



Spelman College and the Associated Colleges of the South present

*How Good It Is to Center Down:
A Courage and Renewal Retreat for Faculty of Color*

July 29-30, 2015 — Spelman College, Atlanta, GA



Spelman Labyrinth, photo by Akiba Harper



The important work of educating young people places intense, multi-faceted demands on college professors. These demands are magnified for faculty of color at predominantly white institutions, who face additional stressors, among them a sense of isolation, the need to justify their research interests, and other ways that their race and culture are devalued or are invisible in the academy. Contemplative practices can help faculty of color negotiate these stressors.

Studies show that pausing to engage in reflective practices increases our capacity for effective work in the world. More and more people are discovering that regular contemplative practice improves their outlook, motivation, creativity, and productivity. As we prepare to embark on a new academic year, I invite you to participate in *How Good It Is to Center Down: A Courage and Renewal Retreat for Faculty of Color*, a contemplative retreat designed to offer faculty of color from ACS institutions an opportunity to pause, reflect, and renew—and prepare for the 2015-2016 academic year.

The retreat title comes from a poem by African American theologian, Howard Thurman, in which he outlines the benefits of pausing to turn within. And through guided exercises and experiences using silence, poetry, music, journaling, and other creative and contemplative processes, you will be able to turn within, reflect deeply and access your inner wisdom and strength. Reflecting alone and sharing in pairs, small groups and the large group will enable you to hear your own truth more clearly.

We teach who we are.

Good teaching cannot be reduced to technique; good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher.

These two quotes from Parker J. Palmer's *The Courage to Teach* capture the underlying value of the retreat. Many faculty find it difficult to be fully themselves in their institutions, but this is especially true for faculty of color in predominantly white schools. By helping you to reconnect with who you are and what you value, the retreat will enable you to stand in your own truth more fully.

After the retreat, you will be able to draw on these experiences as tools to retain or regain your inspiration, strength, and courage, and to return to the classroom in ways that are more authentic and that resist burnout. Two months after the retreat, a virtual follow-up session, using teleconferencing technology, will enable you to check in, reflect on your progress, and receive additional support from the facilitators and other retreat participants.

Faculty of all disciplines are encouraged to attend.



When, Where and Cost

The retreat will take place during the summer of 2015 on the beautiful campus of Spelman College in Atlanta, GA. We will begin with lunch on Wednesday, July 29, and end with lunch on Thursday, July 30. This retreat is being funded by an ACS grant. Round trip travel to Atlanta, one night in the designated hotel, four meals (lunch, breakfast, dinner, and lunch), and retreat materials (including the retreat reference text, *Contemplative Practices in Higher Education: Powerful Methods to Transform Teaching and Learning*, by Daniel Barbezat and Mirabai Bush) will be provided for participants. Upon registration, participants will receive instructions for making flight and hotel arrangements.

The virtual follow-up session will be scheduled for late September.

About the Facilitators

Veta Goler is Co-Director of the Teaching Resource and Research Center and Associate Professor of Dance at Spelman College. Holding the MFA in dance and a PhD in African-American studies, she has worked as a modern dance artist—performing and choreographing nationally and internationally—and as a dance historian, focusing her research on contemporary African-American modern dance artists, particularly women choreographers. In recent years, her research interests have expanded to include the intersection of dance and spirituality in popular culture and to explorations of spirituality and contemplative practices in education and the workplace. She has presented her research at national and international conferences and is published in a number of journals and anthologies. Goler has been a Courage Facilitator since 2007 and is committed to creating opportunities for others to turn within and rediscover the passion, creativity and strength they need to offer their gifts to the world.



Sherry K. Watt, Ph.D., NCC, LPC is an Associate Professor of the Higher Education and Student Affairs program at the University of Iowa. She is the co-editor of *Intersections of Religious Privilege: Difficult Dialogues and Student Affairs Practice*, a monograph in the *New Directions in Student Services* series. Prior to becoming a faculty member, she worked as a residence life director and a career counselor at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, North Carolina State University and Shaw University. She has been a Courage Facilitator since 2007. Her work examines privileged identity through the lens of participant reactions to difficult dialogues on race, sexual orientation, and disability. She has 15 years of experience researching and facilitating dialogues on social issues. Sherry finds her calling in designing and leading educational experiences that involve strategies to engage participants in dialogue that is meaningful, passionate, and self-awakening.

For further information, please contact Dr. Veta Goler at 404-270-5473 or vgoler@spelman.edu.

...the kind of retreat that should be scheduled at the beginning of the school year so that we establish the good habits of taking time for renewal before the year starts—and again at the end of the school year, so that we decompress and remember to be kind to ourselves.

When I signed up for the retreat I did not know what I was looking for. I only knew I needed a 'reset' button for myself. I just trusted that in your expert hands, I would receive what I needed. My confidence was justified. Not only did I feel more connected to my own inner self but also to the hearts of the people I work with and labor with. For that I am so very glad and grateful.

—Spelman professors' comments about Veta Goler's retreats

— Registration Form —

*How Good It Is to Center Down:
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Name: _____

Position: _____

Institution: _____

Discipline/Field: _____

Telephone: (office) _____ (cell) _____

Email: (work) _____ (other) _____

Special Dietary Needs: _____

Brief Personal Statement

Please include a short statement about why you want to attend this retreat at this time by answering the following questions.

- What draws you to this retreat?
- What do you hope to receive; how do you hope to benefit personally and/or professionally?

Registration

To register, please send your registration form and personal statement via email to Dr. Veta Goler at vgoler@spelman.edu.

Registration materials are due March 30, 2015.