"All Means All": Social Movement Learning and the Inclusion Movement

Budd and Richard Hall[1]

"Change takes place on a level beyond the personal, but can't grow without the individual" Richard Hall

Two weeks ago, our thoughts about social movement learning would have been expressed quite differently. A phone call from Budd's younger brother Rick changed the way that they both feel about social movements. What followed in the aftermath of that phone call has given both Richard and Budd a new understanding into how learning and social movements are related.

Rick, Budd's younger brother was born when Budd was 16 years old. As Budd remembers, "He was just a cute little guy who was a welcome gift to the family who served as they say to 'keep my parents young'". At nine years old Rick was diagnosed with type I diabetes. His health was excellent however all during his younger years and his early adult years. He got degrees from two excellent universities and taught elementary school for 21 years. As he has grown older his health challenges related to his diabetes have increased significantly. He has significant kidney, heart and neurological damage which have resulted in his no longer being able to work. His health care costs have risen so that his medical prescriptions alone are over $5,000. a month. To be unemployed means to be uninsured most often in the United States. Fortunately, the State of Arizona has been participating in a joint Federal-State Medicaid plan called AHCCCS, which extends health coverage to persons who have found themselves in this a situation such as Rick. AHCCCS has quite literally allowed Rick to live.

At the end of February 2011, Budd learned through a phone call that the administrators at the AHCCCS had just informed Rick that as of March 31, he would be cut off from his health insurance. The State of Arizona was cutting the budget and had decided that adults who no longer had children living at home would not be eligible. He was to be one of 230,000 persons being cut off. How did we feel? Rick was stunned, nearly frozen and logically depressed. Budd, his wife, their Sister and their 93-year-old Mother felt helpless and powerless.

In earlier writing that Budd has done on social movement learning, he has said that learning happens in the context of social movements in at least three ways: in intentional or organized ways by members of a movement; in informal ways because simply being part of a social movement causes one to learn so much; and because social movements create environments because of the actions that they take that stimulates learning by those who in fact are not part of the social movements at all. (2006, 2009).

The Inclusion Movement

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[1] We are brothers, Richard living in Chandler, Arizona and Budd in Sevilla, Spain at the time of writing

Amongst the movements arising from the 60s and 70s were a variety of related social movements that might be called movements of inclusion. Stimulated by people who had been labelled as "disabled" who began to push back the custodial services that society had put into place to' warehouse' or isolate those who seemed 'different' from mainstream society. Stimulated by parents of variously challenged youngsters who wanted their children to learn in schools with other children, the idea of inclusion was born. And while it has grown out of the dis/ability movement, it also relates to all forms of exclusion. Budd has been an ally of the Inclusion Movement for 30 years mostly through his close friendship with Jack Pearpoint, his late wife Marsha Forest and his current wife Lynda Kahn who are collectively the heart and soul of Inclusion Press and the Marsha Forest Centre in Toronto. The phrase 'all means all' and 'children belong with children' he learned from them. Another leader of the inclusion movement is Al Etmanski who lives and works in Vancouver, British Colombia. His group Plan has been responsible for wide ranging policy changes and creative financial arrangements for families looking for long term support. As the late Shafik Asante says, "Providing and maintaining support systems are a civic responsibility, not a favour. We were all born "in". Society will immediately improve at the point we honour this truth!" (http://www.inclusion.com)

When Budd got the call from Rick, he sent notes to these friends. He knew that if anyone would know how to a) fight against the cuts and b) locate persons who were involved in alternative health care solutions, they would. Rick wrote up his story and posted it to everyone they could think of including politicians, academic activists, social work advocates, and the media. The Inclusion movement kicked into gear and within days, Rick had both names of key folks working to stop the cuts as well as the names of lawyers and advocates. Both Rick and Budd *learned* at an extraordinary pace literally on the computer all working hours for a few days. One could argue that both Rick and Budd *joined* the Inclusion movement at that moment. Their learning was part of the informal but intense learning that arise in social movements that continues to grow and develop.

In Rick's words, "My initial thoughts came from an emotional level and then grew to be more intellectual. I have gone from feeling alone in the process to seeing the tremendous amount of work already being done. I am interested in how an individual moves from a one to one situation to the learning and exploration stage where they can become involved in making change. This is where inclusion takes hold. It means getting out of the feeling of hopelessness to where your experiences can be developed and sewn into the fabric of work everywhere. Change takes place on a level beyond the personal, but can't grow without the individual."

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