

Highlights from Leadership Transformed

by Sally Durgan

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“Curating awesomeness” is how improv actress Rachel Hamilton described her role at the Leadership Transformed 2014 retreat. She and fellow presenters, Penney Peirce, Indira Freitas Johnson and Katia Peterson, invited participants to experience the familiar in new ways. These experiences were bookended by Greenheart’s Emanuel Kuntzelman and ITPI’s Pam Kramer. What were the raw materials? Four “P”s stand out for me:



Place: In the heart of downtown Chicago, we convened at Loyola University, part of whose mission is “to expand knowledge in the service of humanity through learning, justice and faith.” In the high-ceilinged rooms, windows offered views of the lake and buildings below. Portraits of the leaders over the dining area were reminders of the school’s Jesuit history, and our lodging in the dorms evoked memories of college days for many. I was impressed by the city’s efficiency and cleanliness as well as well as culinary variety—deep dish pizza, gelato and Thai cuisine—which we enjoyed in large and small groups during free time.

People: The Greenheart and ITP communities converged. In both casual and structured conversations, I experienced both an openness and depth of connection with others. Emanuel, Laura Rose and everyone from Greenheart served as gracious hosts. Greenheart staff from different parts of the organization from accounting to student exchange took part in the sessions and shared experiences of being in the Occupy movement, of traveling and of other creative pursuits. During an improv exercise, participants of all ages willingly stepped into the center of the circle of 80 to embody objects ranging from a roll of recycled toilet paper to a judge to a “mistake” to create a scene under the guidance of Rachel Hamilton. We laughed at the unexpected, the creativity and even the “mistakes.”

Practices: We started our days with the ITP kata; and throughout the weekend participated in improv exercises, Leonard Energy Training (LET), art-making, meditations, other movement and sound practices. Even shopping became an activity that could be practiced consciously and Greenheart’s “pop-up” retail shop showcased some of the fair trade items available at their store. Behind each bar of chocolate or necklace was a story of the person who made it, their working conditions and the wages they received. The community embraced new activities and experienced practitioners generously shared teaching and guidance.

Possibilities: In Chicago, with fellow travelers engaged in ITP and other complimentary practices, I sensed possibilities for a World transformed. Two organizations, ITP International and Greenheart, modeled ways to collaborate bringing out the best of these two groups and allowing for synchronicity and synergy, a sum greater than the individual parts. Since ITP is committed to long term change and long term practice, I expect that the seeds planted in Chicago at Leadership Transformed will continue to grow and flourish. In our San Francisco ITP group, those of us who attended shared some of the highlights with others who couldn’t be there in person (but were with us in spirit!). Thank you to all who made this possibility a reality!