

A FEW THOUGHTS ON THE SYMPOSIUM

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The gathering was a gift valued in many ways. It brought together people who from multiple perspectives and experiences, personal and professional, gave voice and energy and insight into the never ending mission, the great challenge, "to change the face and the heart of America."

For me it was invaluable to explore again and deepen my understanding of the toots of this challenge, as articulated in the life and work and writings of Robert Gard. And it was painful in the way that it is painful as we see ourselves, our time, our work, more clearly.

The face and the heart of America are changing, of course. In the direction and with the heart that Gard imagined? Have we, have the heart and the face been well served by the systems and programs and projects designed and led and implemented by so many in that room at wingspread? We can answer both a strong Yes! And in the same breath see how many gaps and fissures remain. How many people still are on the margins, or still looking for a seat at the table.

It's not surprising that systems and policy designed and implemented 40 and more years ago function poorly today. It is not surprising that what will work better, be more fully human, remains still to be created. Yes there are examples. And great uncertainty.

We called out the reality that systems of power and privilege remain steadfastly in place in many many ways. And we see that vividly in the trumpism of politics and all it has unleashed.

For myself, I feel the tug and tension between working with existing systems and organizations and imagining and actively building the next. Challenging, and yes giving up, power to effect this change. I'm committed to doing that, and the gathering helped renew and affirm and inform that commitment.

I met people I didn't know. Learned of work and ideas new to me. Felt pushed in good ways.