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May 9, 2016



## From the Executive Director

The Center's vision statement says, "We envision healthy, just and inclusive communities, where people and groups collectively define and create social change." Change takes place in and through people (individuals) and groups (institutions, organizations, and communities), and we are grateful to have the opportunity to support both the personal, internal work that goes into relationship building, as well as the external work in organizational development. This month our articles showcase the magic of this internal-external approach. In her interview, Shamsu Issak, our



board president, shares about her use of the circle process in her community and professional settings. Tamara Barrat from Hopelink also shares her personal experiences and explains some of the early organizational response to the recent Gracious Space training attended by some of their managers. The impact our programs, facilitators and participants have in the community is far-reaching, and we need your support to continue the work into the future. We would like to invite you to join us at the [Legacy Event, our annual fundraiser, on Wednesday, May 11, 2016](#) to build the sustainability of this work in our communities, and to celebrate people dedicated to serving the common good. If you are not able to attend the event but would still like to show your support, please consider making a [donation online through the Center's website](#). We look forward to sharing in the experience of this inspiring event with you. With appreciation, ~*Waing Waing*

## Upcoming Events:

### [2016 Legacy Event](#)



The Center for Ethical Leadership celebrates 25 years of leadership for the common good. Please join us for a reception style celebration fundraiser [this Wednesday, May 11 6-8:30pm](#). [Tickets are \\$65, and should be purchased in advance.](#)

### [Introductory Peacemaking Circle on June 17-18, 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 about registration.

## Gracious Space training is "opening possibilities" at Hopelink

By Shelly Najjar

Over the last ten years, Tamara Barrat, Director of Human Resources at Hopelink, has heard good things about a Gracious Space training that was held at her organization prior to her working there.



“Some of the managers that went through it, who are still here, still talk about it,” she says.

They tell her it is “eye opening” and “not about being polite as in gracious,” but “about opening to new possibilities, to trying new things, and inviting the stranger.”

The conversation continued at Hopelink, and they planned to bring the training to the organization again, but ran into complications. Instead of cancelling the training altogether, Hopelink sent as many managers to the training as they could, with the goal to bring the lessons back to their workplace.

As a result, six Hopelink managers attended the most recent Gracious Space training on March 31st to April 1st.

While it is too soon for the lessons from the training to be fully incorporated into the organization, the six managers who attended are dedicated to continuing the work. They plan to meet as a group to learn from each other about how they use the principles in their own management.

Already, Tamara says the training is changing the way she leads. “I definitely admit failure and I’m doing Thankology,” she says. “I’m allowing for Brave Space. I try to be more present, go to the balcony” --a Gracious Space metaphor for taking space and time for reflection-- “and give more intentional attention when I’m needed. I’ve opened and closed some meetings in a different way using some of the exercises that we learned. I mean I just could go on and on. I think about it all the time.”

Due to the size of the organization, it may be logistically difficult to train everyone at the same time, Tamara says. At the very least, however, they would like to send a new group of people to the training every year.

“It’s a really great class, it helps you think about different possibilities and how to get into the spirit, be more intentional, and allow for strangers. [...] I want to keep it alive.”

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## Interview with Board President Shamsu Issak

Interviewed by Shelly Najjar

*Shamsu Issak, CEL’s Board President, is the first in our new interview series, where each of the board members introduce themselves to you and share some of their experiences.*



### **Thanks for your time, Shamsu. Why do you support the Center and how did you come to join the board?**

I have been a member of the Center for Ethical Leadership the last three and a half years. I started partnering with them through my Somali community in South Seattle. I believe in the work they do. It makes a difference in terms of building relationship, having voice, and telling your own story when people are in that circle, and everybody’s voice is heard. For my community, from my cultural background, circle is something that we’re familiar with. It’s a natural setting for us that was not visible in mainstream culture where people sit at a square table or sometimes we’re not even part of that conversation. So this was something that helps us tell our story. We have a huge circle. We have an immigrant

women's circle in the community. We have a men's circle. It was just natural for us to partner with the Center.

I practice in circle and circle process that not only helps on the community level, but helps me professionally where I use to work. I don't work there anymore, but at Neighborhood House where most of my staff were also immigrants from other countries like Asia or Africa, it was an easy setting to have a dialogue. That was how I partnered with the Center. They're all nice. I just developed a relationship with everyone. I'm almost finished with my master's in leadership development, in organizational development. The Center is my client for my school project. We just developed a relationship. Waing Waing, the staff and I talked about "How do we develop a board to get more involved in and invest in the Center's work?" Then I was offered the position and I accepted.

**What are some of your other projects, interests, and passions?**

My passion of interest is my spiritual practice which is creating a beloved community where the community comes together in a healthy way, with diversity and inclusion. All of those things are my passion. I'm a consultant for organizational development and my focus is non-profits. Going forward after graduation, my hope is to help non-profits with capacity building and telling their story, using my skills of circle and circle process to have a dialogue. Right now, I'm lucky to get two paying clients for my consulting practice. Going forward, hopefully I'll do more work around that.

**What leadership advice would you give to others?**

Follow your passion and be authentic in your purpose, because a lot of times we're not clear on what we want to do. Sometimes when we work in and around passionate work, the work is easy. That's my main thing. Following your passion, authenticity, and clarity, being clear about what you want. A lot of times, if it's not clear for the leader, it is not clear for the community. So have alignment, especially for non-profit leaders, to what your mission is. Sometimes it could get blurry.

**The next question is just for fun: What is your favorite animal and why?**

I would say the cat because I have a cat at home, and a lot of times it's hard to picture another animal when you have one that you love. The reason I like them is that they are very smart. I know some people say that dogs are loyal, but I think cats are loyal. They are easy to take care of and are cute. They feel when you're sad and when you're happy. I think they are more in-tune. That's why I like cats. They are more in-tune to you.

**Is there anything else you think the readers of the newsletter should know?**

I want people to see what the Center does. A lot of times they don't show "this is what we do". They do a lot of work around community building, and I know my community benefited from a lot of the circle process, about how to have dialogue, and how to tell your story. It's very important to any community to know how to build relationships, not only within you, but how to make relationships with the community at large. What they do well is just to give people space to come, connect, and build relationships. Maybe that's not known out there.

*Thanks for your time and service on the board, Shamsol! Readers, if you are committed to the Center's mission and interested in supporting and growing the organization, please email [Steve Stapleton](mailto:Steve.Stapleton) for more information about board membership.*

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