

# IN DISCUSSION WITH THE SYNOD OF THE TRINITY

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## **BACKGROUND** (5 minutes)

Acting in concert with others requires seeing things the right way. So, what is the *right* way to see things?

The proposed workshop begins with consciousness-raising exercises that provide a foundation for collective action. It helps participants see things that are not readily apparent in our everyday awareness.

## **Beginning Exercise 1** (10 minutes)

Please take out a sheet of paper and re-write the following so that it is more accurate.

"The sun will rise tomorrow."

## **Beginning Exercise 2** (10 minutes)

Working alone generate a list of people and things (sun, earth, air, mother...) that are essential for your existence right now. Just list. Do this for three minutes to see how many things you can list. Then share your list of non-self elements with one other person.

## The Issue of Hate Crime (10 minutes)

By most objective measures, hate crimes in the United States are on the rise. It is impossible—and perhaps unproductive—to try to affix blame on any one individual or group for the rise in hate which has taken many forms in recent years. But we do know a few things about these trends and the kind of things that might work to reduce hate violence.

Hate is often based on misunderstanding and fear of the "other." In light of this, researchers have found that there are primarily three types of hate crime offenders which are very briefly described below:

1. **Thrill seeking offenders** - young people in it for the psychological thrill. Almost always offend in groups.
2. **Defensive offenders** - Older offenders (such as over 40 years) who are defending a way of life. They will continue until the threat is reduced.
3. **Mission offenders** - Devoted to hate organizations such as KKK, White Nationalists, etc.

There are also two other groups that make hate crimes possible:

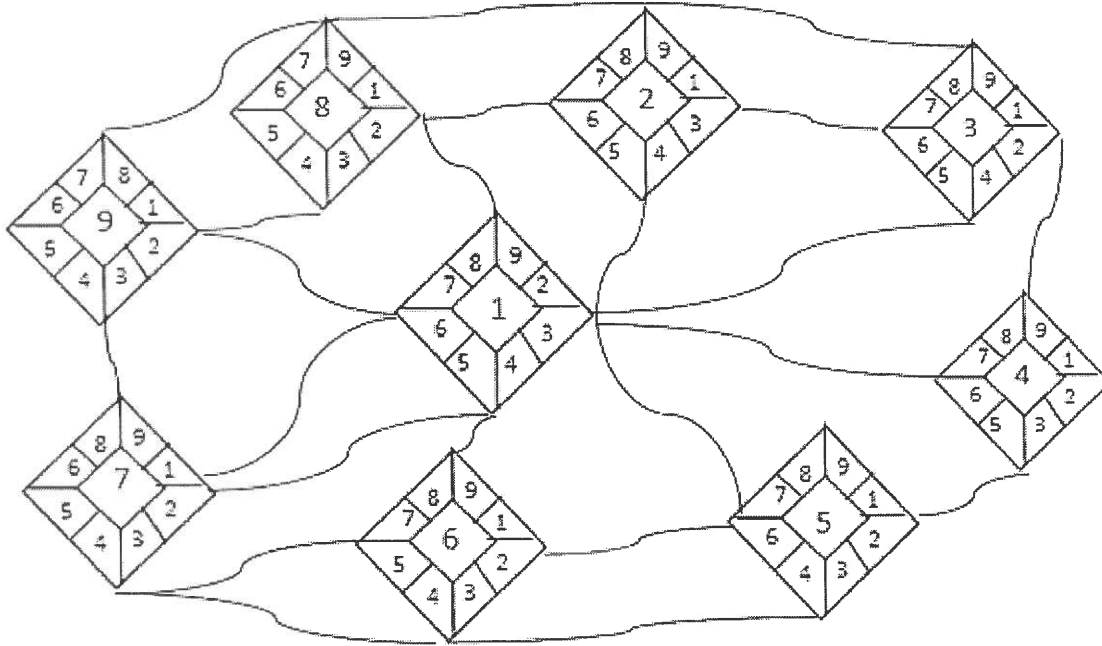
4. **Sympathizers** - "Timid bigots" who agree with the sentiment of the offenders but would not commit a hate crime themselves.
5. **Spectators** - Those who do not want to -or know how to—get involved when they see acts of bigotry.

Research on hate offenders prior to 9/11 found that the vast majority of hate crimes were committed by thrill seekers. These are groups of young people who would go to places where they would find "the other" to harass or threaten in some way. The hate was superficial, and the motivation was more for the thrill than out of fear. Since 9/11 and up to the present there has been a steady increase in the older offenders acting alone - defensive and mission offenders. The change is particularly noticeable in rural counties in the United States. Today, defensive offenders (motivated by misunderstanding and fear) are 60% more likely than they were in the period prior to 9/11.

Collective action to reduce the kind of hate that is motivated by misunderstanding and fear, might benefit from a close look at the reality of the "other." This is the goal of this workshop.

**WORKSHOP (Example): (25 minutes)**

**You are Me: An Exploration of the Boundary of Self and Other**



**Description**

In our everyday consciousness (awareness), it is difficult to see the structured nature of inequality, bigotry, and discrimination. But, exposing the roots of inequality in the social structure may not be enough to motivate change, especially when the comfort of knowing and mastering the existing system may (unconsciously) prevent a whole-hearted effort for change.

This workshop explores the illusory boundary between the *self* and *other*. It is an interactive consciousness-raising exercise using a symbolic framework that shows how working on behalf of others IS working for ourselves, and working for ourselves IS working for others.

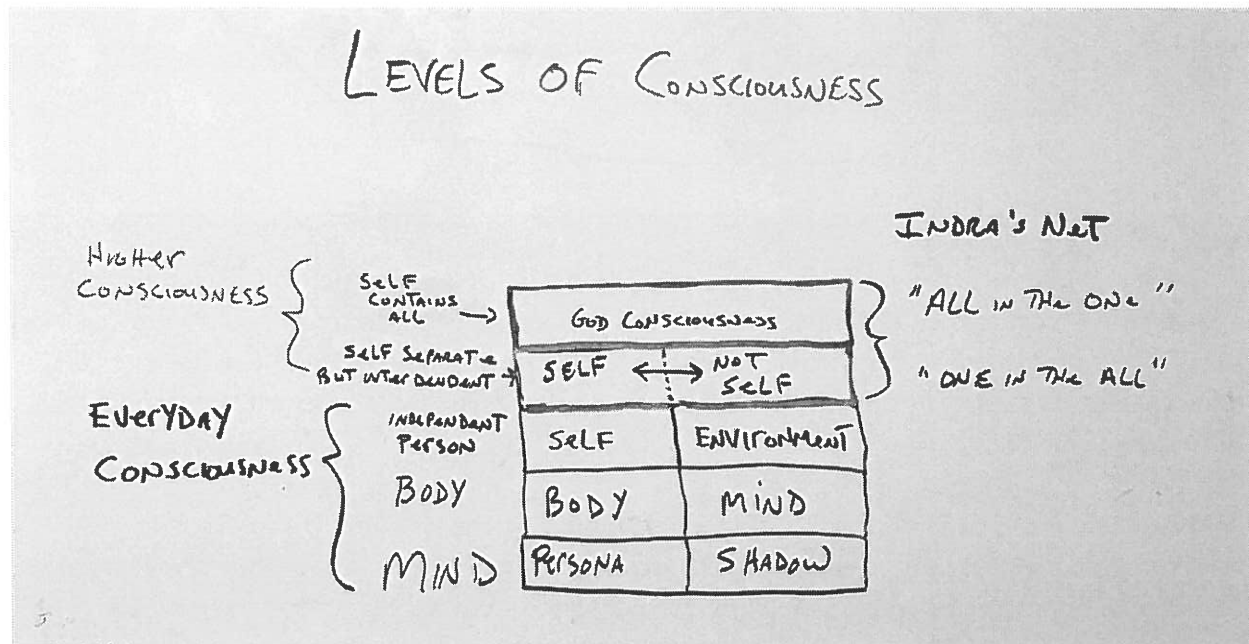
Participants will discuss how removing the boundary between the self and other is relevant to economic and social justice and to institutional transformation that takes aim at the structural roots of inequality.

## Indra's Net (10 minutes)

In Hindu mythology the god Indra possessed a large net which extended to infinity in all directions. At each vertex in the net, there existed a jewel. And, looking inside each jewel, one could see all the other jewels. This image represents the notion of "the one in the all, and all in the one." The jewels are at once *separate* AND *unseparated* entities. They are separate in that they COEXIST as necessary and interdependent parts of the net. They also INTER EXIST by containing and reflecting each other as a single unseparated whole. The point of Indra's net is to help us see 1) the one in the many, i.e., that we coexist and are interdependent, and 2) that the many are in the one, i.e., that we inter exist and that the boundaries between our own "self" and "others" is an illusion.

## Everyday Consciousness and "Raising Consciousness"

In our everyday consciousness we insert boundaries that do not really exist. The boundaries make us unaware or unconscious of the connection. Indra's Net helps us see that everything is connected to everything else.



## SOLDIER AND OAK EXERCISE (15 minutes)

**DIRECTIONS:** Imagine you are visiting a bell tower high above the historic city. You become fascinated by the magnificent wooden arch that holds the bell. While you are staring at its high quality craftsmanship, you become aware that it is whispering something to you. You concentrate and listen very carefully as it communicates the following story to you. Please listen and follow the lyrics.



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Link to song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rJTCKol8VFU>

### ***DISCUSSION:***

Q1. What is important about the story the wooden arch is telling you? How does it connect to the image of Indra's Net?

Q2. What would you tell the wooden arch about the you? How does your story connect to the soldier and the oak and relate to the symbolic message of Indra's Net?

## The Soldier and the Oak - Elliott Park

This is a story that began long, long ago.  
I was a young oak tree in dark Missouri soil.  
And like all other saplings I had dreams of  
growing  
Strong and tall.

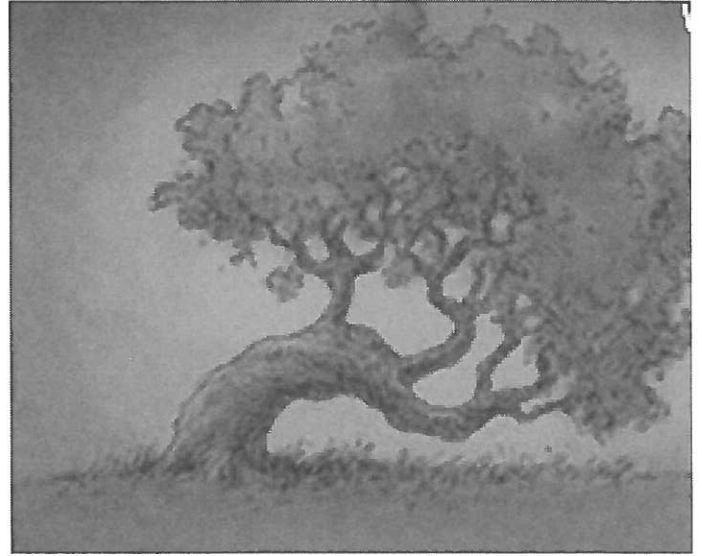
But one day a rebel with a bullet in his chest  
Hung his rifle on my limbs and laid to rest.  
And there beside me as the blood soaked to my  
roots  
The soldier sang a song of grace.

The heavy rifle bowed me over to the ground.  
Two years I stayed this way until the rifle fell.  
And in this manner for a hundred years I grew.  
All my dreams not meant to be.

And then one day two men came with a cross cut saw.  
They spoke of how my arch would hold a weight so strong.  
And I feared not the blade for such a worthy cause.  
And so I fell.  
I gladly fell.

Three winter days aboard a northbound train.  
Three more beneath the hewer's careful blade.  
And while he worked he praised my rich red grain.  
Perhaps it was the soldier's blood that day.

Now I'm the wooden arch that holds a mighty bell.  
Three stocks before me cracked but I shall never fail.  
Up in a tall cathedral high above my dreams of long ago  
And on Sunday mornings when I hear that sweet refrain,  
I see the soldier's face like it was yesterday,  
Calling angels down from heaven with that hymn he softly sang  
Of God's good grace.



## FINAL COMMENTS - (5 minutes)

1. The image of Indra's Net reveals both an interconnected whole AND a self without boundaries. The former helps us appreciate that we coexist and are interdependent with all others. The latter helps us realize that boundaries between the self and other may not really exist. With this insight we can better see that self-interest actually means *in interest of others*. We work on ourselves in the service of others (one of many interdependent parts) and we work for others in the service of ourselves (all parts reflected in the one).
2. Seeing the Other as the Self creates new opportunities and pathways for change. Through understanding it can reduce fear in defensive offenders, spectators and sympathizers.
3. Collective action to address hate crimes can be direct (the explicit focus of action) or indirect (a byproduct of collaboration across groups on a separate but related issue).

### Closing Quote:

In his letter from the Birmingham jail, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. made a similar point when he wrote the following:

"In a real sense all life is inter-related. All men are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be, and you can never be what you ought to be until I am what I ought to be... This is the inter-related structure of reality."

## CONTACT INFORMATION

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