

LCLI CHRONICLE

"Why the LCLI?"

Often a discussion with one or more of our LCLI Fellows generates thoughts and insights that keep us going. We don't often record them. This one we did, somewhat by chance



Greyton, about two hours out of Cape Town, is where Doug and Beulah were living at the time of our discussion. It is also where we held our LCLI gathering on "deep accountability", a theme about which you will hear more.

Discussion with Doug Reeler & Beulah Tertiens-Reeler

Sat., Mar 23, 2024

In this conversation, various thoughts are put forward by the speakers Doug, Jim, and Beulah, each contributing to a rich, multifaceted discussion about community, creativity, intergenerational connection, and the transformative power of shared spaces.

Doug

You ask, "what does the LCLI really provide?" What I find valuable is the kind of soulful connection it offers between intellectually stimulating people, people who actually are connected. And it's always exploring – it's the explorative part that's particularly interesting, enhanced by its creative collegiality. The basic guiding process of how we gather has been the vehicle or soil in which that collegial creativity can be nourished. In fact, the word "nourishing" is a good word for LCLI. I feel nourished in the process, and there aren't a lot of other processes in our lives that do this well.

Jim

An important reason for our LCLI gatherings has always been to create a space where people who often do not have that space can get out of their boxes—institutional boxes, intellectual boxes, pressure-from-all-sorts-of-life-events boxes. Where they can interact with other people free of all that.

Doug

Sure. But far more important than many people realize is how the LCLI brings people together to make their thinking visible in writing. For all of us, writing is a huge part of our lives. We take a lot of writing for granted and we don't, I think, recognize its full value.

Doug

You also asked about the way forward. As an organization development person, I see a kind of polarity between you, on the one hand, as the organizer sensing where things want to go, and then creating the processes which respond to that. As in most pioneering initiatives, you need someone who establishes the quality of the community and then says: "Where do we take this, what's our vision?" I think that's fantastic.

As we move on, perhaps a bit more organized, then the word rhythm comes up. To establish some kind of a rhythm I think is crucial. Things can happen via the Internet, but what would help create a rhythm is an annual gathering (or every two years) somewhere, in person, on the calendar well in advance so people can plan. We're talking about big distances in many cases but if it's important then people find a way to come. Obviously not everybody, so perhaps we need a hybrid version.

Jim

We had planned something like that for El Paso, Texas, to which about 45 people planned to come of approximately 60 Fellows then. Quite extraordinary. That was hit by Covid, of course.

Doug

In a way it's a rhythmic organization that's almost what keeps it going. A rich enough process so that the preparation for it, in itself, is mobilizing, stimulating whatever comes out of that connection. All sorts of spin-offs are possible. Then it re-forms a year or two later. That gives a little bit more form. But you don't want too much.

Jim

One example we are exploring in partnership with Goedgedacht, under two hours out of Cape Town, is a regular Forum where people from different backgrounds and convictions who share a common view of transformation and justice can meet freely to talk about that. People of similar mind across practice and other disciplines and experiences. Something that enables us to recover the moral foundations that are central to the future is what he sees as necessary. I think the LCLI can help with that.

Doug

A national thing? International?

Jim

Could be both local and beyond. International LCLI Fellows could come in their own right, as Gary and TC hope to do about once a year, or as Matthew Bersagel Braley has done (bringing some students with him), or as five US Fellows did in our Greyton meeting a while back. Goedgedacht has very reasonable accommodation with meals, for example. It also makes a difference to be in walking distance from each other, not spending time and energy on transporting people back and forth to a meeting. What really happens creatively is not in the formal sessions but in between, in free time, and that's almost sacrosanct. That that creates a bond that is irreplaceable, something you don't get just from sitting in a conference.

Doug

And lots flows from it, like Matthew who then brought the students to us in Greyton.

Beulah

We also need to shift the LCLI, insofar as it has validity and value for them, into the hands of a younger generation, younger than those who have been key to its beginnings. It's critical to help that happen if we want things to build. Finding people who want to take this on with in their own ways with their own energy.

Doug

We did discuss this in Greyton last year. The imagined bringing all of our young people together in Portugal or somewhere like that, half way between where most Fellows are.

Beulah

Exactly. It was also to share with our children what we stand for and what we're doing. An intergenerational connection. Maybe we need to pick up on that, daunting as it may seem.

Doug

Perhaps also here and there have a group who discuss questions for which we are all kind of on the same page, perhaps in two or three different places kind of on the same day.

Jim

Quite a few of our offspring would easily fit, and some have in one way or another been present to us already. There is already a little core group we could bring into conversation.

Doug

Perhaps we need a kind of four-pager to motivate this, with questions that plant some seeds, allows something to germinate in preparation for that. A little bit of structure, a focus. Write something to pass around, not overly structured, something with life in it.

Beulah

Another key element of LCLI is the connection with you, Jim. What I mean is that if I get an email, I know it's about being personal, not like a vague something from an organization. It's from Jim, and you know Jim; you know where it comes from and you know what the motivation is. Personal interest and personal connection. And then knowing it's about all the other people who are part of it whom you also know. That is being a fellowship. It's not just a collective, you're not just one among some random people who get together. In a way, yes, but more than that. You form part of a group of people who are also personally and historically connected to each other.

So fellowship is a good word. And, crucially, there is no pressure. You don't have to produce. If you can't come you don't have to feel bad, or guilty. Other organizations we've been part of, church or whatever, always have a level of guilt and pressure attached to them. I've got to produce; I have to be there; I must be on time ... all with a kind of the judgment around it.

Doug

Exactly! The LCLI offers a joyful invitation. That's the key: An invitation. "Come, let's talk about what we can." Above all, I always feel the generosity that comes with it. You don't have to pay 1000's to get to be at it. You're going to have accommodation and food will be provided and small things like that. It's about the hospitality of it. People also help with the transport, they help you be there, they want you there.

Beulah

Like the famous stone soup, we all bring something towards it, we all contribute to creating something. But we do it because there's this impulse to say, let's do this together. We probably would have come anyway and paid for it ourselves (though some people may not be able to).

Doug

That's so fitting. And actually very nice. It's how I've experienced LCLI.