



AUTHORITY, LEADERSHIP AND
LEGACY: WORKING WITHIN

DIVIDES

JUNE 9-14, 2024

Bryn Mawr College

A.K. Rice National Group Relations Conference
In-person / residential

www.akrinal.org

Dear Prospective Member,

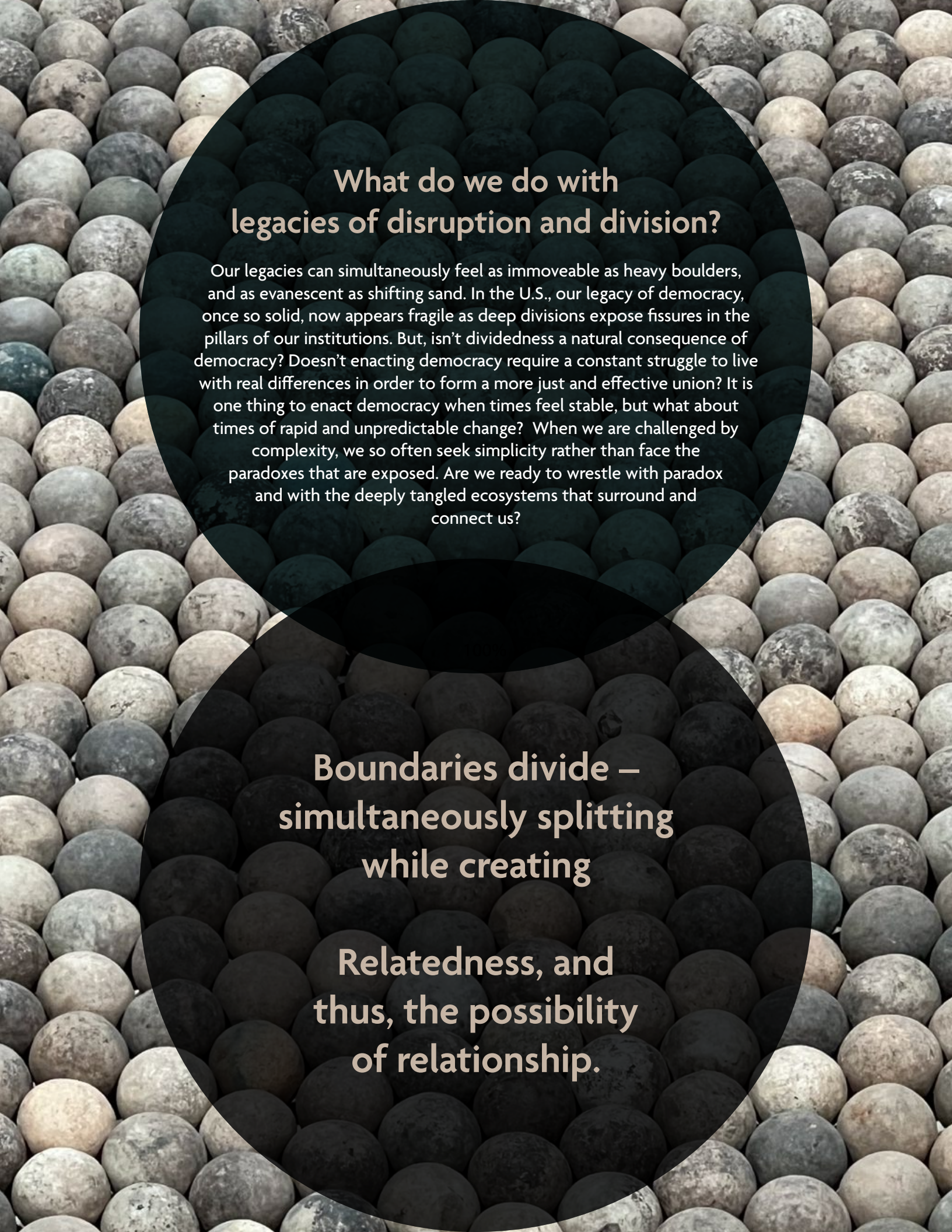
We live in a divided world.
This is a familiar refrain these days.
Our dividedness is linked to the rapid
technological advances that have
simultaneously and paradoxically led to
increased world-wide connection and also
deepening divisions.

In 1991, Edward Shapiro and Wesley Carr opened
their book, *Lost in Familiar Places: Creating New
Connections between the Individual and
Society*, with these words:

*We live in a time of rapid and escalating social and
environmental change. Our ability to position ourselves
comfortably within our social contexts has been disturbed. In the
past, reliable, inherited traditions and institutions . . . helped us to
organize our experiences and make them more recognizable. Now, social
complexity and turbulence contribute to the bewilderment each of us feels
as a once reliable and meaningful environment is . . . transformed.*

Written over 30 years ago, before the proliferation of cell phones and the public release of the internet, these words resonate even more deeply today. The timelessness of this passage suggests that disruption is not a new phenomenon, but the experience of every generation – an enduring state of affairs that is a consequence of human development as well as the legacies we have inherited.

OUR CONTEXT

The background of the entire image is a dense, repeating pattern of small, spherical objects, likely marbles or beads, in various shades of grey, white, and light brown. The spheres are arranged in a somewhat regular grid but with some natural-looking variations in color and texture. Two large, dark, semi-transparent circular overlays are positioned over the spheres, one in the upper half and one in the lower half, containing text.

What do we do with legacies of disruption and division?

Our legacies can simultaneously feel as immovable as heavy boulders, and as evanescent as shifting sand. In the U.S., our legacy of democracy, once so solid, now appears fragile as deep divisions expose fissures in the pillars of our institutions. But, isn't dividedness a natural consequence of democracy? Doesn't enacting democracy require a constant struggle to live with real differences in order to form a more just and effective union? It is one thing to enact democracy when times feel stable, but what about times of rapid and unpredictable change? When we are challenged by complexity, we so often seek simplicity rather than face the paradoxes that are exposed. Are we ready to wrestle with paradox and with the deeply tangled ecosystems that surround and connect us?

**Boundaries divide –
simultaneously splitting
while creating**

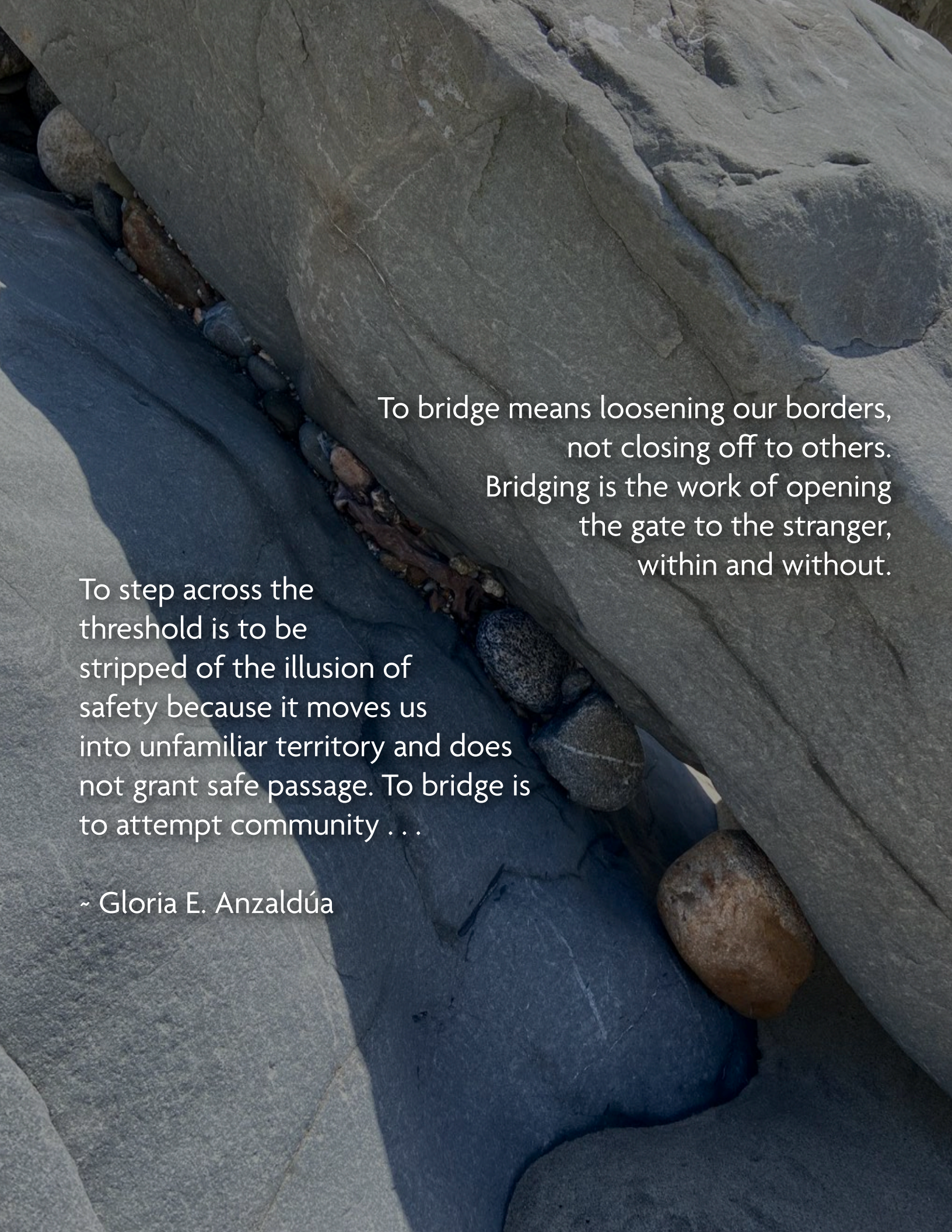
**Relatedness, and
thus, the possibility
of relationship.**

AUTHORITY, LEADERSHIP AND LEGACY: WORKING WITHIN DIVIDES is a Group Relations Conference (GRC) that offers a space to explore these and other questions, and to focus on both the possibilities and impossibilities of work held within the current fissures and ruptures of our day.

In a GRC, we learn about how we enact authority, power, justice and leadership in the here and now, through our collective behavior and contributions. The conscious and unconscious ways we connect, divide and construct our lives together come to light, enabling us to more profoundly understand our location, dislocation and relocation in context with others. As boundaries and divides shift in real time within the GRC, we co-create a space where we can take up roles and leadership in old and new ways, shed light on hidden aspects of our current reality, and open up new possibilities, new narratives, and new realities.

If you are ready to work within divides, activate community, and transform our sense of rupture, then we invite you to join and work with us.

Sincerely,
Evangeline Sarda
Conference Director



To bridge means loosening our borders,
not closing off to others.
Bridging is the work of opening
the gate to the stranger,
within and without.

To step across the
threshold is to be
stripped of the illusion of
safety because it moves us
into unfamiliar territory and does
not grant safe passage. To bridge is
to attempt community . . .

~ Gloria E. Anzaldúa

ABOUT THE CONFERENCE

This is the 58th AKRI National Conference, an annual event that offers an experiential way to study unconscious processes of group life, processes that are ubiquitous but are seldom available for examination. Here, because all participants devote themselves to the task of exploring these processes, the unconscious aspects and tangled complexities of organizational life become accessible.

A Group Relations Conference is conceived to be a temporary educational organization where learning about the dynamics of groups and social systems takes place through a disciplined focus on one's own experiences and those of others. As such, this conference does not offer presentations given by experts. Instead, it offers an opportunity to study a living system as it emerges and develops. The different roles that participants take up and the collective behaviors, thoughts, feelings and fantasies that unfold during the life of the conference become the raw material and the data that participants can access in order to make sense of their current reality.

By using individual and collective experience as data, participants learn to see, hear and understand what is happening above and below the surface, and from there develop ideas to test how to be more effective at being and doing what we say we want to be and do in the organization.

Ultimately, the opportunity offered is to grapple with, enjoy, and develop new narratives that explore and contain our experiences of what it is to be human within divides – so that we can then take up our leadership and management roles in our back home organizations and institutions with more efficacy and integrity.

WHO IS THE CONFERENCE FOR?

A diverse membership creates the possibility for rich learning. Conference members from a wide variety of fields, organizations, educational backgrounds, and vocations have gained valuable learning in group relations experiences. Members who have careers in the helping professions, community advocacy, organizational consultation, education, law, leadership, management, technology, and human resources have found the learning to be particularly applicable to their professions.

The conference is for people interested in learning through experience about the overt and covert ways that human systems function (i.e. groups, organizations, societies, etc.). It is also for those who are interested in how they and others function in these systems through the roles they and others tend to take up. Such learning requires the ability to tolerate division, ambiguity, paradox, and anxiety. Indeed, it is often our fears and anxieties that lead us to turn away from the hard facts of reality and instead construct ways of seeing and interpreting the world that protect us from difficult feelings.

This conference is designed for those who seek to stay with the trouble in order to deepen their capacity to engage nuanced and difficult conversations on the issues of the day and work for change in their organizations. While no particular background or experience is necessary to participate, personal and emotional resilience are important resources for this kind of learning.

WHAT CAN I LEARN ABOUT?

How we respond to a rapidly changing, unpredictable and emerging context -- do we become more divided and rigid?

Our divides, both real and imagined – can our divides be simultaneously defensive, and also pathways to a profound understanding of the tangled complexity of our connectedness?

Paradox – how can we hold and work with paradox; how can we stay with the trouble?

Legacies – can we both honor and rupture the legacies that we have inherited – and be responsive to the legacies that we are creating and leaving?

The fluid nature of most things, including power, authority, role, identities, task, boundaries.

The experiences of others – how can I hold both my experience and that of another?

The meaning made of characteristics such as race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, age and ability in the context of this organization.

How we individually and collectively take up roles, negotiate authority, accomplish tasks and manage anxiety in a changing context.

Competition, collaboration, conflict, coalition-building, envy, delegation and love.

The connection between self and system; the tangled relatedness of part and whole; how and when our relatedness and dividedness are linked.



PRIMARY TASK / AIM / PURPOSE

The **primary task** while in the conference is to learn from experience about authority, leadership, legacy and working within divides by exploring the conscious and unconscious dynamics that emerge in the here and now of the conference and in its wider context.

The **aim** of the conference is to provide the optimum space for participants to exercise their freedom, power and authority to take up their working roles in conference events.

The **purpose** of the conference is to build leadership capacity for one's life outside the conference and to develop a spirit of inquiry into the lived experience of organizational life in order to promote the common good.



CONFERENCE EVENTS

The conference is organized as a series of events that provide opportunities to learn through experience in a variety of social contexts. Each event offers a different view from which one experiences and perceives oneself and others, which may change over time. Participants develop different capacities as they adjust to the distinct dynamics of each event and explore the reality of their situation in the here-and-now. The events will begin and end promptly at the times designated. A final schedule will be provided at registration.

OPENING AND CLOSING PLENARIES begin and end the conference, providing an opportunity for members and staff to express and explore their thoughts and feelings on crossing into and out of the conference space.

SMALL STUDY GROUPS provide an opportunity to learn about dynamics in small groups similar to teams and committees. The small study group consists of 12 or fewer members with one or two staff as consultants.

LARGE STUDY GROUPS include all members in the conference and provide an opportunity to study the dynamics that arise in larger groups where it is more difficult to know or see every member and where group myths reflecting various assumptions can arise quickly and powerfully to impact emotions, thoughts and behavior. A team of consultants will work with the large study groups.

INTERGROUP EVENT AND INTERSECTING SYSTEMS EVENT

These events provide members with an opportunity to form their own groups and determine their own group task. They each open and close with a plenary and take place over several sessions. The Intergroup Event provides an opportunity to study how groups form and authorize their members to do work on their behalf, while the Intersecting Systems Event widens the lens of focus to include political and systemic forces that arise as different groups form and interact with each other and management.

SILENT EVENT/ SENSING MATRIX

The task of these events is to explore the state of the conference system through silence, through creative expression, through the body and through dreams and associations.

BRIDGING GROUPS / EVENT

Bridging groups and the Bridging Event end each day and the conference as a whole, providing participants the opportunity to reflect on their roles and experiences within the conference, and later, the application of conference experience to life beyond the conference.



PRAXIS BUILDING

This conference offers a Praxis Building opportunity for those who would like to build their capacity to understand and utilize a Group Relations stance. Interested participants have an opportunity to take up a consulting role in their Small Study Group and receive direct feedback and role analysis from senior staff and fellow members. Participation in at least **two** group relations conferences (or the equivalent) is required.

Those who wish to apply should complete the supplemental questions at the bottom of the regular registration form. For more information, contact Sarah Rosenbaum at sarahcr@earthlink.net.

Early application is highly recommended.

RESEARCH

Seth Harkins, EdD will be examining data about the learning that takes place during and after this conference. As part of this research, you and staff will be invited to participate in post conference surveys and interviews. Responses are voluntary and personal identity confidential.



CONFERENCE STAFF

Staff administer and manage the conference as a whole and take up consulting roles during conference events. As administration, staff articulate the primary task, aim, and purpose, and design the conference to serve those goals. As management, staff manage the conditions of conference events, particularly in relation to time, task, and territory. Staff do not manage the participants or their behavior. Instead, participants are free to engage the primary task, aim, and purpose as they choose and as they authorize themselves and each other to do.

As consultants, staff link their own experiences to the activities of the conference and offer working hypotheses and reflections that explore the unconscious aspects of the organizational behavior that is emerging. In these roles, staff are actively involved in the life of the conference. Their reflections focus on group level dynamics rather than on the individual, and on unconscious as well as conscious dynamics.

The ways in which staff work are always open for examination. Staff for the conference will be drawn from the list below, and may include others not listed here. A final list of staff will be provided at registration on-site.



Evangeline Sarda, JD
Conference Director

Associate Clinical Professor of Law, Boston College Law School; Director, Prosecution Clinic and Co-Director, Criminal Legal Clinic; former Faculty Director, Leaders Entering and Advancing Public Service (LEAPS). Treasurer, the Research and Education Collaborative with Al-Quds University. Board Member, American Key Food Products; University of the Cordilleras (Baguio). Past Postgraduate Fellow, Massachusetts Institute for Psychoanalysis. Member, International Forum for Social Innovation, France; AKRI Affiliate Member of Midwest Center, NY Center, CSGSS (former board member); Board Member, Centre for Social Dreaming; Board Member, Group Relations International; Fellow, A. K. Rice Institute.



mak wemuk, JD
Associate Director of Conference

Principal, Luna Consulting & Coaching (health equity, racial equity, nonprofit executive coaching, organizational development); Fellow, Director Development Mentor, and member of the Reparations and Conference committees, A.K. Rice Institute; Vice President, Washington-Baltimore Center for the Study of Group Relations (WBC); member and current weekend conference director, Center for the Study of Groups and Social Systems (CSGSS); Co-Creator, Group Relations International; Past-President, National Association of Latino Healthcare Executives (NALHE); member, National Lawyers Guild.



Rebecca Abell, PsyD, CGP
Associate Director of Administration

Psychologist and Director of Psychology Externship, MedStar Washington Hospital Center; Past President, Center for the Study of Groups and Social Systems (CSGSS); Membership Committee Co-Chair, Washington-Baltimore Center for the Study of Group Relations (WBC); Member, A. K. Rice Institute for the Study of Social Systems (AKRI); Certified Group Psychotherapist (CGP), American Group Psychotherapy Association (AGPA); Member, Mid-Atlantic Group Psychotherapy Society (MAGPS); Co-Creator, Group Relations International (GRI).



Nicole Borunda
Associate Director of Administration, Subsystems

Chief Goodness Officer, For Goodness' Sake Consulting; Doctoral Student in the Social-Organizational Psychology program at Teachers College, Columbia University; Lab Coordinator at the Difficult Conversations Lab, Morton Deutsch International Center for Cooperation and Conflict Resolution; Research Assistant at the BISH Lab, San Diego State University; Co-creator, Group Relations International.



Sarah Rosenbaum, PhD
Associate Director, Praxis Building

Clinical psychologist and consultant in private practice; cofounder, DBT of Greater Philadelphia; member, New York Center, Fellow and past president, A.K. Rice Institute; co-creator and training faculty, Group Relations International.



Annysa Polanco
Associate Director, Bridging

Director of Equity and Workplace Culture at the Museum of Modern Art. A DEI Practitioner and Social Worker by training, Annysa's work focuses on building resiliency in people and systems through organizational change. She serves on the Board of AKRI as the current Vice-President and is a member of the New York Center.



Andrew Alsoraimi-Espiritu, MA
Consultant

Assistant Director of Admissions and Marketing, School of Global Policy and Strategy, UC San Diego; Member, City Farmers Goat Cooperative; Co-Creator, Group Relations International; Board Member, Grex; Board Member, Sparrow Academy; Returned Peace Corps Volunteer



Anita Prasad
Consultant

Executive Director, Working for Change; Member of the board, Parkdale Neighborhood Land Trust; Leadership Team, Insight for Community Impact.



Janice G. Brewington, PhD, RN, FAAN
Consultant

Chief Program Officer and Director for the Center for Transformational Leadership, National League for Nursing. AKRI Fellow; member, AKRI Midwest Center and CCSGO Center; executive coach; organizational development consultant.



Leo Wilton, PhD
Consultant

Professor, Department of Human Development, State University of New York at Binghamton; Lifetime Member, Association of Black Psychologists; President-Elect, A. K. Rice Institute for the Study of Social Systems (AKRI); Member and Past President, New York Center for the Study of Groups, Organizations, and Social Systems; Secretary, Washington-Baltimore Center for the Study of Group Relations (WBC); Co-Creator, Group Relations International; Member, International Society for the Psychoanalytic Study of Organizations (ISPSO); Fellow, American Psychological Association (APA).



Kathleen Pogue-White, PhD
Elder

Principal, Pogue White Consultancy, LLC, psychoanalyst, executive coach, organizational consultant, and Tavistock Group Relations practitioner. Experienced reflective practitioner in for-profit, not-for-profit, and educational sectors. Founding member and past director of the organization program at William Alanson White Institute for Psychology and Psychoanalysis (WAW). Currently, founder and co-director of the Chocolate Salon, a program of connection and reflection for Black clinicians.



Betsy Hasegawa, EdD
Elder

Member of GREX, West Coast Affiliate of AKRI; Member and Fellow, A.K. Rice Institute for the Study of Social Systems; Co-creator with Group Relations International.



Seth Harkins, EdD
Elder, Researcher

Principal of Harkins Educational Consulting and Advocacy LLC; Retired; thirty-seven years in public and private school administration including: former chief executive officer, superintendent, assistant superintendent and principal; former director of the Illinois Individual Care Grant Program, Illinois Division of Mental Health; currently member and past president of board of directors of the Illinois Community and Residential Authority; former hearing officer, Illinois State Board of Education; past member and secretary the A.K. Rice Institute for the Study of Social Systems, past president and member of the Chicago Center for the Study of Groups and Organizations; president of the Midwest Group Relations Center; member A.K. Rice Institute Conference Committee; member A.K. Rice Institute Training and Certification Committee 2.0; Co-founder and board member of the China-America Society for the Study of Groups and Organizations. Researcher interested in systems and persons with alternate abilities, addiction and recovery, and group relations.

ATTENDANCE

The conference is designed to be a single integrated educational experience with each component building upon the next. Individuals who know in advance that they are unable to attend all sessions are discouraged from applying. Anyone who must leave for any reason is requested to inform the administration.

Members who do not complete in-person registration may be administratively withdrawn from the conference without a refund.

SPECIAL NOTE

The conference is an educational endeavor and does not provide psychotherapy or sensitivity training. Although the experiential learning available can be stimulating and enriching, it can be emotionally stressful and confrontational as well.

Thus, applicants who are ill or experiencing significant personal difficulties or are intensely emotionally triggered by views different from their own should forgo participating at this time.

Registration and conference membership may be refused or rescinded at the discretion of the conference staff.

CONTINUING EDUCATION

Please email Rebecca Abell at GRleastGRC@gmail.com **no later than June 1, 2024** if you are seeking CE credit.

WITHDRAWAL POLICY

Fees can only be refunded (less \$100 administration charge) if a written notice of cancellation (via email) is received by 6 PM PST on May 1, 2024.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Staff will not report the behavior of any individual member to anyone outside the conference.

CONFERENCE LOCATION

Bryn Mawr College
Morris Avenue & Yarrow Street
Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania, 19010
<https://www.brynmawr.edu/about-college/visit-guide/maps-directions>

CONFERENCE DATES AND TIMES

June 9, 2024 (Sunday) to June 14, 2024 (Friday)
Conference begins at 1:00 pm
Conference ends at 3:15 pm

Dalton Hall, Bryn Mawr College

Information about dorms and on-site registration will be sent by email after all registration forms have been completed and registration fees paid.

ALL: DIVIDES is a residential conference. Fees include dormitory housing beginning June 9th at registration, and meals beginning at dinner on the same day. For your convenience, dorm rooms can be reserved a day before the conference for an additional fee.

REGISTRATION FEES

| | EARLY REGISTRATION | AFTER MAY 1, 2024 |
|--|-----------------------|----------------------|
| Registration fee | \$2,750 | \$3,250 |
| Praxis Building fee* | \$2,750 | \$3,250 |
| AKRI member/ GRI co-creator | \$2,500 | \$3,000 |
| Group of 3 or more from same organization | \$2,500 | \$3,000 |
| Full-time student | \$2,250 | \$2,750 |

Registration Closes: June 3, 2024

*Additional reductions do not apply.

Scholarships are available.

For more information, please contact us at: GRleastGRC@gmail.com

REGISTER HERE

AUTHORITY, LEADERSHIP AND
LEGACY: WORKING WITHIN

DIVIDES



www.akrinal.org