

*Passage Two:
Co-creating a Vision*

Following the River to the Sea

Jeremy

I have always been intrigued by rivers. When I was a young boy, my dad took me to the high Sierras. We always camped in the high meadows near little streams. He left me alone for hours while I played out my heroic fantasies in and around the water. One time I was a trapper being chased by a ferocious band of Indians. Another time I leapt Tarzan-like into the water, narrowly escaping a group of native head-hunters. My favorite role was that of an army private sneaking through the jungles of the Pacific being pursued by the enemy.

My characters came out of a string of action movies that I watched as a young boy. The imagined places changed; the faces of the enemy changed; but I was always the hero; and, somehow, I always found a way to be a hero or to save a beautiful woman from evil.

Sometimes I would build a little wooden raft out of sticks, usually no bigger than the palm of my hand. I would let it float along a quiet pool until it got to the faster part of the stream. Suddenly, it would surge down the rapids. I was close behind, chasing it as fast as I could go, jumping back and forth across the tiny creek and scampering over slippery rocks. All the while I imagined a great adventure unfolding—complete with arrows or spears or bullets flying in the air. I would save the beautiful maiden with one hand and steer the boat around rocks and snags with the other.

When the family outing was over, we went back to the San Francisco Peninsula where we lived. I watched the little stream from the window of the car and continued my fantasies in my mind's eye as the car sped along on its journey. Sometimes I closed my eyes and imagined or dozed off into a dream. When my eyes opened, I would be surprised to see that the little stream had given way to a bigger and faster one. As we traveled down the mountain, the stream had been joined by so many other streams and become so large that my boyish fantasies dissolved—I was too young to see myself in such turbulence. Instead, I just sat mesmerized by the ever-increasing power of the river. By the time we got close to home, some four hours later, I had alternated through several catnaps, hero-fantasies, and intriguing thoughts about rivers. As we crossed the San Francisco-Oakland

Bay Bridge on the last leg home, I remember having two questions: “I wonder if any of my little rafts ever floated this far?” and “Where does all the water go when it reaches the ocean?”

I've always been one to try to figure things out. Perhaps it was my inquisitive nature to look for patterns in things, or maybe I was influenced by a little game my grandmother used to play with me. She always pretended that things needed fixing around the house. A lot of her appliances weren't too modern, so I was able to open them with just a screwdriver. She would say, “Jeremy, my toaster isn't working. Will you fix it for me?”

I always took the bait. We went to my grampa's toolbox and armed ourselves with a screwdriver, a pair of pliers, and some electrician's tape. Then off we went to repair whatever didn't work. We took the bottom off the toaster or took the plug apart and looked at everything. Then my grandmother asked me, “What do you think is going on in here, Jeremy?”

Sometimes I thought about how little rivers come together to form larger rivers. Then I made up some explanation about the little wires and coils in the toaster. I am sure that I seldom made any sense, but grandmas are very forgiving. When she thought that I had gone on long enough about the inner workings of the toaster, she nodded her head as if she understood and asked, “Well, do you think you've got it fixed yet?”

By this time, I was eager to see if it worked, so I put the old toaster back together again, and we plugged it in. “Wow,” I said as it started heating up, “Look grandma. It works!” Then, off we went to fix the sewing machine, the vacuum cleaner, or one of her standing lamps—I “fixed” them all.

When I started in school, I was a pretty curious, active, and energetic guy. All the other kids and all the little attractions that lined the classroom were big invitations to me to get involved. Of course, I soon learned that I was allowed to touch only what the teacher wanted me to touch and play only when the teacher wanted me to play. I was confused by all the limitations placed on me, but eager to figure out how I get my hands on everything.

Schools had rules. Some of the rules made sense: wait your turn, don't grab someone else's belongings, don't hurt people. Some of the rules didn't make sense: stay inside, sit down and be quiet, and don't tease the girls. Some of the rules just didn't take: keep your seat, leave things alone, and quit talking to your friends. I was constantly in trouble. In the fourth grade, I probably spent more time in the hall than in the classroom. I didn't do anything really bad; I just wanted to be free to climb and run and scream and interact freely with everyone.

By junior high, I had school pretty well figured out. I was supposed to be receptive to what the teacher had planned; I was to remain quiet, and respond when I was asked to. The teacher, in turn, decided when we were ready to learn and what we would learn. She made the decisions, and told me when I could get involved. And if I didn't play along, my parents or the principal got involved. I didn't like it; I still longed to be outside; I wanted to hike in the mountains, play in the rivers, and climb trees. I compensated for my inactivity by being the class clown.

I spent many sessions in the principal's office. My parent conferences always were the same: "Jeremy, why can't you be a good student like your sister?" "Jeremy, you are very smart. Why don't you apply yourself?" "Jeremy, you should hang out with better kids." "Jeremy, why can't you behave yourself?"

My teachers didn't like it when I acted out or when I talked to my friends during class. They hated it when I was a wise guy. I had developed a pretty annoying, sarcastic tone. When I attempted to "go away" and take sanctuary in my daydreams, they didn't like that either. I could be floating down some rapids, making ready to save someone.

Suddenly, I would become aware that the teacher had asked me one of those "Caught ya!" questions. I didn't have the slightest idea what she had just asked me. Sometimes, I could faintly recall the echo of her last few words and I scrambled to say something that sounded like it might fit with those words. Sometimes, it worked; more often, it didn't.

One time in high school, when the teacher invited my parents to come for a conference, they tried to go “clinical” on me. My parents and counselor thought that maybe something was wrong with me. They sent me to a psychiatrist who prescribed medicine for Attention Deficit Disorder. I took the medicine for two days and got so jumpy that I quit taking it. My mom thought that it must have “kicked in” the third or fourth day, because I had calmed down quite a bit.

It was no puzzle to me what the problem was. I was bored and tired of being controlled. I wanted to be actively involved with things. School didn't offer me anything that was mine. The teacher made the assignments; I was supposed to do what I was told. The classes seemed so predictable—listen to a lecture, read an assignment, answer questions, take a test. If this was the school's way of preparing me for life, it was pretty unrealistic. I hadn't seen any examples of life, in my short life, that looked like school.

Some of the books and stories that I had to read didn't interest me in the least. I felt like life for my teachers must be pretty boring or bland. Yet they tried to force me to read their assignments. When I didn't read them, they told my parents, “Jeremy just isn't a reader.” I didn't doubt that the statement was true. I didn't read, at least anything that was assigned. I certainly didn't count the war and adventure stories that I read late into the night as “reading.” I actually considered my interest in these stories simply a bad habit which I carefully hid from my parents.

As my high school experience progressed, I figured out that the price was too high for me to continue to be physically provocative in the classroom. I settled for making annoying comments, taking verbal potshots, and assuming a cynical attitude. Unfortunately, my bad attitude spread to all my classes, even band. I loved to play my clarinet. I was pretty good at it. But after the band teacher tired of my remarks and had me leave class, I decided to quit the class and quit playing my instrument. My mom and stepfather were so angry that they threatened to send me to a private high school. I looked for other options. I didn't want to go away to school and leave all my friends.

I was just completing my junior year. One of my senior friends had been in an interdisciplinary studies program at the other high school in our district. However, he always seemed so serious about what his class was doing, which made me pretty skeptical. I figured that if you liked school, something must be wrong with you. But, with the threat of being carted away to a private school, I thought that I had better find a place that worked for me. So I went with my friend to one of the open houses held by The Learning Community.

My parents went to the meeting with me. The teacher, Gary, explained the program:

Our group meets for four hours per day, five days a week for the full school year. We start our year by considering two fundamental questions: "Who am I?" and "What do I wish to learn?" The quest to answer both questions leads us to a study of the whole person. We learn who we are by investigating our physical, emotional, intellectual, social, ecological, and spiritual dimensions. The twenty-five students who are accepted each year enter our program committed to pursue personal meaning and personal development in each of these areas.

My primary purpose is to join in this search, while helping the group to strike a balance in their studies.

I'll have to admit that I didn't really understand what he was talking about; maybe it was because I wasn't listening. I spent my time looking around the room to see if I could find signs of life. The students who spoke talked about supporting one another and valuing the friendships they had made. That was a good sign. So I started paying more attention as Gary continued:

The Learning Community is a place where you can co-create your studies with a community consisting of your fellow students and me, your teacher. We all share the responsibility for developing the group's curriculum. Each of us has an important role in creating the program.

The student is asked to think about what he or she really wants out of life and school—personally, interpersonally, academically, and vocationally. Then he or she is asked to create a study contract that reflects these purposes.

Each new group of students recreates the program each year. I will lead your group through a process in which you can develop a set of common goals. Your group goals will form the basis for the group experience that we will share throughout the year.

As Gary spoke, I started thinking about things that I would like to do if I were in the program. My thoughts were of adventure—hands-on or literary. I wondered if this group would really support my doing exactly what I wanted to do. I wasn't convinced that they would like the things that I liked. Also, I was interested to hear what the teacher's role was in the group experience. I listened as he answered my unspoken question:

In addition to the individual student input and the group's planned activities, I help the group become autonomous. Also, I teach a Psychological Systems seminar and develop some thematic units related to events in the world.

I watched and listened. This approach was foreign to me. I needed time to figure out what this theory meant in a real experience. And, most importantly, I would be on the lookout to see whether this was just a smoke screen for the same old school experience.

First, I had to get in the program. My real dad lived in New York City. He moved there after he and my mom got divorced, while I was in the fifth grade. I didn't like thinking about the divorce, because it also meant my divorce from family trips to the Sierras. My dad never lost touch with me, though. We talked, long distance, at least twice each week.

I called and told him that I was thinking about applying to the program. He was worried about me. He wanted me to get into a good university and he

wanted me to be with the right kind of kids. I couldn't really answer all his questions about the program. I did tell him that it sounded like something I wanted to do and that I had to submit an application in one week. My dad called the school and talked to Gary the next day. My dad wanted to visit the class, meet the teacher, and figure out what was best for me. He flew out to California five days later.

My dad must have liked what he saw in the class because he got real excited about the program. He made a strong plea on my behalf with the teacher. He even called the teacher when he returned to New York to tell him about how we engaged in frequent intellectual discussions over the phone. We had discussed several college-level books, including ***Candide***. Maybe his call helped; one week later, I was accepted into the program.

My senior year started with great expectations. I was really starting over. I didn't know these people, and they didn't know me. My reputation hadn't followed me over, so I was safe for now just being me. I felt strange, though. I found myself in a highly racially mixed group; I wasn't used to this. My elementary and middle schools were in nearly all-white neighborhoods, and our schools were basically white, with a few Asians.

I looked around the Learning Community classroom. I was struck by the diversity—Caucasian, African-American, Latino, and Asian. Some of our students were born in other countries—the Philippines, Guatemala, Mexico, El Salvador, and India. As I got to know everybody, it turned out that three kids whom I thought were like me, were not. One was part American Indian, another who called himself Mestizo (or mixed blood), was from Cuba, and another was from Chile. I felt like I was attending an international school. It took some getting used to for me. Also, I didn't know if I could get along with some of the outspoken girls in the class.

As we got to know each other, many of these differences vanished. I found myself connecting to people, and I forgot about their ethnicity or gender. We were all trying to understand the opportunity that we had before us, and that required that we put our differences aside. I tried to apply my usual

thinking skills to the task of figuring things out. I wanted things to work out for me, but I didn't want to get trapped into doing things that I didn't want to do. I wondered how we were ever going to agree on things with so many different people with so many diverse ideas.

One of our commitments was to come to school every day and to be on time. Some of our students had admitted to having a lax attitude about attendance; they were concerned about the consequences if they broke their commitment. It didn't take very long to find out what would happen. The next day Tamika was late and we waited to see what Gary would do.

When Tamika came in, we were setting up our agenda for the day. Gary interrupted the planning discussion and said, "Tamika, I'd like to share a strategy that all of us can use to give us more power in our lives. Would you like to help me out?"

"No problem," she said, in a matter-of-fact way. It always surprised me how rationally she responded to Gary and some of the other students in our program. Anytime I criticized her or disagreed with her, she'd get pretty hostile with me. I didn't stop to think how I may have provoked her.

Gary engaged Tamika, not in an authoritarian way, but in the way that a friend might offer suggestions: "When you entered our program, you said that you wanted to understand yourself better and that you wanted to improve yourself. Those are major commitments that you've made to yourself. To get to that place, you may wish to take a closer look at what you are creating. Then you could ensure that your **your actions** would be consistent with **your words**."

Janna spoke up: "It's been tough for me to get to school on time most of my life. It's been even tougher trying to change my old habit patterns; my old habits are pretty strong. I'm starting to realize that taking control of my life doesn't mean that I do whatever I want to—it means that I do whatever I agree to do. When my actions don't match my words, I feel a conflict inside of me. At times, when I haven't come through for a friend, it has cost me re-

spect from a person I valued. Worse yet, at times, when I haven't come through for myself, I've stopped trusting myself.”

“Tamika, would you like to go back over the events of the morning to see how things may have gotten out of control?” Gary asked.

She knew that Gary wasn't trying to be preachy. Yet, her response was honest and direct: “Sure, but you've got to know that I'm not a morning person; and I'm definitely not going to come to school with my hair looking bad!” I doubted that Gary was going to change anything with words.

“Good, Tamika, you know what you want. What's left is figuring out how to get it. Maybe we could explore how to get everything that you want,” Gary offered.

“Sure, but I don't see what else I could have done; I already said I am not coming to school looking like I just crawled out of bed,” was Tamika's response.

Gary went on; he didn't seem preachy, but he seldom let up in this kind of situation. The good news was that Tamika didn't react as if she were being admonished: “Think about it as if you are on a path, your path. You want three things—to be in control, to keep your word, and to look presentable at school. But you end up getting only one thing—you look presentable. It's too late to get number one or two this time, but there is a way to get it next time.”

Tamika seemed genuinely curious: “How can I do that? I'm willing, but I'll have to warn you: I've never been on time to things in my life.”

“The solution lies in sifting through the current circumstance. Think back through this morning and see if you can figure at which point you chose to be late,” he said.

“I what? I didn't choose to be late!” Tamika countered.

“Then who is in charge in your life?” Gary asked.

“I am!” Tamika said, as if to put her verbal foot down.

“OK. If you are really in charge, then you are accountable for all that results—good or bad— from your actions,” he said, “So, let's get back to finding your **choice point**.”

“My what?” Tamika was getting a little frustrated. I think she was afraid that, the way this was going, she might have to change her behavior. She didn't really seem to want to do that.

Gary replied: “Your **choice point**, Tamika. If you're in charge of yourself, or want to be, then you are in charge of all the micro-moments of your life. If you can find the moment that you chose to be late and can be aware of that moment, the next time you have the opportunity, you can get control of that moment.” He just laid the idea out and waited for her to respond.

“Now wait a minute. Are you saying that I **chose** to be late?” Tamika looked quizzical. “Why would I do that?”

“That question is for you, not me.” Gary responded. “I'm sure that somewhere in your morning you lost control of the situation, and that you were no longer in charge of the outcome. At what point did that happen?”

“Well, if I had gotten up when my alarm rang, I could've fixed my hair and got to school on time,” she replied. Her voice slowed as if she was seeing herself in some kind of slow-motion, instant-replay video. “But, I have such a hard time getting up in the morning,” she said in a pleading voice.

“What time do you usually go to bed?” asked Joanna.

“Pretty late, I like to stay up and talk on the phone or read,” she answered.

“It looks like you've got a lot of information to apply here, Tamika. Perhaps you'll want to watch your behaviors over the next few days. You've got an opportunity to take charge here,” Gary said. He seemed content to leave Tamika to solve her own dilemma and move on.

Then he turned to the class and said, “We can all apply this kind of thought process to our lives. We can take control of our lives. We can help each other, too. I certainly don't want to be the enforcer here. It's much more effective when people take responsibility for themselves. Why don't we each take charge and help make this a strong group? All we need to do is remind people to be aware and to account for themselves. If our group members are willing to take charge, our reminders become their gifts, not criticisms.”

Over the next few days, everyone's attendance improved. Either the technique of watching for our personal choice points worked, or the prospect of spending several minutes every day being confronted by our peers worked. Whatever the case, we needed to brainstorm ideas and make ready for developing our studies. I was eager to see just how all these people's ideas were going to get worked in. I wondered what kind of sense we could make out of it.

I had been working on my study contract since the first day of school. I wanted to have fun this year, and I wanted to follow my interests. I knew that I could complete my graduation requirements, but I had other goals that would be harder to accomplish. I wanted to go to the University of California, and I wondered how I could strike a balance between my interests and college prerequisites. I needed to find a way to hike in the mountains, experiment with my music, and read what I wanted—although I figured that I had read all the good war stories— while developing skills that would prepare me for my life.

In addition to being together as a class for twenty-hours a week, each of us met with Gary for thirty minutes every other week. This way, he could de-

velop a closeness to us and to our studies. We could get his input into our studies, develop a better personal relationship with him, and actually teach him what we were learning. He and I always approached my work and the evaluation of my work from a common place—as if we were doing it together. I didn't feel judged; I felt supported. We usually agreed on my grades, although sometimes, when I was being strongly self-critical, he urged me to be “lighten up on yourself.” Once in a while, when I was trying to slide by, he urged me not to “delude yourself.” Gary encouraged me to set my own standards and to do my work to please myself.

In one of my biweekly conferences with Gary, I told him that I was having trouble completing my English contract. I was setting up a reading list. It was easy to pick a few books off the school's official reading list, but I couldn't figure what to add that represented my interests. Gary asked me if there was any book that I had wanted to read, but hadn't found the time to read. Some of my friends had long lists of books that they didn't have time to read; that wasn't my problem. I told Gary that my dad and I had read and discussed major classics, but that I really liked war novels. Gary said, “Well, why don't you select one or two war novels?”

“I've already read all the good ones,” I said.

He got up and invited me to look over our small classroom library. I doubted that this little library would have anything that I hadn't read or would be interested in reading. Gary reached up and pulled out a worn, yellowed paper-back novel. The picture on the front looked like a war scene. The book was ***Battle Cry*** by Leon Uris. I started reading it that night and couldn't put it down. It was like a dream; I was in ecstasy. I was completing my homework and enjoying it. I went to Gary and asked for another suggestion. He asked me if I had read ***The Naked and the Dead*** by Norman Mailer. I wasn't sure where he was getting these books; I thought that I had read every war novel that was ever written. Here were two that I hadn't even heard of, and they both were compelling. When I read them, I identified with the main characters. They helped me get in fantasy what I couldn't get

in reality—drama, suspense, action. There was also an underlying sense of justice that the character helped to bring into the world.

Our students got their individual contracts in order. Each of us created course descriptions in five curricular areas—physical development, psychology, communication process, human ecology, and environmental studies. We varied our course titles to fit our needs or grade levels. Since the group was of mixed grade-level and we each had different graduation requirements, we got credit in different courses even though we shared the same experience each day. Our program was probably structured more like the old one-room school house.

I was curious to see how the program would come together. In some ways, I felt as if I was still the little boy in my grandmother's house trying to figure out the internal working of the toaster. I had ideas and I could ramble on about them, but I really didn't have a clue how this experience was going to be tied together.

As part of our contract development and in preparation for our group studies, Gary had us bring in all our ideas to share. We brainstormed activities in each area of study—physical, emotional, intellectual, societal, and environmental. We rolled out big sheets of butcher paper and recorded our ideas as the class shared them. We ended up creating “mind-maps,” ways of organizing data that looked like big nerve cells and fibers. We spent five exciting sessions just exploring ideas in the subject areas. With each student sharing his or her idea on each subject area, we ended up with literally hundreds of ideas. It gave us an idea of just how rich the world of ideas is. When we had finished, I became excited at the prospect of pursuing some of the issues that the students had shared.

When we came into The Learning Community, many of us didn't know what to expect. It was the first time that most of us had been in a learning environment in which we were responsible for the content. We had a three-week calendar on our wall; it was blank when we came into the classroom the first day. Some of us wondered aloud how we could create enough

learning activities to fill it for four hours per day, five days a week for a whole year. After our brainstorming session, some of us began to wonder if we would have enough time in the school year to do all the things that we wanted to do.

After we finished our individual contracts and started our studies, we were ready to plan our daily calendar. Gary cautioned us that if we simply filled our calendar with events, we would lose focus. He said that we needed to work toward some kind of group purpose to bring meaning to our work. He offered to facilitate a process to help us develop our group goals.

Gary got out the butcher paper again and tacked it to the wall. He laid out pieces of colored paper, felt pens, and index cards. We gathered around him in a semicircle against one of the walls in our classroom. He asked us to close our eyes and follow along as he spoke.

Imagine that you are sitting in class on the last day of school. You are very satisfied with the year that you have just created together. You start to talk to each other about the activities you have shared—field trips, speakers, discussions, debates, projects, trips, service projects, and the like. As you look back over the year, note which five or six things stand out as having made this the best year that you have ever had in school. What specific activities stand out for you?

When we opened our eyes, Gary asked us to write five of our best ideas on index cards. Many of these ideas had been making their way into our conversations, our contracts, and our brainstorms in the three weeks since school had started. After we finished compiling our lists, Gary asked us to pare down our lists to our three most important ideas. That was the hard part.

Each of us had our favorite ideas. I wanted to organize a backpacking trip for the class and go somewhere that I'd never gone before—I wasn't sure where—as long as it was far away and in the mountains. I wanted us to create a talent show in which we could share our acting or musical talents. I wanted us to have some speakers that would talk about the effects of smok-

ing and how to quit—I didn't think that I'd ever say anything like that in public, but I had secretly wanted to stop smoking for a long time.

Tamika wanted to invite a civil-rights attorney to speak to our class. She wanted to set up a mock trial in which she would assign courtroom roles for us to act out. And she wanted to teach us some stepping routines that we could perform to music.

Greg wanted us to write and stage a play. He wanted the class to read ***Slaughterhouse Five*** by Kurt Vonnegut, then discuss the morality of war. He wanted us to investigate the role that media play in shaping people's opinions. Also he wanted us to watch the videotape, ***Manufacturing Consent***, featuring Noam Chomsky.

Shawn wanted us to play Ultimate Frisbee, an airborne soccer game. He wanted us to participate in a ropes course to help us confront our fears and learn how to work better as a team. Plus he wanted us to have a music jam, in which each student would create sounds on improvised instruments.

Jenny wanted us to investigate the politics and cultures of Latin America. As part of the study, she could share her experiences in El Salvador, and we could read Mayan folk tales and watch ***El Norte***. She also wanted us to set aside days in which we could do art projects or create a mural together.

Kristie wanted to make a presentation on birds, wildlife rescue, and bring in a live falcon. She wanted us to participate in a creek clean-up project. She also wanted us to learn about the ecology of San Francisco Bay.

Janna wanted us to discuss creative approaches to education. She wanted us to work with children. She was especially passionate about discussing gender and body issues and getting a speaker from a battered women's shelter.

Angel wanted us to earn money to support an overseas development project in Ghana and get overseas pen pals. She wanted us to listen to her gospel

choir. She suggested that we read and discuss ***Sula*** by Toni Morrison. I was surprised when she said she wanted us to go to the beach and study tide pools. I didn't know that she had outdoor interests, too.

Adrienne wanted us follow the results of the Overpopulation Conference in Cairo. She wanted us to study organic gardening and plant a group garden. She suggested that we explore vegetarianism.

Gary offered to conduct weekly seminars in which we could investigate models of psychology and spirituality. He wanted to facilitate a weekly support group. He also offered to help us focus on major social and environmental issues that are surfacing in the world.

The more ideas that were shared, the more our group got excited. Joe wanted to go to southern California to Joshua Tree National Wildlife Sanctuary, and he wanted to play the sitar for us. Joanna, whose father was a publisher, wanted to introduce us to publishing. Alma, who was born in Guatemala, wanted us to come to her house and have her mother teach us how to make tamales. Erika wanted us to study the election propositions that were on the ballot in the coming election. Each student shared three exciting ideas. It was unbelievable, I had one of my most exciting days in school and all we did was talk! Still, I didn't know how we were going to pull this off. The ideas were exciting enough on their own, but I doubted that we could create a focus.

As each student presented his or her ideas, Gary asked us to watch for patterns or relationships to emerge. We wrote our ideas in big bold letters on pieces of paper and grouped those that seemed related. As our ideas were shared, I actually began to see some patterns starting to form.

Gary challenged our group to develop a descriptive phrase for each group of events. He insisted, though, that we create the phrases as a group and get the whole class to reach consensus on the phrasing before we moved on to another group of ideas. He suggested that we imagine a student's offering as a beach ball thrown into the air. Then our challenge was to keep the idea

afloat by nudging the concept along. That way, we reinforced the other person's idea while embellishing it with words of our own. The process was quite a challenge—one that led us to a greater level of cooperation.

It was quite a task to bring twenty-five people to consensus on one small phrase, but we made it a team effort. We supported each other's ideas and tried to build on ideas instead of shooting them down. The whole process of sharing, grouping, phrasing, and agreeing took hours. It was an emotional strain, but no one seemed to want to quit. When we finished our task, we had created seven categories with seventy-five activities for the first semester. And, we had done it ourselves.

Gary pointed out that the grouping of these events represented our **group objectives**. Our final groupings were:

To Expand And Express Our Creativity

Activities: Creative Day, Invite Playwright To Speak, Work With Clay, Make and Sell Crafts, Make Dream Catchers, Write Short Stories, Watch The Wave, a play about fascism, Make Masks And Role Play, Write A Book, Stage A Talent Show, Have A Music Jam, Write Poetry.

To Understand The Structure Of Society

Activities: Read Teenage Liberation Handbook by Grace Llewellyn, Speaker-Civil Rights Attorney, Policeman's Perspective On Violence In America, Read People's History Of United States, Watch Eyes On The Prize Series, Watch Documentary On Harvey Milk, Discuss Censorship, Study The Homeless, Speaker From Battered Women's Shelter, Watch Manufacturing Consent, Discuss How We Are Influenced By The Media, Research Subliminal Advertisement, Conduct Mock Trial, Abortion Debate, Work In Soup Kitchen, Debate Affirmative Action, Visit Courtroom In Session, Work In Political Campaigns, Watch El Norte, Watch Cry Freedom, Study Indigenous People, Study Latin American Politics, Study Women's Issues, Study Gays and Lesbians, Read Slaughterhouse Five, Watch King Of Hearts, Invite Song

Writer, Go To A Shakespearean Play, Study Election Issues and Ballot Measures.

To Experience Nature

Activities: Hike At Jasper Ridge Biological Reserve, Visit St. Patrick's Seminary Grounds, Speaker On South American Butterflies, Go Stargazing With A Telescope, Study Deforestation, Backpack At Joshua Tree, Hike At The Baylands, Go Tide pooling, Study "Deep Ecology."

To Explore Our Minds, Bodies, And Spirit

Activities: Play New Games—Non-Competitive Games, Host A Yoga Teacher, Watch Bill Moyers' Healing And The Mind, Set Up A Writing Workshop, Check Out Book Store & Library Resources, Learn How To Stop Smoking, Speaker-Naturopathic Healer, Go On Ropes Course, Play Frisbee Soccer, Study Birth Control, Discussion And Speaker On AIDS, Discuss Gender And Body Issues, Film On Anorexia, Study Zen Buddhism And Tai Chi.

To Appreciate The Richness Of Our Diversity

Activities: Research & Present Our Families' Heritage, Mayan Fairy Tales, Read And Discuss Sula, Watch Swedish Film My Life As A Dog, Attend Concert By Samate-drummer From Africa, Watch American Me, Make Tamales Together, Foods From Other Cultures, Watch Folklorico Dance, Go On An Overnight Trip, Watch Black To The Promised Land Documentary, Write To Global Pen Pals, Attend Kwanzaa Ceremony, Listen To Gospel Choir.

To Work With Children

Activities: Participate In Environmental Volunteers Training, Organize Food Drive, Work In Children's Garden At Duveneck Ranch, Raise Money For Children's Garden In Mexicali, Work At The Ronald McDonald House.

To Help Conserve The Environment

Activities: Plant Trees With Magic, Take Organic Gardening Classes, Plant An Organic Garden, Rain Forest Awareness, Beach Clean-up,

Research Vegetarianism, Study Endangered Species, Set Up Home And Classroom Recycling, Research Electric Cars, Research Ways To Conserve At Home, Study Current Issues, Study Global Pollution / Observe Bay Area, Write Legislature Regarding Local Issues.

We breathed a collective sigh of relief when we finished our task. Each of us had contributed to the group's proposed activities for the semester, sorted them into similar categories, and agreed on seven objectives to guide our group. I could see that our group was coming together.

We weren't finished though. Gary wanted us to go the next step. He asked us to look over our group objectives and see if we could we find a relationships among the objectives. There was something about the process of finding a relationship that seemed familiar to me. I felt as if I had seen all of this before, but I wasn't sure where or when.

Everyone jumped into the act. We had written out objectives on poster board and placed them in the middle of our circle; then looked for relationships. "Hey look, **experiencing nature** and **conserving the environment** are related," noted Paki. We moved the two objective posters together. After some discussion, the group agreed with Paki. Then we looked at the remaining objectives.

"How about putting **exploring ourselves** and **expressing our creativity** together?" suggested Janna. Once again, a discussion brewed. By now, we had become pretty good at asserting ourselves in a public debate; it was interesting to see how everyone got into the act and how everyone seemed to know exactly how they wanted the objectives sequenced.

The task was completed when Wendy noted that "**Society, diversity, and working with children** were left, and she described how they were related." After we agreed, our ideas had come together. It was truly a group effort.

Our next task was to find a common phrase that represented our groupings of objectives. Gary told us that we had progressed from specific activities to

group objectives to group goals. Our next step was to formulate our goals. After more spirited collaboration, we developed the following **Group Goals**

Goal 1: To Enhance Our Personal Awareness

- To expand and express our creativity
- To explore our minds, bodies, and spirit

Goal 2: To Learn To Live Together As Human Beings

- To understand the structure of society
- To appreciate the richness of our diversity
- To work with children

Goal 3: To Develop A Healthy Relationship With The Planet

- To experience nature
- To help conserve the environment

As Gary described our last step, I realized why today's goal-setting activity seemed so familiar. I'd had an experience like this before; but it wasn't in school. It was in my dad's car when I was a little boy. The little streams that joined to form larger streams, the larger streams that turned into rivers. I remembered them vividly. Here we had events flowing into objectives and objectives flowing into goals. With that realization, I anticipated the next assignment. We were instructed to create an overarching statement that represented our groups vision, our large purpose. It wasn't easy. We all wanted to cling to specific elements in our objectives and our goals. After nearly an hour of discussion, our group finally broke through. We found a way to embrace everyone's higher ideals into a single vision statement:

We wish to build a strong, effective community so we can explore and contribute to the world.

Our collective vision in the goal-setting process was like the ocean in my childhood experience. As an innocent child, I wondered where all the rivers went when they got to the ocean. Earlier today, I wondered where our ideas would go if we created a collective vision. I found that, like streams in a watershed, each individual's interests and values were included in each objective and in each goal. Our final **vision** embraced them all.