found it's important to bring in leadership practices that create empathetic space and promote healing and peacemaking to help the fellows address social justice issues affecting the diverse communities they serve," says Waing Waing. "Some of our processes for creating gracious space, practicing Peacemaking Principles, and holding that brave space have been used and are cornerstones of the curriculum."

[Niesha Fort](#), one of the fellows in the program's inaugural cohort,

In this edition:

- Executive Director note
- Article - *Supporting emerging leaders in the Rainier Valley*
- Interview with CEL Board member, Cassie Mires
- Upcoming events - including a **new** [Racial Healing series](#), and a **new** [Gracious Space Master training](#)!

From the Executive Director



My heart has been heavy this month with all the traumatic events that happened one after another.

The relentless onslaught of micro and macro assaults on human dignity and life has become unbearable. Regardless of how we identify and whether or not we suffer direct bodily harm, the world is interconnected and these assaults sear us all. None of us are immune to the psychological, emotional, and spiritual harm caused whenever a human life has to endure injustice. And there have been too much for too many for far too long.

appreciates the Center's lessons on collective leadership. "I come from the technology sector where it's very structured [...] It's more of an 'I' structure. Coming from the Center and what I've learned [through RVC], it's more of a 'we.' How can we build collectively? How can we each individually contribute to make sure that the end goal is done for the better of everybody?" She also learned how to use active listening, which she says helps her personally and professionally. "[I] think about what that person said," Niesha shared, "whether I agree with them or not, I put myself in their shoes, and try to be there and help them, and make sure that they have a good outcome at the end of wherever their journey's going to take them."

Niesha's own journey gives her opportunity to directly apply to her work the leadership theories she learns from the program. She says she connects most with the contingency theory of leadership, describing it as "having to adapt to different styles of people when you're trying to build the mission, strategy, vision, or goals." In her placement at the Ethiopian Community in Seattle, Niesha has plenty of chance to practice adaptability. "I'm trying to adapt to whatever they need me to do and step up to the plate for them," she says. This attitude helps her involve other people in her actions, a true example of adaptive, collective leadership. "Even though I may not have the skills yet, I'm taking it on and doing the research, maybe calling people within the community and asking them for help, to guide me to get things done," she says. "It's been pretty successful."

Interview with CEL Board member Cassie Mires

Interviewed by Shelly Najjar

Cassie Mires is this month's spotlight in our interview series, where each of the board members introduce themselves to you and share some of their experiences.

Thanks for your time, Cassie. Why do you support the Center and how did you come to join the board? That's an interesting story. I'm currently a graduate student at Seattle University. I'm getting my masters in nonprofit leadership, and Waing Waing came and spoke to one of my classes. I got really interested in Center and the work it does. Shortly after that, I had a chance to meet Waing Waing again at my professor's home, who had invited me for Thanksgiving. Waing Waing said, "Would you lead us by serving on our Board?" I said to her, "Oh, that's very sweet." I certainly didn't think I had enough experience to serve on a board. I thought she was just being nice, the way Waing Waing is.



Then I spoke to my professor about it and my professor said, "She wouldn't have asked if she didn't mean it." But I didn't think I was qualified. Once I considered it, I thought, what a safe environment to learn to serve on a board and give back to this new community that I've adopted since I moved here from Florida. I thought if I was going to get that experience, this would be probably the best place to get it, because I know that I'm working with people who are extending grace to me, who are creating a safe environment, where I can learn these things while also helping the

I am struck by the relevance of our Peacemaking and Healing Initiative's premise – to create healthy change, we need healthy change makers. Already grieving, the intensity of the violent flare-ups symptomatic of all the sickness in this world hit me with rage and fear, protectiveness and fight, cynicism and despair. Currently not in a wholesome state myself, how could I responsibly lead the Center to serve during such turbulent times of need in the community? It would be much easier to respond to these manifestations of humanity's pain by passing on my own pain to others, and I struggled to not let the bad wolf win the battle inside of me.

I am grateful for the support and guidance from the Center's community of practitioners. They remind me to look to the principles and leadership practices of Gracious Space and Peacemaking & Healing to help me through these volatile times. In doing so, I am able to regain my grounding and listen deeper for what needs we can fill. Amidst a contentious political climate, controversy of which lives matter, who gets to "claim the rainbow," and violent extremism around the globe, I learned the best way for the Center to make a difference is to stay steady on our course. Here are two examples of how we do this:

1. There are many different ways in which people experience isolation before, during and in the aftermath of tragic events. Often, the most immediate and accessible avenues for bridging the disconnection they feel tend to cause greater polarization around the issues that caused the tragedies. Having healthy ways to break the isolation is greatly needed. A community leader, who is a Gracious Space practitioner,

community. I accepted and now, here we are.

I support the Center because I appreciate the Peacemaking Circles and community facilitation, especially cross culturally. I'm learning also, because coming from Florida, it's culturally diverse, but when people speak of diversity, they mean racial diversity. Now that I've moved here, I'm learning so much more about diversity and inclusion and cultural fluency. Moving here is teaching me to open myself up to other ways that diversity shows up. Also, it's teaching me to check my own privilege, because as an African-American woman, I really never considered myself as being someone coming from a privileged place. Then I think about folks with different physical abilities or being in graduate school. It reminds me that, yes, I do have some areas where I might be the one who's privileged in a situation. I have to remember to check that. I'm learning these things and being a part of the Center is helping me keep that framework in place.

What are some of your other projects, interests, and passions? I'm currently working at the UNCF, United Negro College Fund, funding education. Fundraising for higher education for students is a passion of mine. It wasn't one that started out as a passion. I sort of fell into it and realized the importance of it. I was raised by a single mother in an urban area. We didn't have a lot of money. My mother is not a college graduate. I understand. It's frustrating filling out the FAFSA. Just paying for the college applications can be really expensive, when you're trying to go to college. With \$35 and \$45 application fees, that can also limit how many schools a lot of students apply to, if they can't get those fees waived. You don't think about that. People are like, "More people should apply to college," but families face these barriers. I am committed to trying to eliminate barriers or help ease entry for kids, especially minority students who are trying to get to college or vocational school. I work with kids, so that they can follow their dreams. Whatever those dreams end up being for them.

What leadership advice would you give to others? I'm learning a lot in the classes now about leadership and the different types of leadership. My advice that I would give to people would be: don't be afraid to try. Even if you don't feel quite ready or fully equipped, try your best. Oftentimes leadership comes in the form of shared responsibility. Don't think that you have all the answers, look to people around you for guidance, and that shared commitment. Shared decision making is much more useful than just trying to figure it out all on your own. For me, one of my core values as a leader is remaining teachable. I always try to keep that in the forefront, because I don't have all the answers. There are people who are probably much better at this than I am, so let's ask. I like to ask a lot of questions. Be curious. Share the decision making and just go for it.

The next question is just for fun: What is your favorite animal? I don't have a favorite animal, but I do have a favorite symbol, if I can switch it up a little bit. My favorite symbol is the anchor. I like the anchor, because it grounds you and it keeps you from going adrift. When the waters get really rough and you need to move on, you can also pull it up so that you can move forward. It's especially true for my family and my friends being my anchor and keeping me from going too far adrift. They ground me. Then, if I find myself in the situations or environments that are toxic, I need to be able to pull that anchor up and move on.

Is there anything else you think the readers of the newsletter should

told me that in times such as these, what she would most like to have is space for solace, empathy and finding reconnection with those different from ourselves by embracing our common humanity instead of attacking our differences. She sees this as the Center's strength, and continuing to create such spaces will help facilitate the individual and community healing process.

2. The sense of urgency to fix complex issues that are deeply seated in historic problems around race, class, sexual orientation, and other forms of oppression is surging. Harnessing this is incredibly valuable. Yet achieving social justice is on-going work that takes shape in many different ways, and we need people to stay in the fight even after the news and heightened activism dwindles.

The Center is committed to working for social justice for the long haul. Through programs that develop personal and collective leadership, and help build conditions that are conducive for creating positive social change, our approach is proactive, multi-layered and long-term.

In this newsletter, we highlight our work with the Rainier Valley Corps Fellowship Program as an example of our progress toward the Center's strategic goals. I am very excited about the strong mission and vision fit between the two organizations! This partnership deepens and broadens the Center's relationship with communities of color, immigrants, and refugees; and supports their capacity-building and leadership development.

We helped shape the curriculum cultivating inclusive leaders who can work effectively across cultural boundaries and positional differences. It's been rewarding to

know about you? I'm pretty goofy sometimes and I'm quick with a smile.

Readers, if you are committed to the Center's mission and interested in supporting and growing the organization, please email [Steve Stapleton](#) for more information about board membership.

Upcoming Events:

NEW Racial Healing Circles: Exploring Race Matters

Many times our approach to racial healing is in response to a crisis in community. We are offering a different way of talking about race that is preemptive rather than waiting for the conflict. Will host 6 monthly half-day sessions **beginning August 6, 2016** through January 14, 2017, utilizing the Peacemaking Circle process, each on a different topic. Participants can register for individual sessions that are of interest, or the whole series.

[Click to learn more and register.](#)

Double Identity Circle August 13, 2016 2-5pm

This free circle session will focus on the topic of "Double Identity" that affects many immigrant and refugees in our community. The 3-hour session will utilize the Peacemaking Circle process to create a safe and empathetic space for deep listening and story telling. The session will be facilitated by our intern, Taishi Ozeki, a student at Fordham University. Participation is free and open to all, but advanced registration is required. [Click to register](#)

Circle Keeper Training - The first step August 19-20, 2016

Participants must have attended an Introductory Peacemaking Circle before registering for the Keeper Training.

[Click to register - \\$375](#)

Introductory Peacemaking Circle

October 14-15, 2016. Experience the Peacemaking Circle and learn leadership practices that promote healing, as well as individual and community health. We need healthy leaders to create healthy change.

Contact [Keiko Ozeki](#) for more information, or [click to register](#)

Introduction to Gracious Space training August 23, 2016 1pm-5pm

Gracious Space is a process that helps create the space, both literally and figuratively, to allow all people to bring their "best stuff" to conversations, relationships and the workplace in a non-critical, open-minded

put into practice the framework and theories the Center has about effective and sustainable change, leadership, relationship building, and learning in public. I've enjoyed contributing the Center's wisdom, which comes from 25 years of work with many diverse communities, and creating space where we can tap into the fellows' collective wisdom. In today's world, we need leaders who are dedicated to social justice and serve the common good. These inspiring RVC fellows have amazing, enthusiastic energy for creating social change. It's an honor to be involved in this program and to have an opportunity to influence their leadership. They give me hope.

~Waing Waing

environment. The principles of Gracious Space shape environments (within and outside of ourselves) that encourage integrity, honesty, trust, deep listening and continuous learning.

[REGISTER HERE - \\$59](#)

NEW Gracious Space Mastery class September 29-30, 2016

We could all use more Gracious Space.... so here is a very special opportunity for the right people at the right time... *Are you one of them?* The Center is excited to announce a rigorous **Gracious Space Mastery** class which is designed to prepare and support trainers, managers and directors within organizations to teach and facilitate Gracious Space in-house. Participants must have previously taken a "Creating Gracious Space" or "Courageous Collaboration with Gracious Space" class on their own or through their workplace. Contact Steve Stapleton with questions.

[REGISTER HERE](#)

Tel: (206) 328-3020
Fax: (206) 328-4570
@CEL_Seattle
www.ethicalleadership.org
Email: [sstapleton@ethicalleadership.org](mailto:ssapleton@ethicalleadership.org)

If you no longer wish to receive these emails, please reply to this message with "Unsubscribe" in the subject line or simply click on the following link: [Unsubscribe](#)

Center for Ethical Leadership
1401 E Jefferson St Suite 505
Seattle, Washington 98122
US

[Read](#) the VerticalResponse marketing policy.

vertical DELIVERED BY
response
Try It Free Today!