

# CHILA Workshop : Habits of the Heart: Resourcing Your Journey

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"Heart is a word that reaches far beyond our feelings. It points to a larger way of knowing-of receiving and reflecting on our experience-that goes deeper than the mind alone can take us. The heart is where we integrate the intellect with the rest of our faculties, such as emotion, imagination, and intuition. It is where we can learn how to 'think the world together,' not apart, and find the courage to act on what we know."

~Parker J. Palmer, *Healing the Heart of Democracy*



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"Habits of the heart" are deeply ingrained ways of seeing, being and responding to life that involve our minds, our emotions, our self-images, our concepts of meaning and purpose in life. These five taken together are critical to sustaining a democracy:



# 1. An understanding that we are all in this together.

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We humans are a profoundly interconnected species-entwined with one another and with all forms of life. We must embrace the simple fact that we are dependent on and accountable to one another.



## 2. An appreciation of the value of "otherness."

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Thinking of the world in terms of "us" and "them" is one of the many limitations of the human mind. The good news is that "us and them" does not need to mean "us versus them." Hospitality is premised on the notion that the stranger has much to teach us.



### 3. An ability to hold tension in life-giving ways.

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Our lives are filled with contradictions—from the gap between our aspirations and our behavior to observations and insights we cannot abide because they run counter to our convictions. If we fail to hold them creatively, these contradictions will shut us down and take us out of the action. But when we allow their tensions to expand our hearts, they can open us to new understandings of ourselves and our world. The genius of the human heart lies in its capacity to use these tensions to generate insight, energy, and new life.



# Habit 4. A sense of personal voice and agency.

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Insight and energy give rise to new life as we speak and act, expressing our version of truth while checking and correcting it against the truths of others. But many of us lack confidence in our own voices and in our power to make a difference. We grow up in educational and religious institutions that treat us as members of an audience instead of actors in a drama, and as a result we become adults who treat politics as a spectator sport.



# Habit 5. A capacity to create community.

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Without a community, it is nearly impossible to achieve voice: it takes a village to raise a Rosa Parks. Without a community, it is nearly impossible to exercise the "power of one" in a manner that multiplies. The steady companionship of two or three kindred spirits can kindle the courage we need to speak and act as citizens.





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1. *An understanding that we are all in this together.*
  2. *An appreciation of the value of "otherness."*
  3. *An ability to hold tension in life-giving ways.*
  4. *A sense of personal voice and agency.*
  5. *A capacity to create community.*



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The human heart is the first home of democracy. It is where we embrace our questions. Can we be equitable? Can we be generous? Can we listen with our whole beings, not just our minds, and offer our attention rather than our opinions? And do we have enough resolve in our hearts to act courageously, relentlessly, without giving up—ever—trusting our fellow citizens to join with us in our determined pursuit of a living democracy?

~Terry Tempest Williams

