

**Zen Center of Los Angeles
Angell Foundation Organizational Spirituality Initiative**

An Exploration of Collective Wisdom with John Ott and Rose Pinard

Please notice: Some of the content shared by Rose Pinard and John Ott during the event will be part of John's book on Collective Wisdom to be published September 2009. Additionally, some of the material will be part of a forthcoming book by John and Rose. To be in integrity with the publisher's copyright requirements, please contact John (jgott@earthlink.net) or Rose (rpinard22@earthlink.net) before distributing copies of this material.

John: Thank you very much for this opportunity to be with all of you to explore the concepts of collective wisdom and collective awakening.

For Rose and me, there is a relationship between collective wisdom and collective awakening. Let's start with awakening. We do not think about being awakened as a permanent state but rather a question of our state right now. The question is not, "Are we awakened?" or "Have we achieved a permanent state of being awakened?" Rather, the question is, "Are we awake right now?"

We also believe that when human beings gather in groups, a depth of awareness and insight, a transcendent knowing, becomes available to us that, if accessed, can lead to profound action. We call this transcendent knowing *collective wisdom*. This knowing is not of the mind alone, nor is it of any individual alone. When this knowing and sense of right action emerges, it does so from deep within the individual participants, from within the collective awareness of the group, and from within the larger field that holds the group.

Within groups, when more of us are awake right now, we become a clearer portal for the possibility of collective wisdom arising among us. And, as collective wisdom arises, it supports our becoming even more awakened in this moment. So, there is an intricate relationship between our individual openness or state of being awakened and the quality of awareness that becomes available to us collectively when we are awakened together in this moment.

For us, we often face as individuals and certainly as groups, moments in which it is not clear what right action is: in our families; in our culture; in our organizations; in our spiritual communities; and in our relationships. The practice of moving to not knowing is the beginning of releasing attachment to a particular story and discerning together what movement is arising or what invitation is being extended to us. When we can hold that stance together, miracles happen. In such moments, action that was literally unimaginable - fifteen seconds before, or weeks before - can arise. I suspect that every one of us has experienced such moments and been utterly stunned by what arose among us. These movements in some ways remain mysterious.

We do not believe that groups can control when collective wisdom arises. What we can do, however, is continue to invite its arising. One of the ways we know to extend such an invitation is by holding an orientation that we call the Scallop Principle.

Depending on the species, a single living scallop may have over *one hundred* eyes. These iridescent blue sensing organs are highly sensitive to movement and light, helping the scallop to detect the presence of predators in time to close its shell or swim away. So essential are these eyes to a scallop's safety that it can quickly heal or re-grow any eye that is injured or lost.

The scallop principle maintains that within any group or larger collective, each member is an eye (an I); the whole discerns and acts through its members. This principle orients us to the whole of the group or larger collective, not just to its constituent members.

The implications of this principle for group life are myriad. First, it suggests that the group itself, the collective, is a living being that depends upon, but is different from, its constituent parts. Second, it suggests that a distinct kind of collective awareness and knowing can arise within the group, transcending what any one member can discern alone.

A third implication of this principle is that, like a scallop with an injured eye, when a group does not receive information from any of its I's—its members—the whole is at greater risk. Each eye of the scallop has a distinct perspective; it sees a part of the ocean that no other eye sees in the same way, and many other eyes don't see at all. The scallop relies on receiving information from the many different vantage points to insure its safety, so much so that when it loses one of those vantage points, it re-grows the eye to get it back. Literally, the survival of the scallop depends on getting really good information from each eye. Each eye must share its unique perspective for the scallop to make sense of its situation. Is this a predator? Is this a mate? Is this food? Get one of those questions wrong, and the scallop is in a lot of trouble.

When human beings gather in groups, we often become confused. Each of us can suddenly become convinced that we are the scallop, that we are the whole. "If they would just listen to *me* and *do what I say*, everything would be fine." We then reject contradictory data without curiosity and inadvertently put the whole, and ourselves, at greater risk. Fortunately for the scallop, each of its eyes doesn't have individual volition. As far as we know there's never been a scallop in which a group of eyes on one side of the shell got together and said, "you know, those guys over there, we've got to do something about those folks, cuz' they're just not seeing clearly."

When we embrace the scallop principle, however, we begin to orient to the whole. We begin to understand that the perspective of each "I" is essential to the whole, and that the group will be safer and more effective the more it is able to receive and process the information unique to each I's perspective.

This turns on its head our typical response to divergence in groups. Often, groups seek to minimize or repress divergence. From the perspective of the scallop, however, when we are not hearing or receiving information from any one of our members, the whole is at greater risk. Part of our work in inviting collective wisdom as a whole being, therefore, is to deliberately invite each member to share what he or she sees. Like the scallop, when we are seeing from all of our I's, the whole is safer and better able to sustain life.

So while we cannot dictate when collective wisdom arises, we can seek to be awake—together—in this moment, in this now, and extend an invitation to collective wisdom by orienting to the whole and discerning together the movement that is arising among us.

Rose: I would like to describe what has been emerging for us in terms of a concept that we describe as “leader-ful” and how that concept builds on the scallop principle described by John.

John and I think about an organization or a community as an organism and differentiate between two types of power: (1) formal authority and (2) the power to create.

In an organization, people naturally have different responsibilities and different roles. That is part of what we consider to be the first type of power - formal authority – typically associated with leadership. But this type of power is very different from the second type of power – the power to create – what we associate with being leader-ful - when an organism begins to act as a whole through the wisdom of embodied intelligence emergent among its parts.

There are three things that come to mind when we think about leader-ful and the power to create. First, is the stance of fully assuming the power to create – embodying the notion that – “I have the power to create.” By assuming such a stance, we’re constantly asking ourselves questions like, “What’s my part in all this?,” “How can I more fully step up?,” “How is my own seeing limiting what’s happening?,” or “What’s being asked of me now?” It’s a focusing on the “I” within the framework of the power-to-create that transcends formal authority. Through the process of inquiry and deep listening, we become more natural conduits for not only individual wisdom but also wisdom on behalf of the whole.

Second, is the “power-with lens” that influences how we relate to our selves, each other, and the group. The “power-with lens” is in contrast to an assumption of “power-over” or “power-under.” When we see different roles or positions of authority as somehow an elevation or reduction of worth, it becomes harder to notice and access the inherent power-to-create that moves through us.

This oversight is associated with the victim/perpetrator consciousness that is often not helpful. If we see ourselves as a victim, and attribute “power over me” to other people, we more naturally collapse into silence and discourage ourselves from stepping up to our truth. The recoiled energy may then spring forward as aggressiveness or even violence in an attempt to exert control or assume a “power-over” stance, the flip side of the coin of victim/perpetrator consciousness.

So, a leader-ful stance is when we’re acknowledging our inherent power to create and choosing to step out of the victim/perpetrator consciousness not only on our own behalf but also on behalf of the whole. We are also acknowledging and appropriately responding to the existence of different roles and authorities as merely social constructions not as absolute structures of power.

The third aspect of being leader-ful, is consciously choosing love over fear. If we think about an organism and the different eyes, aspects of love such as compassion, kindness, and tolerance naturally inspire us to consider other points of view – not to agree but to understand, take in and respect. Without love, it’s easy for fear to fragment the whole. So, the expansiveness of love

helps us to embody – as a whole – the beautiful mosaic of multiple perspectives – sometimes convergent and other times divergent.

So, what would it mean for a community or an organization - an organism – to imbibe a leaderful stance - fostering “power-with” relationships, supporting the power to create, and developing a norm of deliberating choosing love over fear?

**Zen Center of Los Angeles
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Under the Bones of the Master
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**Transcript:
Exploring Collective Wisdom with John Ott and Rose Pinard**

John: For Rose and me, when we awake, we become a clearer portal for the possibility of collective wisdom arising among us. As collective wisdom arises, it can support our becoming more awakened in this moment. So, there is a linkage between our individual openness or state of being awakened and the quality of awareness that becomes available to us collectively when we are awakened together in this moment. What does that mean?

For us, often we face as individuals and certainly as groups, moments in which it is not clear what right action is; in our families; in our culture; in our organizations; in our spiritual communities; with our friends and our relationships. The practice of moving to a place of not knowing is the beginning movement of being awake, of releasing our attachment to a particular story and beginning to discern together what movement is arising or what invitation is being extended to us. When we can hold that stance together, miracles happen.

Action arises that was literally unimaginable fifteen seconds before, thirty seconds before, weeks before. I suspect every one of us have had moments in which we have been present in groups and then utterly stunned by what has arisen among us. We also know those moments when there's so much potential, there's so much capacity, there's so much talent, and the space collapses and we end in war, or struggle, or violence, or in conflict with one another. For us, those movements in some ways are mysterious.

We hold our understanding in this way. We can't control when collective wisdom arises, just as we cannot dictate when we will awaken. We can continue, however, to invite being awake. We can continue to invite wisdom to arise among us by continuing to stay open, fully open, and fully present to what's arising now - in my individual interior and within the interior of the group.

Can we stay open and awake together to allow wisdom and the right action to arise among us? One of the ways we know to extend that invitation to awaken and/or wisdom is by holding an orientation that we call the Scallop Principle. For those of us who are not vegan or vegetarian, we probably know what a sautéed scallop looks like and can taste it perhaps even now with that fabulous white wine sauce. If you look on the back of the agenda, there is a photo of the cross section of a live scallop. Every one of those blue iridescent balls is an eye. Many species of scallops have over 100 eyes that encircle both the upper and lower part of the shell. These eyes are so essential to a scallop's survival that when one becomes damaged, they re-grow it. Literally, the survival of the scallop depends on getting really good information from each eye, because there's no way that an

eye that's facing out this way to the ocean can have any idea what's coming from behind that eye. And so, the survival of the scallop depends on each eye sharing what it sees in a way that the whole can make sense of it. Is this a predator? Is this a mate? Is this food? Let me tell ya, get one of those wrong, you're in a lot of trouble.

The hypothesis that we hold is that every group is like a scallop. Each one of us is an eye (and an I). The whole discerns through us. We get confused sometimes and we think we're the scallop. Fortunately for the scallop, each of its eyes doesn't have individual volition as far as we know. As far as we know there's been no scallop in which a group of eyes on one side of the shell got together and said, "you know, those guys over there, we've got to do something about those folks. Cuz' they're just not seeing clearly." We get confused when each of us thinks we're the scallop.

When we understand that each of us is an eye, then several things become clear. The first is that our survival depends on each eye being able to share what it sees, because no one eye sees exactly the same part of the ocean, and therefore, no one eye sees exactly the same movement that's around the scallop. When we are not hearing or receiving information from any one of the eyes, the whole is at greater risk. So, part of our work in inviting being awake, as a whole being, is to be inviting for each eye to share what it sees, and to be celebrating the divergence, because no eye can see exactly the same part of the ocean. So, if we're getting the same data from every eye, we're probably not seeing clearly.

This turns on its head the notion of our response to when divergence arises in the group. When divergence arises in a group from an orientation to the whole, we should celebrate. We are getting access to data that we did not have access to before. We're safer now. That orientation becomes possible when we're orienting to the whole, and not just to me. And when we understand that as an eye my health and my safety is greater when the whole is safer, then I welcome somebody who sees differently.

When I'm confused and I think that the way I see the world is the only way to see the world and that's what keeps me safe then I reject any data that contradicts me and I put the whole and ironically, myself, at greater risk. So one of the orientations that we have is, we cannot dictate when wisdom arises. We cannot dictate when being awakened arises, but we can invite wisdom and awakening to arise, and one of the ways that we can do that is by orienting to the whole. It's by seeking to discern together what the movement is among us. I want to reflect more in a little bit on that, but I now want to invite Rose to amplify what I've shared and then to share the implications for this conversation about what it means to be leaderful.

Rose: We've been working with the concept of leaderful and listening deeply to these conversations as allies having helped us in embodying that notion at different levels. I would like to share what's beginning to emerge for us in terms of being leaderful and how that concept is related to the scallop principle.

So if we think about an organization as an organism or a community as an organism and that wholeness exists, we differentiate between formal authority and the power to create. In an organization, folks have different responsibilities and different roles, and those are formal authority, but that's very different from the power to create and the whole organism beginning to act as a whole through embodied intelligence that emerges.

There are three things that come to mind as we think about leaderful and the power to create within this context. One is what happens when each of us really assumes the stance of the power to create. We're focusing on "I" and what that means when we're with the community. We're constantly asking ourselves, "What's my role here?", "How can I step up?", "How can I see differently?" So, it's a focusing on the "I" and the power to create as an "I", and that can be at times quite different than formal authority and the wisdom that arises and listening for that power to create as an "I", e-y-e and I.

The second thing that we we're beginning to see in terms of leaderful is this notion of acting or relating to ourselves, one another, and the group through a "power-with" lens. Again, in terms of the power to create, it's noticing when our thought or actions stem from an assumption of "power-over" or "power-under" when we see different roles or positions of authority as somehow an elevation of worth or power over other people or as an inherent reduction of a person's power to create.

For us, this has association with the kind of victim/perpetrator consciousness that is not as helpful. If we see ourselves as a victim, and I'm attributing other people to having power over me, and I may in those moments collapse into silence so I'm not speaking my truth, or collapse into a place of violence where I'm actually trying to exert control and the power over as a reaction to my own sense of being a victim.

So, this power-with and leaderful organism is when we're really using the power to create and choosing to step out of the victim/perpetrator consciousness, recognizing that there are different roles, different authorities, but that that these social constructions are different from our inherent power to create.

The third aspect of being leaderful, is when moment to moment I am paying attention to my choice in choosing love over fear; that if we think about an organism and the different eyes and what keeps them together as an organism, there's that field of love that enables us to continually expand in actuality rather than contract and start fragmenting through fear. So, it's that ability to be curious about the uniqueness of other people's stories and using the power of love to expand and embody – as a whole - what that eye is seeing into ourselves.

So, those are our beginning reflections about a leaderful organism. I know that this group explored a lot in terms of gender and the role of the leader to looking at what it would

mean for each person to step into being leaderful. What would it mean in an organization, an organism, when there's a leaderful stance that allows a "power-with" relating, focusing on the eye/I, and a conscious choosing of love and noticing when there is fear arising? And I'll stop there.

John: Our intention with these reflections is to seed the field. If there are questions now, we will be happy to stop now and take them.

Question: I'm a citizen of the United States and I'm hearing about being leaderful and power-with but what do we do if that isn't the way it's being run. Look at the Bush administration. What do you do when the system is unilateral.

John: So, a couple of quick responses. The first is, being awake and the arising of collective wisdom are, for us, different from concepts that refer to the popular media like the wisdom of crowds, or the wisdom of mass movement. For us, there needs to be an understanding that we are in relationship with each other.

Question: You mean amongst all of us?

John: Right, and so to the extent that I hold a stance that says "I am in relationship to everyone in the United States" and others do not, we have a weakened field, a weakened capacity for being awake if some of us do not recognize that we are in relationship with others. My own hypothesis about the polemical nature of the political discourse over the past forty plus years is that it has weakened our capacity to feel in relationship with others who disagree with us. So, for me I hold with great love both John McCain and Barack Obama, both Sarah Palin and Joe Biden. A stunning statement for me that Sarah Palin made during the debate was that taxes are not a way of showing my commitment to this country. That statement says to me that we have come a long way from understanding our common relationship with each other when my ability or my willingness to pay taxes is seen as an individual act and not as a collective act. So, for me the issue of collectively being awake is always possible, it is a potentiality, but it is a potentiality that will be far less likely realized when I don't understand that I am in relationship with you. That's why we start with the scallop principle. If we understand ourselves to be in the whole, of a whole, then my response is very different than if I am of a whole separate from you and you are the other. My way of engaging with you becomes entirely different if I respond to you as other. It doesn't mean that collective wisdom may not still arise, or that awakened states may still not be realized in moments, but the likelihood is far less when we don't understand ourselves to be in relationship with each other.

Comment: I just have to say that I don't see that we were whole forty years ago. What happens when people are forcibly locked out of dialogue? I think it points to being careful about hypothesizing about wholeness and what it looks like. It's about trusting that unknown more than getting hung up on the whole and where Dick Cheney or Sarah

Palin may fit in because I think as a country we're working with that model and how to be inclusive but we're not there and not forty years ago either.

John: Bless you. Absolutely I agree with that and my intention was not to suggest that. I really appreciate your clarification. My intention was not to suggest that we were at one time whole. To the extent that that was suggested, it was a failure of communication, not of intention and I appreciate the qualification.

Question: John, from the model that you used, it requires that the formal hierarchy is working with this principle. Otherwise, if there's no willing of that, listening and incorporating, then the whole system doesn't work, because then the brain takes over the eyes. So, what you suggest is that we are working on the level that that is a given, right? Otherwise you have a situation of power-over, right?

John: There's a lot there – let's work with it. The first thing to say is, that it's absolutely true that in organizations or structures there are power relationships, and those power relationships can have impacts on people, and it is absolutely true when we begin working with an organization we do an enormous amount of work to get the buy in and shared understanding from multiple layers of the organization, not just folks who have power to create, but including folks who have formal authority. So, as a first level I will say yes. And our own experience is that no one ultimately has power over me, unless I choose to relinquish my power. That's different than authority. But no one has power over me unless I relinquish my own power. So even in those organizations where there is a structure of authority that has not bought into this way of being, our own experience is that when people begin to orient in this way, it can still have an enormous transformative impact. Is it more dangerous from the prospective of "might I be excluded or expelled from the organization?" You bet. But is it true that I must give up my power, or that I have no power, if people in authority don't see the world the way that I do? It's not my reality, and I'm working very careful here to distinguish authority and power. My power is the power to claim who I am, and to choose how I respond with what I engage. No one has any ability to take that away from me unless I relinquish it.

Question: And just thinking about it, I worked in healthcare and it's very hierarchical, extremely hierarchical. And I had a leader when the choice was either surrender or leave. What about the time of Hitler? It was a question of survival. So, what are you doing about those types of situations?

John: What I'd say is that the capacity to choose, the range of options we have to choose may be less, but our capacity to choose is still great. In Germany, folks made very different choices. In France, folks made very different choices. Nelson Mandela made a very different choice. I mean, his first act when he was sworn-in as the first president of the freely elected republic of South Africa was to have one of his prison guards on stage with him, as an act of honor. That's an incredible choice by someone who was in prison

for over 30 years. We may have our options reduced, but our power to choose our response is ours. Nobody takes that away from us unless we relinquish it. It doesn't mean it's easy.

Collective wisdom can arise even despite our worst efforts, but for us to be awakened together, it is much more likely when I understand that I'm in relationship with you and starting from there.

Question: I was wondering with all these eyes here, what's the central processing unit?

John: Great question. Fabulous. I know that's a joke, but there's also – we have that kind of fantasy, that there's somebody or something or some field, and if we can just access it, then, thank God we'll have the answer. Our experience is something quite different and without getting esoteric, I'd say that there's a field of awareness. I'd say that the awareness arises among us. The whole discerns through us.

I have heard many of you tell stories, when something arose that you literally could not imagine beforehand. And I will say, from my understanding of the evolution of the Center, there are many Centers looking at you saying 'how did that center arise?' and how did what unfolded here unfold? The way we would say that is that there is a whole seeking form through us. When we are conscious and awake together we can collaborate with that whole and part of the way of becoming conscious together is by being open to what arises in each one of us, not with attachment but as data. Then we're discerning together. Then we're the eyes. The meaning arises, sometimes in one of us, sometimes like a flash in several of us, and sometimes the conversation is just done because we've all become clear of what's next. What's the sensing organ? What's the meaning making organ? It's of us, as a whole.

Comment: I think some of the things that kind of tie in with this is still forming for me. When Rose was speaking it's like I wanted to make a visual of it. Well, first this element of the eyes, which I feel is also my practice. My practice is what allows me to understand who I am as an eye, and to not sort of think of myself as the scallop and to not get together with the other eyes and figure out which eyes are like me, and all of that stuff. So it's like this piece of this relative self in relationship, but it's so important I think to look at this dynamic of victim/perpetrator in terms of power and authority, because what I'm hearing within this victim/perpetrator dynamic, and in terms of choosing love over fear, what I feel like I've experienced is to immediately then say 'ok I get it, we're all eyes.'

And so therefore if a hierarchy shows up or if this group of people in this particular time becomes some sort of central process then maybe I have your piece of something in a particular way. It's like the victim/perpetrator model automatically says, "oh that's a hierarchy and that's bad, and so we have to just flatten it." It's this constant thing of where we're trying to flatten everything. But just automatically doing that is not working.

I feel like this movement of really examining these patterns around victim/perpetrator and choosing love over fear and this potential of leaderful is just really rich to practice with.

It's a moving process. I always have this feeling that you know when you're carrying something heavy with people and when you're not. You can't always shift the weight. It's hard. It requires a lot of trust. My experience of being in the sangha is that I have trust. I guess it's the practice. If there's a process happening that I'm not directly a part of, there are many mechanisms and shared stewardship for me to feed into the processes, but I also have this trust.

A lot of that is about me. I try to understand my own projections and when I mistrust and what that's about. If I had been a part of another organization that isn't rooted in practice and I just see this level of mistrust and this pattern of victim/perpetrator and circular verses vertical and all that stuff, then the model comes up that we should all be doing the same thing. So I just feel like this is really important. Just the relationship between....yeah, there's just some kind of trust. I don't know if that's the word to use.

Rose: As I was hearing you, what comes to mind is almost like a trusting of the movement of life, that it almost goes beyond even me to trust other parts of the community. There's a trusting of what I'm taking into my whole body and what's coming through and there's a trusting that if at the moment I'm only holding a slight part of this, that there is a movement. I know John will talk about the differentiation we're beginning to understand around movement and story, but for us, it's almost like a trusting of life and the diversity of life. And so, love, in this case is not a romantic or a puny kind of love that says we're all nice, but it's like what had happened here with Jimyo. It's a kind of love when we're willing to surrender to and it works us. It works us. If we've got a prejudice, if we've got a fear, it works us. And so that's the kind of fierce love that we're talking about, that expands us to greater wisdom and greater holding of diversity.

Comment: Yeah, because trust can also be used in a puny way. I guess that's why I started questioning the use of the word trust because I mean it in a bigger way.

John: There is a quality of connection that's not a decision. I can act as if, but when that trust arises it's grace. It's not because I say I trust you. Now I trust you I think. We can act as if and we can choose to act, but when that sense of connectedness and love arises it's grace. We can act as if, that's choice, but the feeling itself and that experience of connection is not a decision of the mind. It's a blessing. We'll take one more question. We could continue this, but I really want to invite you in to exploring the movement here, so I'm going to take one more and then I'm going to offer a reflection to get you into some small groups.

Question: You've actually sort of already discussed what was on my mind. I have a couple things to say, but I don't get the impression that we're talking about collective

awakening and the eyes – which I love, a tremendous image – as a day to day decision making process. I don't think that's what we're talking about. We're talking about the deeper exploration of the kind of issues that start with, "where do we even start"? This group is small enough that you can make the commitment to say I will be sincere and candid even on the days I don't actually trust when it comes to this exploration. So, my question I guess really is how is this different than decision making? We have the opposite of this is in George Bush. Decisions get made but that doesn't mean they're wise ones, they simply get made. Consensus decision-making can often paralyze because everybody wants the floor. We're not talking about day-to-day decision-making are we?

John: Well, I would say it this way, for now that's true. And what I mean by that is, we have very crude ways in this culture of acting together, and they often don't serve us well. And so, every one of us I suspect has been in meetings where they're running some version of Robert's Rules of Order and you just want to bang your head against the wall because that would be less painful, and then other times when the definition of consensus is that everybody has to talk incessantly over and over again until everybody leaves except two people and they don't really care so they decide and we call that consensus.

Oh God – please, right? Let me say, we have more choices than that. But for now, and if this became an inquiry for this body, I will say your council practice you have been evolving and seeking to explore different forms are about how to do this. For now, our invitation is if we understand that this is a living being, and that we have been called together, not simply to support the awakening of each of the individuals who are of it, but it's called together for a collective purpose, there's a purpose that is supported by individual awakening, but is not limited to individual awakening. Is that a story that makes sense to you?

If it is, how do you think about the community from that vantage point? What is the movement of collective awakening and how do we support it? That's the inquiry for now. I will say the question that you're raising is a crucial one, which is, can this have practical application day in and day out? And the answer is yes. But that's not the conversation for now.

I want to introduce one last reflection and then I'll get you into small groups. If we go back to the metaphor of the scallop for a moment, the eye processes movement. That's all it does. It processes light and movement and it sends that data to the mind of the scallop and the scallop is processing data about light and movement coming from all of these eyes and the mind creates a story - predator, mate, or food. The crucial understanding here is that movement and story are not the same thing. There is the movement and there's the story we tell about it. Part of the difficulty with the perpetrator/victim lens is that it often collapses the stories we hold into a single story so we can't inquire into what the movement is because we already know. I'm being attacked again. I have to react again. So, we can't inquire into the movement because the story has already come in. We've already made meaning. We're off to the races.

So, I want to invite us to understand that distinction for this reason. We're inviting you to hold a story. You'll decide if it's a story that makes sense to you or not, which is - there is a collective being here. An awakening is possible. Collective awakening is possible. That's a story, right? If it's a story that makes sense to you, our question is are there movements that you see in the community that suggest that story? I'm not presuming that story is true. It's a story. The inquiry is - are there movements in the community that suggest this story? And if so, what might those movements be? That's the invitation for the small groups. I'm going to focus you on the questions and then I'm going to get you right into the conversation.

Question: Is the movement you're talking about to be detected simply arising and we're seeing it in process or is it intentional?

John: In our case, it can be either. But even intentional there's a story, right? So, what ever is movement...whatever we might see is movement. It can be choices you see folks making. It can be the experience of Jimyo in our community as a movement. We can have lots of stories about that. "It shouldn't have happened." "I can't believe we had a failure of leadership like that." "Look how wonderfully we've responded." We can have any number of stories, but there's the movement and then there's the story we make of it. And right now I'm only introducing the distinction so we pay attention when we are interpreting movement through our story.

It's not because stories are bad. That's how we move in the world, but when we're not aware we're creating a story, then we get trapped by our meaning making and we can't see differently. What do we mean by collective awakening? And let me tell you, if that question has no energy for you, please discard it. I have no interest in having you have a conversation that has no energy. So if collective awakening is not a kind of inspiring energy then move on. Then the question becomes what movements do we observe within ZCLA that suggest a story of collective awakening. Substitute what has life for you - wellness, wholeness. If collective awakening works, amen, we would love to hear it.

And the last is, "what might support this continued movement toward awakening, toward wholeness, toward health of the body of the whole?" It's 2:30 now, I'll give you 30 minutes in groups of no larger than 6. Create groups here. You can go out. We will ring the bell, the singing bowl when you have 5 minutes, and then we'll ring it again when it's time to come back and we'll explore our responses to these questions in the large group when we come back.

Break up into smaller groups.

John: Someone shared with me that no matter how we hold today, our experience will not be closure. It's a beginning and we take that seriously. So, we are not imagining that

we will resolve, nor come to any final conclusions today. (lots of laughter!) What we're imagining is that in the next half hour or forty-five minutes, we begin to create ingredients for further inquiry. The inquiry can continue in different forms through movements that may already be present within the community or through other movements that might be imagined as a way to continue the exploration after today, but those are for discernment for another time.

Today our intention was to seed the conversation and the inquiry to see what emerges, to see what has energy for you, what feels alive, and that itself will suggest directions to you. We are recording and our intention will be to produce a transcript that reflects back to you the data that was generated from this conversation as well as some of our own reflections that will be a resource to you. So, feel free to take notes as you will, but note that one of the reasons we wanted to make sure that today was recorded was because the data that gets generated through our conversation now we wanted to make sure we capture in a way that would not be lost to you, to support whatever movements will unfold. The last thing is that I'm not asking for report outs for groups. This is now another exploration and the three questions are the questions until they become different. The floor is now open to whoever wants to begin with what's alive for you now. What became clear to you or what questions arose. Let's see where we are taken.

Comment: At the end of the group discussion I was feeling a little frustrated that we had to stop it and come back, so I appreciate what you say about seeding. And so in the group today I got the image of council practice as these small groups that then break up and re-form with others from other groups to inform one another of what came up in that group and to carry it forward, and then break up again and re-form. I don't think scallops can do that, but we can. I can't see the way to do it now, but I can certainly feel that movement of literally carrying the energy, carrying the movement, one to another in an organic way.

Comment: I'd like to offer two really just personal comments. Rose, I think it was you who talked about victim/perpetrator. What really penetrated my heart was when you talked about how the victim could be silent or the victim could go aggressive, and I see that in my own life. I have so much been silent and the silent one takes over and it doesn't allow expression of who I am and then sometimes the violent one then comes out. And so I can see in my relationship to this group that the feeling of I'm the victim would also mean that I couldn't express who I am. If I didn't believe that the pushy one would also come out a little less often. And then the other thing is deeply personal, but I just want to say it. Collective awakening for me I think I learned something from my father and my fifth grade teacher. We would go to Dodger games and the Dodgers would play the New York Giants and there was inner city rivalry you know. I was really little and the Giants would come to play and you wanted the Dodgers to win, you were Dodger fans and you root for the Dodgers, but when Willie Mays came on the field, who was a Giant, we would clap for Willie Mays, and my father made sure that I understood that. He wasn't the enemy and you clapped for him. And my fifth grade teacher said, we don't

boo the other side. We don't boo them. It's un-American. I'm deeply distressed actually when I see both of the political leaders and all the booing that goes on, and nobody says we don't boo. Now that's very personal, but you know, for me right now in this very moment collective awakening can take this form of not being a silent victim and also not booing.

John: The first thing to say is thank you for trusting this group with something that was deeply personal. It's a testimony to the trust that's here and that's in the field that you would trust us with that story. So, the first thing I want to say is thank you. The second thing I want to say is just an understanding about what it means to hold the whole, is that we may think we're sharing a story that's personal but we don't always know if it's also of the group or for the group. Part of the practice, the collective practice is when we're discerning there's movement inside of us that the need for it to be spoken. Is the movement in need of being spoken? If it is, the group will help us learn why. It may be for me only, or it may be data for the group. When we're silent, we deprive the group of so much data, even when we're angry and we're silent. Our anger is data for the whole. Part of us is enflamed. What is that telling us? We can discover together what the data means.

Comment: Trust is so important. We talk about being available, inviting, open, and being aware. But sometimes in a group, there will be a scapegoat. There will be someone that doesn't quite belong. The whole thinks it's their whole and that one is sort of bringing it all apart, and we don't see clearly.

Comment: I wanted to really thank you for your description of collective decision making before we went off into our small groups, because it crystallized for me the difficulties I have with decision-making. What you said was all these people talk and talk until finally at the end everyone is so exhausted and the last two people finally make a decision. I really enjoyed that description because I experienced that. When our group was talking, I was thinking well, about collective awakening and I'm slowly kind of grasping the understanding that it is very similar to collective decision-making except there is nobody on top saying a decision has to be made. So, it's a process of people really sharing and really bringing stuff out. There's the possibility that within that process a beautiful consensus or beautiful new way of seeing things will arise. And when I looked at it that way it was different from my usual hierarchical approach to making a decision – it's like “move on please,” “come on, the guy's still not here,” “what's going on here.” That has been my problem so far. I can now understand so much better that it takes time to create a process for collective decision-making to be built.

Comment: I love that, and I just have one thought really quickly, which is that maybe collective awakening in a group is a place where you expose the ingredients. You don't have a decision or not have a decision; you see what you got in the kitchen. And if

people are really committed to showing what they got, then maybe something will happen.

Rose: One way also of thinking about accessing collective wisdom, is to acknowledge that we have a large portfolio of different choices as a group – decision-making, brainstorming, priority setting, and strategic planning. There's just a huge range of options and at times it's interesting when we hit a point as an organism where it's an adaptive dilemma. Everything that we have tried, what we know, we're no longer able to do what we have been doing to solve a problem. It may be that there's just too much complexity. It may be an issue that's just too large. It can also be very emotional. When we approach an adaptive dilemma, the stakes are often so high that we need to tap into a fundamentally different kind of thinking, a thinking not based on what we already know – collective wisdom. The challenge is not about efficiency because a fundamentally new solution is needed. It's as if we can't quite evolve with life with our current skills, forms, and knowledge. And so, in moments like that then it's that deep environment when we're cultivating, just bringing up of all the different ingredients from a witness place and then just allowing that to embody us and then we can know if there's a movement forward. We'll sleep on it and have our dreams inform us. But it's a way for me when, at certain times, when simply developing shared understanding is huge. And it allows for a breakthrough transformative thinking that not any one of us can really do by ourselves. These are times when we really need each other.

John: We're close to 3:30pm and we're going to lose someone so I want to see if there's any reflection you would like to offer? It's fine if there's not, but I wanted to create space if there was.

Comment: A couple of things – when you asked what were some of the movements where we observed collective awakening. For me I've been part of the Many Hands and Eyes group which has been an actual transformational shift for me in how to approach a hugely complex multilayered issue with such willingness - not to jump to conclusion and not to take immediate action, but to look at each and every piece of it the way each member came in with their eye and contributed. It was really powerful and moving. So I think that's an illustration of the collective process.

Before we broke into small groups I was trying to flag you to ask the question about how reaction formation responses may also exist when you get a collective moving forward like a tidal wave so to speak. What are the forces that in this community or any community that pull us back, that hold us back, that need to be identified as shadow and more? And the last thought that just came up for me when we were in the small group was that I am able to feel the shift here. I think it's unmistakable. It's like a tidal pull if not a tidal wave. It's very powerful. It's not quite in a form that I know how to talk about, but it feels like it would require something else of us in the same way that this country is going to either make or break. The country is being required to understand money differently, our neighbor differently, that we literally can't be a Heratio Alger or

have that concept anymore. Globally, it's all one piece. Either we will do this or we're in deep doo doo or we may not be here at all, actually.

Comment: In our group it came up how 12-step programs really function in this way of collective awakening. My experience has always been that people in 12-step groups say we're the lucky ones because we're forced to learn this way of behavior and it does seem like in that way there's an addiction, you're really forced to learn how to act in a radically different way. Again there is this sense of we have to function in a radically different way to survive, but I keep having this response which is yes, and aren't we lucky, because it's not just about survival, but that's the only way to look at it. Like that's the only way we'd be willing to work in this way, but if it's just about surviving there's so much more. There's so much more human potential than just that, but at least maybe this will force us to get better.

Comment: Well, one of the things I wanted to say is that one of my experiences during the bones group throughout was how much I really appreciated working in a small group setting. I don't want to basically "dis" the big group, but experientially I loved every single one of the small groups I've been in. I've really loved them and it's been a completely different experience for me. In a room this big it feels like there's me and there's everybody else and the speaker. Yet working in a group of six people really feels like I'm part of the whole. I can really feel. I can see everyone. For me, it's such a beautiful way of relating. And of course it's so interesting I thought even at the beginning when we were figuring how we were going to break up. (.. group laughter ..) It's like all of it is this opportunity for collective awakening. Working with six people was a lot easier for me experientially than forty.

John: I really appreciate the claiming of your experience. There's often a kind of assertion of connection without the experience of connection – a premature declaring of "we're a community now." That may be true in some logistical or organizational ways, but again this isn't a decision of the mind. I'm not saying I'm deciding not to connect with you people, I like my six. There's an energetic that's true for you and what I'd say is that different ones of us may have different thresholds where it becomes more abstract. In a community where folks come and go frequently, the community has to work really hard for folks to have an experience of connection without an assumption of connection. And I think you're starting to imagine some different forms that you might explore. If folks are coming every other week, what does it mean to be in connection? As opposed to folks who live here day in and day out, as opposed to folks who have been here for years. How do we take as real the different experiences and actions as the starting place for inquiry, as opposed to a threat if someone names their experience and we suddenly have no clothes. The story can then be, "oh no we're not a community" rather than noticing the movement. How do we take that as an invitation for inquiry?

Comment: While we were in the small group I had a fantasy about scallops. We form a circle of scallops here. Each of us with our 100 eyes is able to see the scallops directly in front of us and somewhat to the side. My experience has been that my scallops talk and they also have legs, we'll get to that. We're saying to each other, I've got your back. Nobody's going to sneak up on you. Then every so often, this circle of scallops shifts and one or two or half a dozen or so scallops say, let's go outside the circle and take a look at what it looks like a few feet away. And these are ally scallops, and they move out, they see the circle, and then they come back and say, man you wouldn't believe what it looks like from out there. Take a look. And after awhile all of the scallops have had a chance to back off and look at the circle and then come back to it and share with each other what they've seen and that seems to me to be the movement that's been happening ever since I've been here. We're communicating not just ideas for preferences, but we're starting to recognize, sometimes forcibly, we see something that's not working or we try something that wasn't working and then we have to consider what does that mean? And that's where the stories come from. And the more stories the better is what I'm finally really seeing. It's 360 degrees...not only on one level, but up and down too. It's a sphere of understanding.

Question: This has really resonated with me. In the six or seven days of silence and council, you could come in the room and feel what we're talking about. It was the breathing in and breathing out of the group. When I did my first sesshin, it was very disturbing. Everybody looked so angry, but it was because they were just looking down and working not to express emotions. So, there's nothing there. I wonder if there's some way to take what happens at sesshin and move it into new ways, into new groups, because I felt a bond during the sesshin. We all loved each other. And I don't even know you. I don't know where you live. I don't know anything about you, but I love you. So, can we do something with that?

Comment: I wanted to add something about feedback thing. There is actually a structure. It's called the world cafe where they have set up a structure to do exactly that. There are different tables with topics related to a bigger topic and everybody provides feedback and then the tables meet again. It's a very beautiful structure for working in groups. And then one other thing it just goes with me the last few weeks. I'm really interested in how to develop a structure that is a whole in a bigger whole and has smaller wholes. We are talking a lot but nobody is putting this in a legal language with which we can present ourselves. It came up for me when a personnel policy was written out. How wonderful it would be if we had the language to express our vision and stand up to the outside world. It would be like breaking with the traditional hierarchy. We would be standing up for awakening together and presenting that to the corporate world that hangs on to an old structure. If we now fall back to a hierarchal structure, we can go back to victim identification and not be in the power of awakening collectively. But we actually believe it. Do I make any kind of sense? If we let our power be suppressed, we may please people for now, but not really stand up for the beauty and the love we believe in. I

want to stand up for that that this is a model of my values in the world that I want to express.

John: That's a real question. I want to say I hear the invitation and it feels very exciting to imagine that there might be exploration here that says how might we create legal structures for decision making and action that would reflect the values of decision making and community that suffuse our commitment to each other. It does not follow for me necessarily that choosing not to do that is being a victim. It could represent a choice that says I'm choosing to focus our creative energy where the community needs work here and I'm consciously understanding that that means we're going to continue the structure this way because it meets our needs well enough and to do more will distract us. So, that's just to say choosing hierarchy does not necessarily by definition mean victim. It may be an appropriate choice in the context of the community at the moment because there are other places you want to give attention to. We never give up the power to choose unless we do.

Comment: But you're talking about a conscious setting of priorities, not just being blind about it?

John: Exactly right.

Comment: That's the only thing that I mean is to be aware - are we doing this out of laziness or are we consciously setting priorities?

John: Exactly right.

Comment: But not to lose the vision over it.

John: Exactly right.

Comment: I wanted to pick up on something you said, John, about the frankness and intimacy and richness of a story being proportional to the safety of the container and the container being in tact. I think that in looking at the movement into collective awakening, I see that as the movement from individual practice to the relational field, as we say in the counseling world. I drove here from the closing bell of a three-day council retreat that I lead for 36 kids from Pacific Palisades High School. And they arrived without ever having had council before and not knowing each other. And the circle at the beginning you know, was sort of this, and the circle at the end this morning was this. It was an extraordinary kind of dynamic connection that was just beaming out of them, which always warms your heart when you spend all weekend doing something like this you want to see something like that. The tears and the laughter, but to me there was a palpable awakening, physical awakening that I attribute to specifically that intention in council of listening from the heart, which we interpret very deeply as listening without

disagreeing even silently on any level, and what we do to support that in working with skills as people who work with us is to bring a group to a place where they are so present in their ability to be open of heart that you're received in your fullness. So you've emptied, I've emptied, and then when you come to me what you're seeing is a really pristine reflection and sort of holding. I think we continue to evolve. I know I personally am always learning about how to become more and more present and practicing regard, unconditional, positive regard without any ideas or thoughts or precepts or anything, but just being in the circle and being able to regard each other is a practice that is foundational and builds up some tremendous skills. As we walk through, as we interact as a sangha, the relational skills help take our own individual practice to an extraordinary level relationally and collectively. I think there's potential for a lot of support and structures that extend our personal practice. One aspect of group practice is circle. There are all kinds of forms for that which I think could be very exciting.

John: What does it mean for a group to come together and connect when they are together for three days and then go away. It's different for a group that comes back together time and time and time again. The principles are the same but the practices and the skill sets required and the work required is often in our experience different, and we're just touching into that conversation now. I think looking at ways in which your council practice and other practices invite opening and the knowing of shadow arising in a person or as part of the group is important. It's that level of work that's often very difficult for groups. When darkness is arising in me, is this of me? Have I just been triggered? Or is this darkness arising of the group and for us to work on together? Often we don't know until we risk sharing. If we're looking to the group as the only place for doing our work, we are misunderstanding the work. But if we never share the dark or the hesitation or the resistance that arises, we are also probably misunderstanding, because we may be the vehicle through which that energy is seeking expression. How we hold that energy of resistance while also honoring the pristine of heart is work. That's work.

Question: I had a question before we broke up and it came up in our small group, about communication. You have all these eyes around the rim of the scallop and it has a wonderful nervous system for transmitting the information to its CPU, its central processor. What communication mechanisms have you seen for doing that in an organization? The mechanism I've seen here is this group of meetings itself, where all us eyes come together and share with each other and there arises in the room the CPU, the sharing itself brings forth a sense of energy and collective wisdom. So it is the meeting itself that serves as the communication mechanism. Have you found other things?

Rose: In an organization, one of the biggest challenges is creating reflective space that allows for the whole system to be represented. I've had this image from the start, so I'm going to share this. A very good friend of mine was invited with a group of folks from different countries to witness a Tibetan sky burial, where a dead body is cut up ritualistically and the vultures allowed to come and actually eat the parts of the body. What was interesting was when the brain kind of popped out and fell on to the ground,

the folks from the United States were the only ones who suddenly gasped loudly. Everybody else from the other countries were like, "What, it was just a brain." And so, I share that as someone who hasn't been raised in this culture, who hasn't been reared in this culture, there is a way in which decision-making in this culture often privileges the mind and rational-thinking, in ways that are sometime even invisible. And so the processes that I'm hearing about - like the lovely dynamic movement of small circles spontaneously forming new small circles - is more about distributed intelligence and tapping into that distributed intelligence. It's not over relying on the brain or over relying on certain key people who are supposed to know everything.

One of the interesting aspects of our work with systems has been our experiments, involving creating smaller holding environments to represent a microcosm of the whole or to represent the larger system in a manageable way especially when the organization is facing an adaptive dilemma. It's at a crossroads. The issues are too big. The small group is structured to represent the entirety of the organization from the board to senior leadership to front line staff people. It's creating a fractal of the larger organization and that small group is then charged with, as you say, interacting with the larger organism, spreading and getting feedback. That group meets regularly over time so they are taking advantage of dream-time and spaces of unfocused reflection when we're going for walks etc. That group is charged with really deep reflection and contemplation, and entering into a place of not knowing.

What's interesting is that most of the time the folks will say they've never had something like this before. It's usually only the Board that goes on the retreat, or it's the senior leaders who go on and create, or its staff who get special training, but it's rare for an organism to have a microcosm of itself, to contemplate itself as a whole. And in our experience when that happens, one of the most surprising ah-ha's will be, my gosh we had expected to have this small group 25 people or so, reflect and contemplate and go deeper, and then we were going to have this roll out, starting with the core down to the senior leadership and it would cascade down, but it's not working that way. What's happening is front line staff are having yard sales and taking ownership of this and wanting to raise money and giving board members ideas about. What's happening?

It's a different way of thinking about an organism and how intelligence is distributed. In those environments, communication and feedback becomes really key and the intention to create a loving environment is also key because it doesn't mean that really hard decisions like layoffs or program reductions suddenly go away. It doesn't mean that disciplinary issues, if they are necessary, suddenly disappear. So, it's fostering a kind of maturity that allows for a holding where truth is spoken and each eye is taking responsibility for his or her own intention, for speaking that truth. Am I speaking this so I can get even or shame another? Am I proactively negotiating for my needs or blaming others? Am I saying this and providing this feedback because I really want to strengthen our relationship? Am I saying this because I acknowledge that I have incomplete truth?

This intention, the fierceness of really holding the intention of love becomes paramount to this type of communication.

And one more thing that I'd add, an interesting thing is that folks who have "been in formal authority" will often report a sense of relief or an unburdening by these types of processes because the previous stance was 'I am supposed to have the answer. That's what I am paid to do. I am supposed to solve this problem, but wow, I can actually be a part of the whole and be held. And I feel relief.' So it's an example of an emergent form that we've been experimenting with.

John: Folks in power who often receive our projection of perpetrator often feel victimized. And often when we project onto them their power, it's a way of us hiding from our responsibility. So, the victim/perpetrator dance can serve both and can be present both in each of us.

John and Rose Collective Wisdom Talk
Zen Center of Los Angeles
Under the Bones of the Master: October 12,2008

Summary of Group's Closing Remarks

Comment: I feel like we're just about to have the baby at the hospital.

Comment: Well, I want to thank you, and I mean this at many levels, for your angelic benefaction to us. It's been enormous in so many ways and I'm glad I'm part of this scallop. Thank you.

Comment: Thank you for the love over the course of the Bones group. I love the small groups. They're so small and I'm very happy. Thank you. Who knows where we'll go together.

Comment: Thank you. I found the meetings very challenging and formative and forming definitions of things I only felt. So it's really offered me a lot of clarity and understanding and seeing benefits of what we do. It's like we just assume and took for granted so many things about leadership.

Comment: I wanted to thank you for making this possible. This has been quite an experience for me and it very much seems to me to be what we're talking about.

Comment: Thank you so much for this space and the opportunity. You know I often leave this thinking, "I have no idea what just happened." And that's kind of been my practice. I felt really great today when it was just narrowed down to the word faith and trust. I got that. I don't know what else. I love the rising of some of the vocabularies and ideas.

Comment: This was a very difficult session for me for some reason. I felt very tired and I really wanted to just leave. I think I missed the break somewhere. I appreciated a lot of the classes. This one in particular was challenging. That's how I feel. Thank you.

Comment: For me, this particular class seemed to express and condense something I've been experiencing over the last 7 or 8 months. It's an invitation to risk that my eye is valid and trust the process to find out if it's my darkness or if it's the group's darkness. It means that it's valid. There can be trust and confidence to find out and have the support and space and freedom to find out. It's just incredible. It's a process that feels so much and leads us into perhaps the expansion of tolerance and into the true nature of us all - this collective wisdom. The space is just so valuable and I'm just so moved. It's a great gift at this point in my life and I appreciate all of you. It's certainly been a very enriching experience for me.

Comment: This means that people need my data. You know, it's okay. It's okay to express my feeling. I don't have to keep it inside because I'm afraid I'm going to offend somebody. It's data. It's just data! (laughter) There's a really, really big thing of delicious salad in the refrigerator. It's going to go bad. Please take some home. And I will risk this – some people come here and I don't see them every other time. I only see them here and I don't always talk to them, I don't engage them, but I see them. And I'm happy that I'm going to see that person. I'm just happy to see that person, so I'm going to miss this.

Comment: I missed quite a few of the classes so I feel part of but not part of, but I really appreciated so much of the information and the thoughts that have come while I have been here. Thank you.

Comment: Well I had a great time, and I felt the time was used well and deeply appreciated all of our sessions together. We have a full house today. But thank you everybody for exploring leadership and I look forward to what will continue too.

Comment: Let me see how sure I am. I really appreciate this scallop image that you brought and the picture with all the eyes. I hope next time you can bring the ears. (laughter).....Thank you.

Comment: I've been very adamant about coming to each and every one of these and I've had no idea why. I leave and I don't know why but I'm glad I was here and I'm going to the next one. This process of coming together has sort of been like collective wisdom. I heard such wisdom from different people and my whole way of looking at something completely turned around. It's had a huge affect on me and I don't exactly know how it will all play out but I appreciate the conversation. In a way, it's a very simple way of sharing, and working with, and chewing on these questions. It's been a great experience.

Comment: Well, through all of this I've felt I've been struggling with leadership. Does something have to be the central functioning principle or operating principle, and how all that works. And how it works for me, not just academically, but how it works for me. And then you just said something, at least here's what I heard and found very relieving – the concept of distributed intelligence. I think you said that. It gave me a lot of hope, I must say. And thank you for making the classes Roshi Wendy.

Comment: Thank you so much. The bones class has shifted so much over these nine months. I must say it's been like a birthing – nine months. I think we are giving birth to something. I don't know how often we can appreciate that. That we are here, we are together.

Comment: So I'd like to thank everybody. For me, when this started, I would never have imagined where it ended both personally and collectively. I did often have the experience of not knowing exactly what happened but realizing that it was pretty

important and feeling very good about it, and not in a kind of I feel better or I realized x, y, z about me. It was something kind of unusual and yet I know meaningful. I know that I thought gender and leadership and all these things were pertinent and the way this has all played out has been even more pertinent than I ever thought those things were. They seem so limiting now in the way I had thought about them. So, really glad to be part of it. Thank you.

Comment: Firstly, thank you everybody. It is funny for me to look back at where we started and it makes me wonder if you can just start anywhere? You know, you can just take up anything in this container and it will just evolve. I've just learned such wonderful lessons about this process and participation, the meaning of the participation and not needing something beyond that. And this trust. And something about....one thing that came up for me in the small group for me today and also continually in my practice here is just that we're just continuously revealing something that is already present. And so, I'm just really examining that in my own life, not just in my practice container, but in all sorts of many larger processes that I take part in collectively because I do recognize some kind of distinction between this process and participation together and awakening. practice and....the end points that we start with are rooted in knowing and the way that So I think that this will just be with me and resonating through me for many years to come. Very valuable. Thank you.

Comment: I want to thank you both as well, and of course Roshi Wendy for bringing this about. To underline what you were saying, we could have started this whole thing with this session here today and what would have happened if we had started from this place and how it might have changed the way we related to it. For me the value in these sessions has not been the concepts because if I had to be tested, I'm sure I'd fail, but it's about the experience I had in each of the sessions and the affect it's had on all of us here. Just watching it shift and change from where the group was when we started to where we are today. I'm kind of excited to see that carry forward and be expressed. That's very exciting.

Comment: Thank you all. That's what's up for me.

Comment: Yeah, a lot of gratitude for the alliance and the dispersal of intelligence, and wisdom, and for the organization that's behind it. It's really rich. I find myself kind in this very murky area of being a male leader and profoundly feminine, nurturing work, and it's complicated stuff to be a really potent receiver, or a really powerful listener and seer. And it's very rich to be inventing this. It feels new. It feels like there isn't a lot of sign posts along the way, you know fathers and elders that have really done this a lot, so it's great to be in this conversation and the leadership side of all this. I find with seventh grade, eighth grade level kids, in introducing counsel we talk about nomadic tribes and access. We talk about the notion that the leader carries the center of the world with them and the passing around of the center of the universe from person to person as they

experience what it feels like to hold the heart of the tribe, the heart of the people in their hand. We can see the way, just the silent council moving that intention, that leadership around, how just that transforms people to share more fully and openly. There's something really transformative about that and being facile and being really mindful about how we hold leadership roles. I think it's really key to empowering the collective. And that is really much of our discussion. Thank you all.

Comment: Thank you all. When I personally think about this last nine months, the first few sessions were kind of digging out the bones and then we kept going from there. And personally, that was also for me exactly that process. I don't know how much that process actually had to do with the process. When my bones showed up it was very painful, and Rose, I'm still thankful for that moment to feel your love. It was incredible and I'm very thankful because we hadn't known you before and you caught that moment. That was incredibly painful and also it was the starting point of the big healing process for me. So, it really helped to start the healing and finding wholeness. In going to this....digging those bones out and helping to see them for what they are and healing them and getting this wholeness, because healing and wholeness are so crucial. And I felt that also really in my relationship of Roshi's robe. Of course you can never say, is this my personal experience of the sun? Is this the collective experience? It's always a kind of....but I felt it as a collective and in my relationship to the collective and to the whole. Coming up and all in this nine months, it was an incredible process and it fit that those things happened during that time in practice. That gave us a practical thing to...it's not just the theoretical exploration but this is what really happens. It really happens. So, I thank you all.

Comment: I just feel like there's a big stew on the stove and I just got all these things in there and I don't know how it's going to taste or come out but I hope it tastes good. Thank you so much.

Comment: Thank you both very much for this closing session and all the other work you did behind the scenes. Thank you Roshi for setting this up. Your guidance in knowing to offer this to us...I had something to say....senior moment and it's gone. Thank you doesn't say enough, but THANK YOU.

Comment: We went through all of our ups and downs, and this way and that way. It reminded me a lot of the first shared stewardship class. In a way this is kind of like that. And that is wild, but in the sense that it's a deep shifting I feel for us in ways that we can't quite imagine right now. Thank you to Rose and John of course. Deep appreciation to you both. And what's coming up for me a lot is a new language, this emerging I feel for me certainly, and I hope for the group. It's just a new language, new ways to express. And this past week I used contemporary poems to talk about basic movements of life and I feel this is really, really important to continue to do, and explore, and reach out, and create words when the words we use don't quite serve us simply because they have become rigid and locked-in through particular usages. So I thank you. It was very

exciting. There was a lot of movement. There always is in the community, you know. It's always....like a whirlpool we live in.

Comment: I'll add to the thank you, thank you to Gemmon for keeping track of all of us and recording all of that. Thank you very much. Well the first day we started we had a lot of words on paper so it's great the sheets are blank. (laughter). There's a place to put that new language. When collective work responsibility begins, just what does leaderful mean in that context and how will that manifest? And I'm looking forward to really experimenting with how to embody this work and practice, and sesshin. We had a very interesting discussion in our group about that. I really appreciate that point. That sense of embodying that knows these things in our body as much as in our mind. So, I'm really glad that we had a crazy ride to get here, you know. Each class in its own little piece. I hope that we continue without really knowing what we're doing,

Comment: Thank you John and Rose and Roshi. When we first started and came up with the concept of calling this a lab, I had this feeling of all of us with our little microscopes and Bunsen burners and beakers and we were going to be looking at gender and leadership. The winds came through that laboratory and the force just turned it. It wreaked havoc. The Bunsen burners fell over and we didn't know...who knows what we were doing and that's been wonderful for me and I think for all of us. I agree with Roshi about the language. I love the new language and I love image of the scallop. I love having those new ways. It's funny because it's the eyes. Thank you so much.

Comment: The scallop's eyes, they are both my eyes and all our eyes. I feel so grateful for this past year and to reflect on what a leaderful leader looks like. You know in my early twenties, it was a flash that came to me. It was very startling and it just came out of nowhere. There was no place that I can see where it would have come from. It was a flash that there were other ways of being, other ways of seeing, other ways of thinking, other ways of speaking. And I think I had just finished college or something and it depressed me, because I didn't see how or where that came from. And I see now that my whole life has been this path of, now that I have another word, not knowing, my life has been a path of not knowing to a place like this - to what we've created here.

Comment: I love hearing all the voices. It creates such a wonderful creative field. I was thinking of all the words we started with, you know. We just threw words on the wall and we just told the story, you know. We told the story of the Center. And amazingly enough, I found that personally very useful and I had some really, really important insights through that process. Today it just felt like a real culmination of seeing it. We're in a practice of communal awareness. We become aware together. We communicate. We have practiced sesshin to become aware together and really see that out of that can come the communal awakening. That's what pushes along, and the creativity. You know, we had just a wonderful example of an amazing container. And we don't know what to do. Crisis situation. If you have the container then you have a place where the creativity can

bubble up. So, it's just been an amazing experience. I was just reflecting a few minutes ago that you know we started with not knowing and in many ways we wound up with not knowing, but it's a very different not knowing than what we were in before. So it really does feel like a beginning rather than an end. It's been a very rich and fertile conversation. It's ongoing. Thank you.

Comment: Thank you everyone. Now I'm sitting here and ????????? to our charity and it occurred to me that this whole coming together in this group was exactly awakening together. This is the....I actually have this physical sense of actually, that's what this is, right here. And it was just....wow. That's something. And I see how ????????? ?????? as you were speaking and that sense of really what this vessel became, you know. And as this sort of way of discovering this and experiencing this, and it's just...wow. Thank you.

Comment: Thank you for all your eyes and ears. You're amazing and thank you to Roshi? A couple of things. One is that I want to vote for nine months of collective awakening inquiry. But you know, I've been very interior for the last number of months. When I first joined the group, I made a commitment out of my appreciation for the Zen Center and for the practice but there were times when I didn't want to come to the group just because I wanted to be home within myself. But I made a commitment to be here and I've been to every group in addition to the Many Hands and Eyes and the education section of the council. I haven't missed one. It didn't matter whether I felt like I was going to make a contribution or not. I felt that I was an important eye in the scallop and somehow my presence needed to be a part of the whole and it reminds me what you said about when an eye of the scallop is defective or lost it replenishes itself and that's what an organism does, doesn't it? It was self-correcting like so many things and that's what we're continually doing. We're a self-correcting organism. I feel lucky to still be alive and keep self-correcting towards wholeness. Thank you.

Comment: Words like thank you and wow just begin to point at what's going on with me. The real sense of this whole last nine months has simultaneously conceding our selves and giving birth to our selves. It's really palpable. This, for me, is what it means to be alive and a part of something way, way bigger. I also actually today finally recognized that something like the ally function is so generative....the going into and coming out from and going back into is like practice.

Comment: Thank you Rose and John. Roshi Wendy thank you for all your work with the grant application and all you did for the nine months and the gestation period. I have this sense of being in a hurry or haste or maybe sense of powerful forces, today. I never would have known nine months ago where we would be at today. We seem to have come to a new level of not knowing, that's how we renew and begin to continue this process. And I also heard today someone talking about the intricacy of the watch and I had this image of old fashioned watch - the big wheels and the little wheels and the little wheel

turns the big wheel. Isn't that something? Or nothing? I have a sense that this turning will affect other turnings.

Comment: Roshi, I want to thank you personally for creating this experience. I didn't get the memo that this was a lab. It said class and I'm really glad it did, because it totally threw me. I expected there to be a curriculum and a syllabus and an extensive reading list. And I had so many interesting interior objections and skepticisms and gee, I don't know if I want to go there. And so everybody's commented on how we've gone through so many paths. Well, it really is a lab. It's an incredible experiment. And I too came to every class. I made a commitment and I'm someone who's had a very marginal relationship for many, many years. It's really only in the last few years that I've had a real practice. And I knew that I would have an opportunity to know the sangha better doing this. And I am so impressed by everybody's intelligence and sensitivity. I feel very lucky to be embedded as a part of it. I really do. And I think for a while I thought well, it's a very special group of people, no wonder. But now I've come to think that maybe this is what happens when people bring their best selves to something and that that's what the lab is about. And I'm just very honored to be a part of it and I want everyone to know I really appreciate it. Thank you.

Comment: I too am very grateful and I too thank Roshi Wendy for your wonderful leadership. Just two things. I really completely appreciate this. My frame for leadership before was really narrow and I feel like my new frame for what leadership is so much bigger. So, I am very grateful. And secondly I am also grateful to have gained a wonderful new understanding what a sangha is. Thank you.

Comment: Thank you.

Comment: Thank you so much. So much has happened in this class and so many people have voiced it for me. In the beginning, there was much talk and so many words and I like words, you know. I get all excited about contests and stuff. And I knew really early on that something else was working because I couldn't remember any of the concepts after I left. Just like what she said. What I remember, looking back at this class, is every single little group I was in, what we talked about, and your comments, and your comments, and the thing you each said that day. It's like working in a way that is so organic to the core. It's really an astounding process. I really liked the small groups.

Rose: Thank you so much. There are just no words. Thank you.

John: My experience is that chocolate tastes exquisitely fine and different each time. I'm so grateful for the invitation and so grateful for the welcoming that I have felt each time I have stepped into this community. As someone who grew up as a homeless child, being welcomed is no small thing. It's been joyous. I really can't wait to see what happens next.

