



## From the Executive Director

This month's article was inspired by a conversation I had with my eleven-year-old daughter about the presidential campaigns. It prompted me to think about the leadership qualities we should be looking for, both in our elected officials and in ourselves. Leadership that will transform the polarization the campaigns provoke into productive collaborations that will actually solve the critical issues of our times. Instead of being stuck in harmful rhetoric, we need to have deeper conversations across our differences so that we can better understand the root causes and diverse impacts, and collectively create solutions. To do this, we have to be willing and able to view the problems from several different perspectives, including from the people we are opposed to. Dr. Bill Grace, the Center's founder, recently told me the crucial element in [Gracious Space](#) of inviting the stranger does not always mean "invite someone you do not know." He said, "To me, it is inviting the person I do know that I do not like." Can we really do that? How can we realistically invite people we do not like? Or invite opinions we do not want to hear? Can I listen to them without judgement, seek to understand their story, have empathy for their pain, and find ways to work with them? Will they do the same for me? This is the work of the Center, to cultivate leadership capable of creating space for real, deep conversations that can shift the political climate stuck in accusations, criticisms, denials and blame, to something transformative and productive. A unique kind of leadership we can all partake in.



In peace and leadership,  
~Waing Waing

### Leadership, Politics and Parenting

by Waing Waing

A few weeks ago I came across my 11 year old daughter watching online video clips of Donald Trump interviews. My first parental instinct was alarm, wanting to snatch away the laptop to protect my child from hearing inflammatory statements that fuel a harmful world. Fresh on my

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mind were recent news [articles](#) and a report from the [Southern Poverty Law Center](#) about "[The impact of the presidential campaign on our nation's schools.](#)" Thankfully, I remembered to create a pause between my reaction and the stimulus—a Gracious Space practice I learned many years ago -

and instead I asked her, "Why are you watching them?" "Because I want to know what's happening in my country," she replied. My parental fears were replaced with parental pride for her civic attentiveness. I continued with the appreciative inquiry, "And what do you think?" "I'm scared," she said, "It's really scary that he's so popular."

Immediately parental anxiety returned - how can I help my child make sense of the disturbing political climate that I myself was struggling with? It feels like the battle of the [Two Wolves](#) from the Cherokee parable is happening inside the country, and it's illuminating that a child intuitively knows how dangerous it is for a presidential candidate to be feeding the bad wolf. This bad wolf begets hate and violence, and exacerbates the schisms of "us vs. them" prevalent in society, and when left unchecked, begets more hate and violence. It became very important to me to help her feed the good wolf in this situation. So we talked about the battle of the two wolves and how not to counter the anger, fear and animosity incited by Trump's rhetoric with more anger, fear and animosity of our own. But instead, strive to do it with compassion, understanding, and comity. I wanted her to know that this was not passiveness, but activism that advocates for justice and equity in ways that does not perpetuate "[othering.](#)"

This exchange with my daughter got me thinking about the ways in which the Center does this. For 25 years, the Center has essentially been helping to feed the good wolf. At its core, the work is on leadership for the common good, which we envision as advancing healthy, just and inclusive communities. While there are a myriad of attributes that bear on presidential performance, [essential leadership qualities](#) for creating sustainable social change in service of the common good are often overlooked. To create opportunities for everyone to enjoy the benefits of the common good involves making changes to the way our institutions, systems, and communities work. In today's diverse and globalized society, the new ways have to foster inclusion and build pathways to equity. This entails a cultural transformation that builds our personal, collective and organizational capacity to make these changes. This requires a unique kind of leadership capable of working across difference, silos and destructive boundaries. This leadership is effective when it is culturally fluent, inclusive, [collective, and ethical](#). The leader needs to be able to create and embody gracious, empathetic and brave space for people to build trust and relationship in order to work well together. And to do this, peacemaking and healing leadership practices are crucial to transform the pain and distrust that exists within and between communities, and the institutions created to serve them, into positive openings.

It's unrealistic to expect a sole person to hold all of this. However, we

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can all strive to develop these leadership qualities. And in doing so, we can create a better social/political climate, in which the President, regardless of who is elected, can be effective in serving the common good.

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## **The Center for Ethical Leadership will be co-presenting two different session at this year's Washington State Nonprofit Conference on May 17.**

If you are planning to attend this years conference look for these sessions, the first will be in Track #1, Tapping the power of Collective Innovation, and will be co-



presented by Keiko Ozeki and Pamela Taylor, titled, ***"Peacemaking Practices to Make the Invisible Visible: The Power of Storytelling for Social Change and Collective Innovations."*** [Click to see more](#)

The second session will be in Track #4, Leading for the long term, and will be co-presented by Waing Waing and Noreen Elbert, titled, ***"Creating an Inclusive Culture of Leadership."*** [Click to see more.](#)

Tel: (206) 328-3020  
1401 E. Jefferson St. STE 505  
Seattle WA 98122  
[www.ethicalleadership.org](http://www.ethicalleadership.org)