

Into the Deeper Story

For the Fall, 2015 Retreat of the New Orleans Men's Center, which marks the 25th anniversary of NOMC retreats, we invite men to reflect anew on the "deeper story" of our lives, and of the NOMC, and even the men's movement.

Connecting the Dots

The 'arc' of our lives, careers, and partnerships, and the arc of major movements/religions, nation/tribes and even worldviews, often begin with a naïve, linear story of heroic patriarchal conquest that is met with an apparent failure:

- Loss of a 'battle' (e.g., disease, addiction, bankruptcy, divorce)
- Death/downfall of a leader/king/parent
- Disappointment even in 'victory' that turns out to be unsatisfying

As we join with other men to review our individual 'stories', we find common elements that allow us to connect the dots and draw a new, non-linear 'arc' of our lives, one with a deeper meaning – more nuanced, mysterious, and paradoxical, as:

- The stone that the builders rejected becomes the cornerstone
- The phoenix rises from the ashes
- The phony gets real

Beyond the Hero

In his 1993 book, *Beyond the Hero*, San Francisco psychiatrist Allan Chinen used an analysis of classic folktales to show how the more highly evolved stories went beyond the cartoonish John Wayne hero story to incorporate deeper elements like:

- Being transformed by a true encounter with the feminine/anima
- Renouncing the power-hungry, conquering, controlling, consuming hero-fuhrer
- Using the energy of the magician/shaman/joker to 'succeed' in a different way

Citing other early men's movement writers like Robert Bly (*Iron John*), Sam Keen (*Fire in the Belly*), and Robert Moore (*King, Warrior, Magician, Lover*), he reveals how historically men in all cultures, especially indigenous ones, preserved stories and developed rituals that retained the deeper meaning of real heroism and genuine masculinity.

Whither From Here? From 1990 to 2015 to ...?

When the facilitators of this retreat picked up this book recently, we felt it might be a good time to re-visit the role of real masculinity in our lives and in the NOMC. Have we as NOMC men really internalized the great lessons of the men's movement of the 1980-90's, when NOMC started, and how has the 'arc' of the NOMC and the men's movement itself paralleled the non-linear arc of each our own lives? And what does that mean for the future of us?

Preparing for the Retreat:

To prepare for this retreat, we invite you to think about the story of your own life and how it has been affected by your involvement in the NOMC. This may require some deep reflection on your part, maybe writing down ideas, journaling, sleeping on it, exploring your dreams, and talking with other men.

For the Saturday night 'ritual' for this retreat, one of our early facilitators, Jim O'Neill, will assist us in an evening of storytelling about men and the NOMC. Gathered around the great circle (to be continued informally around the campfire later), he will invite men to share, individually or in small group panels, some of the stories of men and the NOMC. Things like:

- Memories of significant moments in NOMC retreats
- Personal testimonials of how NOMC has impacted men's lives
- Dreams and imagining for the future

Arts and crafts

For the arts and crafts part of the retreat, New Orleans artist and long-time NOMC member Steve Lindsley will lead us in an exploration of the power of mythical symbols. He will invite men to participate in creating individual and/or small group projects using archetypal non-verbal cues, like animal totems (e.g., the clans of NOMC) or perhaps symbolic figures with astrological, heraldic (coat of arms), spirit talismanic or prehistoric cave art roots. As preparation, please bring any 2-D or 3-D objects with spirit/animal/sexual power for you.

Story

The story for this retreat will be narrated by George Beals. You can expect a 'deep' story - full of nuance, mystery, and paradox (for a sense of that, see the [images](#) on the next pages).

Poems

As always, men are invited to bring their favorite poems or readings to read aloud in the circle. Again, we invite you to give this some of your time in advance: read some of your favorite pieces that you think might speak to you at this time (because of this theme or because of life events for you), or take time to write something new and bring it.

RSVP

The dates are Friday, October 23rd (dinner at 6PM) through noon on Sunday, October 25th. The cost is \$130, including food and cabin lodging. The location is King's Arrow Ranch in Hillsdale, MS, as usual. To let us know if you intend to come, please reply via e-mail to retreat@thenomc.org. For comments, or inquiries about partial scholarships, call or e-mail:

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