

Summer of Peace 2012™: Pete Carroll & Brian Center

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Philip: Hello everyone. This is Philip Hellmich, the Director of Peace with The Shift Network. We're continuing our journey with the Summer of Peace. We're in the week of Urban Peace. We've just had some just amazing speakers already.

Today is a real treat. We're having with us today will be Pete Carroll who is up in the training camp right now, the Seattle Seahawks and is being pulled out of a meeting to come join us.

We have Brian Center, the Executive Director of A Better LA. We also have Alfred Lomas who is one of the outreach workers doing amazing work with Better LA in South LA. There's potential that Ray Bercini, a sheriff detective will also be joining us shortly.

As you know, a little background here, Pete Carroll is the head coach of the Seattle Seahawks and he also is the founder of A Better LA when he was working with coaching with USC down in L.A.

He's also the author of Win Forever, a New York Times best-selling book that unveiled his philosophies about coaching and leadership.

Brian has got an extensive background also in community work. He has a law degree and he's been the champion there with the Better LA Center. Helping it get going and do pull in collaboration.

We're thrilled to have Alfred join us, who is part of the outreach team. So I understand Coach Carroll is being pulled out of a meeting. So Brian and Alfred, so let me welcome you two for being with us today.

Brian: Thanks for having us.

Alfred: Yeah, thanks for having us.

Philip: Okay. Wonderful. So we'll hear Pete Carroll's voice here probably any minute. So let's just go ahead and get started. Just a little, Brian, if you could just tell us in your own words what it's been like being the

executive director of Better LA. How you came to the company, to the organization.

Brian: Well, I always dreamed about transforming inner cities. As long as I could remember and I was doing policy work for the sheriff's department actually and stumbled into Better LA in the front line police officers who had helped Pete start it.

I just thought it was an amazing platform to try to implement the strategies we've been thinking about, about how to make these communities healthier and safer because it was a gathering of a really diverse group of people from Pete to police officers to former gang members. They all used to be enemies, the police officers and former gang members. They all became buddies and started up a Better LA.

It just was a great example of collaboration and trying to do things in a unique way to change old problems. So I jumped on board as quickly as I could.

Philip: Nice. Wonderful. Then Alfred, how about you? How did you get involve with a Better LA?

Alfred: Well, I first started about ten years ago. I began to have this transformation in my life that occurred. I was doing a lot of humanitarian effort, doing a lot of feeding programs, clothing programs in South Central as well as Watts.

As I continue to do that work, it was very, very rewarding. However, I was very distraught because no matter how many people we cloth and fed, there was still these communities that were gripped in fear because of violence.

Several years ago, as Pete Carroll began to start the Better LA movement, if you will, I began to shift a lot of my efforts towards violence reduction and really just helping rebuild these communities from a holistic approach. So it's been a great and very rewarding journey I should say.

Philip: Uh-hmm. Alfred, can you tell us a little bit more about your own background too?

Alfred: Sure. Well, I come from what is known as a multi-generational gang involved lifestyle. As a young kid, I was exposed to what we now call

“generational gang violence.” As a young kid, I began to self-medicate at nine years old.

The so called mental health experts would say that I was experiencing post-traumatic stress trying to fight from the trauma or some of those symptoms.

So then by twelve years old, I began to drink. So drugs and alcohol became a gateway into the lifestyle of gangs. My drug addiction and that gang lifestyle took me into a lot of gang warfare and a lot of violence.

So now, it’s incredible that now I use the influence and gifts and talents that I once used for bad and now I use them for good.

Philip: Uh-hmm. Excuse me. Hey, Brian. I just want to check in that Pete’s on the phone too.

[0:05:14]

Brian: Hey, Pete.

Pete: Hey, guys.

Alfred: Hello, Pete.

Philip: Pete, thank you for joining us. We know you’re in the middle of preparing for the Titan’s game this weekend. So we appreciate you taking time out of your schedule there. If you heard, Alfred and Brian were giving a little bit of background about how they were drawn to a Better LA, both brave and passionate people.

Can you tell us a little bit about what inspired you to create, to co-founded Better LA with Lou Tice?

Pete: Okay. I’ll tell you a little story. I don’t know if you’ve ever heard just to give you the real background. Just being in L.A. for a year and driving in one morning, driving out Figueroa going to SC campus in the morning. I heard a report on a Monday morning that four kids have been shot over the weekend.

Then the next morning at the same time, the news reporter came on and related slayings two more kids. By Thursday, there were 11 kids that had

died. It's kind of related in retaliation type of occurrences. I called Lou Tice up.

Lou and I had been friends for a long time and I had made a pact with Lou years earlier that someday we're going to do something together. When we figure it out, let's do it and we agreed.

So I called him up and I said, "Lou, we got see if we can save some kids in these neighborhood. They're killing each other. I think this is what we should do." He said, "Okay, I'm in." That was it. Then from there, we kind of mobilized an event to get the word out that we were going to talk about the gang issues that we're going on in the L.A. area.

We set a date on the SC Campus and we just had an extraordinary turnout with the politicians and the community based workers and organizations, probation, the sheriff's department. The sheriff was there. Deputy Chief of police was there. Charlie Beck showed up who later became the chief. Of course [0:07:15] [Indiscernible] was there, Maxine Waters, the mayor, all kinds of people, the TV station for just because we put the word out.

I realized that just by initiating the thought, we were able to rally a bunch of people. We started with creating a dialog one to understand what was going on and what the needs were and to see where we could facilitate in some way.

I remember on the very first night I asked the people, "I don't know where we're going with this or where it's going to wind up. All I'm asking is if you say you're going to do something, just do it. If you can't and join in, that's okay. If you're going to be involved, be involved."

Well, from there, the sheriff's department, the police department, so many different groups around town just jumped on. So it took us quite a while to get -- I needed a lot of stuff. I knew nothing. I didn't have any idea what we were doing. I needed a lot of background. Eventually, a couple of years later, after kind of just floundering and trying and being available and having other meetings and getting an energy going, what was happening was we had created a new dialog.

It was a dialog that became available to people who I never talked before. Like people in probation were talking to people in corrections, community based organizations we're able to talk to and get in a conversation with people from the sheriff's office.

We just watched a conversation, a dialog develop and blossom that turned us to the point where we were able to connect outreach workers and law enforcement in a way that I don't think had been connected before. I don't know that, but I don't think it ever happened before.

We realized through our conversations and everything that it was really the guys the in the streets that were willing to work that were really the most valuable players in this whole process because they not only were working for the right reasons, but they were the ones that were able to connect with the people in the streets.

We just utilized an approach that I've used in coaching for a million years that whenever you deal with people one-on-one and we talk to them and listen to them and hear what they need and where they're going and try to help them create a vision of hope. Then as coaches do, when you have a vision for what a player could become, that you keep coaching them until that vision comes to life, until it's created right before your eyes.

That thought is really kind of the guidelines of the whole program in the hope of turning things around through communication and the really strong listening characteristics. We can find out a way to help people see things in a better way. Then hopefully, we have the staying power to be available so that we can make it happen.

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We've created them. What came to be is that we needed to create a model because the L.A. area was so large we couldn't effectively reach enough area. So we just decided let's create a model and prove that we know that there's a way to do this in the quiet areas and the change culture and the shift to communities to being good from being bad.

In that, kids would stop dying and it would be safer in the whole function of the community could work more freely and more positively. That's basically what's kind of happened. I don't know. That's what I feel happened.

One other thing, the long term vision that I've kind of continued to hold on is if we were able to create a peace corps of workers in the community, where each community had a couple of people place that were there to really quell the violence and the hard-hitting acts that are happening.

Make the area feel more safe, eliminate retaliations; we could start to develop a relationship with the communities that would turn things for the good. Those community workers that we're talking about, the ones that would be like a peace corps, they would serve just like the guys do right now. I always dream that eventually they'd become community workers that were doing things for all the positive. Not just trying to stop the negative.

We could effectively change this whole thing. Really, the financial part of this thing is ridiculously in favour of what we're talking about if we could just get somebody to listen to it and get the state of California to understand that every gang murder involves a minimum of a million dollars in processing.

There's three hundred less murders a year or whatever it is and whatever it was last year. It was 150 or something like that. That's a \$150 million not spent on processing gang related slangs and murders and stuff.

Well, I know it's stupid to have to do for dollars and cents, but also make sense. So if they spent a tenth of that to get that done, it's a great transaction for the state and then an extraordinary effort for the communities too, so just to give you some kind of big thoughts.

Philip:

Wonderful. Yes, I notice on the Better LA website, it was saying that 25 years and tens of billions of dollars spent a war of crime and the number of gangs had doubled in L.A. Also you had some startling statistics about 90% of the children in L.A. It sounds like, Alfred, in your situation too has witnessed violent crime and that 27% of them were suffering from post-traumatic stress even.

It sounds like you've been able to cope. You sound like the desire was there, but you create the space for people to start working together in ways they hadn't before.

Pete, I know you only have a few more minutes with us. I want to bring Alfred and Brian back into this, but can you just say a little bit more about those initial efforts at collaborating when you actually started working together. Just some of the dynamics that you saw and how that paralleled with your coaching experience and how you solved --

Pete:

Let me help you. Brian wasn't there right at the very beginning, but the effort was really directed towards convening, get people together and let

them speak. Those that are in attendance listen and try to listen carefully to what's going on and what the needs are and what's really happening as opposed to coming in like we have all the answers.

The obvious thing I've learned over the years of dealing with it that the communities are always, they're accustomed to people coming in and doing something and then leaving. They'll take whatever you bring to them just like you bring events and you bring food and you start and then you leave.

This effort needs to be directed through people that are of the community, from the community. So that means you got to have a process of finding the individuals in the areas that are willing to do the work and then support them, train them, monitor and mentor them so that they can be effective.

So that's what we learned through the process. So that's kind of we developed a model that would serve that. It was basically about communication and listening so that we could hear. Then people who had never had a chance to talk to people across the fence or across the way started to see that, "Okay, we're all here fighting for the same thing. How can we help you and how can you help us?"

It's just in the simplest ways a dialog created the cooperation and created a common language that allowed people to come together. Really in terms of football, that's all I've ever done with teams. I mean it's the same thing. You go and you take over a team, you figure out who's who and you start working and you start listening. You start watching and then you start solving problems and you start helping people solve their own problems.

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You develop camaraderie and a common language and now we're speaking kind of the same terms and we're battling for the same goals. Before you know it, you're powerful. The power comes from the familiarity and the willingness to join in for a common goal.

So this is not rocket science. This is not a hard problem to solve. It just needs funding. It just needs funding and we can do it. We just don't know how to get the money. That's the hard part.

Philip: Wonderful, Pete. I just love you draw upon your own natural experience with sports to co-create that. You say Peace Corps. You know about Peace Corps volunteer for four years. I'm enjoying hearing you talk about that reference and the lessons that were applicable with Africa also.

I just want to ask, Alfred, while Pete's on the phone here. Alfred, what was it like for you to engage in this process and to be heard. I'm assuming to be heard. What was that like that for you to suddenly engage in a broader dialog about your community?

Alfred: Well, I got to tell you for me it was really a great experience. I would have never thought in life that I would be working with the work that I do, but because I mentioned earlier about coming from the multi-generational gang family dynamic.

We were a very isolated group. To come out of that lifestyle and then to now work with people from all walks of life as coach was saying, being able to break down a lot of the barriers and have this common language. I mean it's just been phenomenal and very, very rewarding to do that.

So I really went from one extreme radical way of thinking, radical behaviour to now this man who's passionate about peace. Like coach said, I've been given an opportunity and a platform to do that work and we're so thankful that there's this collaborative effort that's been in place. So a lot of great people really believe in this vision and I'm just very thankful to be a part of it.

Philip: May I call you coach also. Coach, just respectful of the fact that you have a short amount of time in the call with us, what else would you like to share with us about you feel like some of the lessons learned from this process and where the growth potential is with it.

Hello, Pete.

Pete: Please ask that again.

Philip: Yeah, I'm just aware that your time with us is limited. Brian and Alfred can continue conversation. Just before you go, what are some of the -- and vision to the listening, the communicating, creating a team with people that normally don't play together.

What are some other important lessons learned that you would like to relate with people, people from 116 countries listening or people who registered for this service. Where do you see the growth potential being?

Pete:

Okay. Let me say this first, I think one of the really hard hitting message is that we have the power. We own the power to do this. This is not something that we have to reach outside of our scope to accomplish this. To be at our best in these communities, we totally own that.

We need to help the people who are trying to create the change understand that through their thoughts, through the direction of their focus, through the intentions of their group. They own the ability and the power to do this, to make these changes. That's really important. They just need a little bit of guidance.

To me, it's like coaching them essentially. You're going to help them along the way of language and empowering them with a common language so that they can talk to the people on the same vein because they're coming together for the same purposes.

That's the message, if you don't understand that then you might say, "Well, how could we ever create this change?" I know that that's crucial. So in essence, we empower the people of the areas through our language and through our teachings and through our dedication to create the change themselves. They do this.

See, if we do it for them, then we leave. Then it doesn't happen. You have to help them create the change. So that means you have to empower them to get that done.

One of the issues that we have is finding ways to locate and support the workers that are capable of doing this work. So one way to do it is you just pay for them. You train them, you pay them salaries and you support them and you see them through it.

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The other thing that we're working on hard is to find our ways to find work for the people that are in the communities and put them to work through job placement so that they have regular jobs. Then as they have been training and they have made their commitment to kind of like the club that they're going to do the work.

That they'll work and become volunteers for us on a regular basis so that we create the number of available people who are speaking the right language and are listening properly and are there to empower those around them through the one-on-one process.

That's something that allows us a chance to get an army of people working for this. Forget the army reference, make it a Peace Corps reference because I think in peace this all has to happen and in corps it all has to happen as well. So I don't know if that answers your question, but that's it.

Philip: Yes, it does. Then I also notice in your programs you have life the California Cowboy Team. Can you talk more directly about the impact of sports in these communities?

Pete: Well, certainly sports is a great -- just as we're watching the Olympics, it's one of the great mediums in the world for bringing people together and connecting people regardless of where they're from. Because all of these issues come from people who think they're from a different area and they're separate in their own world.

They don't want to crossover and accept others or cross into somebody else's. Sports is one of the great equalizers. So wherever we can stay connected to the competition of the games, I think it's important. It isn't the only way to do it, but it's a powerful tool.

So for instance, you're talking about the Cowboys, those guys, they have been committed to raising kids through that program and through the opportunity of teaching them and coaching in a game. There's so many opportunities to teach kids about principles and character and integrity and decision making and habits and all of the good things that you can teach when you teach this great game of football in particular, but you can do in all games.

That's why we have started another side of us that it's a business that we're trying to develop to coach coaches so that we can train coaches to speak on behalf of the things that will help kids along the road and down the line as they go. It's our company; it's a Win Forever company that is teaching a new generation of coaches for the next generation of athletes.

We're really dedicated to do that to utilize the mechanism of sport to help people grow and come together and see the world in a better way than they have. So it's truly, it's easy to understand the connection.

Again, that's dedication and that's a different source of funding and there are other problems with that.

Let me say this too. That's taking advantage of an asset in a community that was already there, but kind of floundering that we could support and help out. Keep them going and now it blossoms and it creates a regular connection to the community that ties the community together. A bunch of kids have gone through. There's a bunch of little girls that have been cheerleader, the parents, the kids, the next generation, their little brothers and sisters and on and on and on.

They get a common experience that connects them. That's what you hope happen in communities. The people become connected for the good reasons and the right reasons.

Philip: Thanks, coach. Thank you. I just want to be respectful of your time. So please let us know when you need to drop off and we'll thank you and say good bye. If you do have more time, I'm just really curious. How important was it that you think that you are a known sports figure in terms of helping form this team of different players working together? How important do you think that was?

Pete: I think other people can answer that better than I could. Ray has been around for so long. Other people that have watched it happen I think would know better. Curtis Woodle and Cornell Ward, those guys and Brian can certainly attest. I don't know, you know. Obviously it had done something because we've got people together.

I don't know. I can't tell you that answer, but I'd like to think because it was so easy to get people to come to the first meeting and the second meeting. It was easier there raising money, all that kind of stuff. It had something to do with it.

I think the fact that people see that as an uncommon connection that a coach would be concerned. I hear that all the time. To me, it sounds silly. What's the difference between whether I'm a coach or I'm working in a grocery store or something. I think that's given people reason to listen a little longer and maybe get involved a little bit more, you know. I don't know.

Brian: This is Brian. I think it also makes it more politically safe. When Pete got started, it was considered a little politically risky to hang out with former gang members and engage deep in the inner city. He just went in there

fearless and made it cool in a way and gave cover, I think, to a lot of people to get involve that otherwise would have been a little afraid to get involved.

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Philip: Brian, can you pick up once that space was created, how you solved like the unlikely partnerships coming together. What was your experience with that?

Brian: Could you say that again?

Philip: Yeah, like once Pete, you know, that it was okay to get engage. Tell us a little bit about, I mean you've been working in the city for a while. Like what were some of the changes that in your own experience you saw some of the relationships with different parts of L.A. that were suddenly collaborating together?

Brian: Well, I think the biggest impact of this work around collaboration is just that what Pete was saying is that people started listening to the people in the community who really had the answers to the problem of violence and isolation. We spent so much of our time in government and policy makers coming up with stuff without asking the people who are in the middle of it what they think.

Because of fear and isolation, who's going to go walk up to the gang member ask them? Everyone's afraid of it. Well, Pete just kind of walked up and said, "Hey, what do you think about this?" The answers we got back were really compelling.

So now, the space basically it's allowing everybody to come together and hear solutions. Just a really quick example is we used to sit around when I was in government trying to figure out how to keep kids safe on the way schools because gang members bully and recruit kids on the way to school and couldn't figure out how to do it. Maybe pass tougher laws and allow the kids to run if they're running from a gang member to a 7/11 to hang out there, just really kind of ineffective solutions.

Then we started listening to the outreach workers and they said, "Hey, we can do that. We walk up to the gang members and ask them to allow the kids to pass safely," and it was a solution to a problem that people thought was intractable and impossible.

So that's the space allowed really conversations to happen with the right people.

Pete: I think it would be interesting to hear Alfred comment too because he's watched this from a totally different perspective. He has extraordinary insights to what the kids in the streets are thinking and also somebody who's been through it and goes through it is thinking as they see the work coming at them.

I mean he told you what he thought, but I think Alfred's perspective is important for us to understand because this isn't about us on the outside. It's about the people on the inside. It's about the people that are there and is listening and cooperating and making ourselves available for supporting the solutions.

It's not us that create the change. It's the people that are there that create the change. They're the ones that do the adjusting and the growing and the shifting. So I think that's why, even on this call, you need to keep asking Alfred because he knows better than anybody what's going on.

Philip: Sure. That sounds good.

Pete: I don't mean to put the pressure on you, Alfred.

Philip: Alfred, you're in the game.

Alfred: I got to tell you just what coach was saying and Brian about transforming communities from within. Just let that set in for a second. When we understand organic work, we understand that when we empower communities that it's incredible to see what happens. I got to tell you that there are a lot of myths that surrounds communities that are involved with violence whether it's gang violence or cartel violence. Whatever the violence, there's a lot of myths.

One myth is that guys coming out of the lifestyle don't want to change. As Brian was saying, there's a lot of people in these communities that want to help including former perpetrators of violence. It's really amazing that now we have an opportunity to sit down and voice the concerns.

What's more fabulous is now we can enact change in our communities. So as Brian was mentioning about how do we keep kids safe in parks and how do we keep kids safe at schools has really been on the forefront of

what Better LA's involved in. A lot of that has to do with negotiating safe passage. Basically going up to the bad guys and saying, "Hey, look we need to do this for our community."

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I wish it was complicated because it would make us all seem like we're brilliant, but really just being able to have that space and communicate those efforts. So there's a lot of good people in these communities. Understanding that and breaking certain stereotypes has allowed us to further rebuild these communities.

So it's really that collaborative effort and hearing voices that come from within and then taking action. That's what this is really about. It's really just groups of people from all different walks of life coming together and making that change happen.

Pete:

Can I just add something. This is kind of an aberrant thought, but just to take a shot at it. I think the scope of the principles and the approach. It'll sound kind of crazy to you, but had we gone in to Iraq with 10,000 people. We've flown them in and support them.

So they go into the communities and just talk to the people and listen to them and hear what's going on. Listen to their issues and just take our time and see what's going on and come back and talk about it. Then go back in and go back out and go back in and find out what they needed and what could help their way.

I really think, and this is just me thinking that the exact same approach could have been effective to the point when we wouldn't had to kill thousands and thousands of people and drop millions of dollars' worth of bombs for years over a community to try and create a change.

I say because it's a dramatic look at it. Instead of shocking and awe, we just go in there and listen and talk and don't have timelines and goals in mind. Just take the time so that it can be done peacefully and with love and with care. You help the people change their own for the good. We didn't have their answers. They had their answers, but we didn't even ask them.

So I think our approach and what we're talking about in this whole mindset is not just confined to just the communities in southern California. It's

not just confined to the United States and the inner cities. I don't think it is at all.

It's about having an openness and trust in the communication process and the creating of dialog in common language with the language of hope being behind everything that we do and working with people one-on-one and listening is what gives us extraordinary power to do whatever.

Because the numbers of people that we can engage that would be on board and that would embrace the opportunity to create their own cultural change, now we're talking about real power. So it's not hard for us to understand that. It's not at all. It just isn't common. It's uncommon to think that way.

So somebody's got to stand up for it and somebody's got to create the example for it. Then people are going to get on board. This is the way it's going to go. This is the evolution of change that people don't understand that the Pacific Institute have understood for years and years.

They've been teaching it and we're just in the midst of the opportunity to get this language in this way of thinking out. So then we'll start doing things the right way instead of hurting people to try and create change.

So I know that's kind of a mouthful there and it's dramatic and all, but I think it's as real as anything. I just wish we could make it known to people, let's start thinking differently. Let's start acting differently and let's start listening like we should and communicating like we should. So anyway, okay I'm off the soapbox. I got to get out of here in two minutes.

Philip: Great. Well, coach, I just want to thank you because just so you know, the villages I lived in Peace Corps are sacked by child soldiers. I later got to go back, and we helped child soldiers become radio producers.

Everything that you just described I've been seeing manifesting in war-torn countries across Africa. I think you're spot on. I'm glowing with enthusiasm to hear these things, principles or similar principles that you and Brian and Alfred and others are applying. I just want to applaud you and thank you so much for taking time out of your training schedule there.

Pete: Okay, I appreciate it. Thanks, guys. Let me know when I can help, okay. I got to take off.

Philip: Thanks, coach.

Brian: Thanks, Pete.

Pete: All right. Bye-bye.

Philip: Alfred, I want to pick up on this and Brian, one thing that we had when I was working in West Africa is that a five degree shift is a principle where if someone who's been like a gang leader, you can just take the same leadership skills and then redirecting them five degrees. They can become a leader as a peace builder.

It sounds like something similar that is happening, Alfred and Brian, in your situation too, right?

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Brian: Well, I think Alfred's an example of that. I think a lot of the people we work with were leaders in the negative and has taken a lot of those similar skills. Alfred can talk about that from a personal point of view and shifted. Their transformation, Alfred's transformation not only is an amazing story in itself, but it starts to influence the culture of the entire community and impact all these other people around him who look up to him.

So I think that's why this model is so powerful because it is one person at a time, but it's also one influential person who can impact a lot of other people in the community with their leadership skills.

Alfred: Absolutely.

Philip: Alfred, can you expand on that?

Alfred: Sure. I can expand on that maybe through an experience of me growing up as a young child. I can tell you that walking to school and navigating through violence was a horrendous experience. I recall that even the good intentions of law enforcement was unable to protect me in this ultraviolent areas.

So for me the heroes became the gang members that protected me. The heroes became those that provided in a way that no one else could. Understanding that, I became drawn to that lifestyle, but I also now understand that the influence that a lot of guys that are living the lifestyle

have over communities, it's very important to understand that when we are professionalized, equipped and able to work in a collaborative manner, then we're able to redirect that influence in a positive way.

So it becomes a tool if you will in a toolbox of efforts for community transformation, but a very powerful tool. So if you look through that lens of influence, you'll see that it has a very profound effect in reducing violence in these communities.

Philip: Yeah, could you tell us a little bit more about what your own experience. I mean what was it like to suddenly be recognized as a hero for helping, it's going to be that's how people are looking at you. What's that transformation would be like for you?

Alfred: Yeah, but I have to start off by saying as well that there's a lot of people that are involved with this work. I'm one of the many people that are involved with this. So I have to make sure I give the props as they say to these guys as well.

There's a lot of pioneers that have been doing these work, but what that looks like, was that the question of what it looks like to --

Philip: Yeah. What's it like for you? What's your experience like from where you are now to let's say where you were years and years ago. How does it feel to you to go through that? I mean when you walk down the street, how does it feel differently to you now than before?

Alfred: Well, it's rewarding beyond words. I mean words couldn't begin to describe the level of fulfilment to know that we are providing hope in communities that were at one time hopeless, if you will.

I'll give you some numbers that would kind of maybe bring some insight into these gang wars that have occurred in Los Angeles. In 2005, the area that I was from and continue to work in had one of the highest gang related murder rates in the nation in 2005. In a three and half squared mountain area, there were 80 people that were killed.

When we see first-hand and we all know the devastation of violence and how it just grips the community. We can now say that several years later, using the strategies of a Better LA and intervention work that those murders have been reduced to a trickle if you will.

So that's where the passion and the drive comes from is knowing that not only are we stopping violence, but that we're part of a bigger picture and that picture is I hope for a new generation of children.

I got to tell you that I draw a lot of my energy and efforts through my experiences of the past. What it was like to grow up living in fear, what it was like to be a drug addict, what it was like to be a perpetrator of violence. I looked through the lens carefully and I now understand as well that just as violence has a profound effect on a community, so does good work, good effort and hope there as well.

I think that we live in a time where there's a lot of energy and media that dwells on negativity. I think that people would be pleasantly surprised to find out that good prevails. As melodramatic as it may sound, I'm very sold out on what it is to help these communities. So it's just a reverse effect if you will in doing good.

[0:40:19]

Philip: Nice, wonderful, Alfred. Brian, can you tell us a little bit more about from your perspective the impact that the program's having not only in the communities, but just in L.A. different departments working together and so forth.

Brian: Well, I've never seen anything like it, this impactful. I think what we spend, I don't know the exact number, but probably around \$30 billion in L.A. county for stuff that is supposed to help people.

You go to these areas that are war zones like Alfred was talking about where 80 people dying in a three square mile area in one year. Not that much has changed other than the strategy. We're not only ones doing it. There are some other people here doing it, but the strategy of just people coming together convening and listening to each other has this enormous impact.

So just a few examples, parks where for years they sat empty and our tax dollars were funding park workers to sit there who the only activity might have been to get beat up by gang members. No one knew what to do about it and enter outreach workers who have the relationships with the gang guys to say, "Let's let the kids play."

So now, not only do we have a new message of hope and a change of culture as influencers are telling kids that killing people is not normal

anymore. What's normal is going to the park to play. Now, you also have park people able to do their jobs and create programs and do sports. You have police officers who used to treat it like a militarized zone now participating in playing games with the kids and becoming through community police officers.

There's this domino impact in the community that is tremendous. That's one of the most exciting part of the model to me is the domino impact depends on the community.

Philip: Nice, nice, nice. Let me open up. If anyone's on the webcast who'd like to type in a question, please go ahead and type it in. If you're on the phone, please hit *2 and I just you to know we got an amen from what coach just said earlier when he was talking about the need to listen and to do that in Iraq and different places around the world.

Alfred, tell me a little bit more about just some of the day-to-day activities that you and other outreach workers are doing in communities?

Alfred: Well, we can break it down into two venues if you will. The first being a crises response community outreach work. That's when there's a gang related killings or killings that could potentially create retaliatory violence. That would be the first domain would be conflict mediation. That would probably take I would say, maybe if we broke it down to maybe 10% of what our time and efforts would be in these communities.

Then the other domain would be the prevention effort. That's work in day-to-day whether it's keeping a local high school and middle school safe. Better LA did a phenomenal job of seeing that vision where school lets out and the outreach workers would work as crossing guards and create a safe passage program where these kids are able to walk home without fear.

There's various other programs that are involved with Better LA, but for me the most part I'm really involved with the violence interruption component where it's kept me pretty busy in the areas that I work in as well as with not just South Central but parts of Watts as well which historically have been gang saturated.

So that's where my priority has shifted towards, the conflict crisis response for a community. I'm not sure that answered the question or not.

Philip: Yeah, it does Alfred. What does an interruption look like because we had someone from Ceasefire Chicago the other day and they have a concept there, interrupt or so. So what does interrupting a crisis situation look like?

[0:45:08]

Alfred: As Brian said earlier that there are different groups of people doing work out here, but we're all driven by the same purpose. So as we get into definitions, I would say that the interruption would be similar on all sides whether it's ceasefire or other organizations that have coined the term "violence interruption." That would be a more specific direct approach to violence reduction.

Out here, in gang involved communities, we don't use words like peace treatise only because, well several reasons. Probably the most important one being that peace is elusive. The idea to have peace would already become problematic if we started using the word.

So by using terms like reduction or interruption allows us to at least reduce some of the retaliation killings I should say. What we've experienced here in Los Angeles is that the retaliation killings have often times created the murders off the charts. That's where these gangs go back and forth on these conflict gang issues. Before you know it, you have a lot of innocent children that are killed in these drive bys.

So the whole idea is how to stop rumours which is very prevalent in a lot of these gang communities. Often times, someone will get killed for some other reason than a gang involved issue. By being able to do a rumour control and find out exactly why someone was killed has had a profound effect on stopping retaliation gang shootings.

So I think that's pretty similar in terms of interruption on urban setting and being able to focus on those particular issues have been very, very successful.

Philip: Wonderful. Thank you, Alfred. Brian, just to pick up on this, tell us a little bit about your day-to-day. It sounds like you're serving as a bridge in some ways to many different groups with Alfred and then people in the city. Could you tell us a little bit about your goal?

Brian: Well, my role is a lot more boring than Alfred's. I'm running a non-profit and raising money. I think the most important role that I have is to be

translator to listen to the outreach workers. Understand what is so valuable about how they do their work and then be able to communicate that to the rest of the world, how to be part of that process of communicating so that we can reach our policy makers and funders and other people that can join in this movement of doing things differently.

So I try to spend as much of my time as possible in the inner city. I think it's a really important part of the story of a Better LA is that what the way that Pete set this up allowed me to have the time to go hang out with these guys.

In the first year or so, I was around the outreach workers and even after a year of hanging out with them I was like, "I don't understand what you guys do." So it was a very difficult story for me to tell. So I feel very lucky that part of my job is to be able to just sit there. Now, I understand what Alfred's talking about. I've been in the room and I've seen when someone is shot, two kids get in a fight over a girl and one shoots the other.

Immediately through the community, there's a rumour that it's a gang war because one kid happened to be from one gang and another kid happened to be from another gang. So both gangs go and get their guns out and are ready to shoot because they think there's a war on.

Law enforcement is coming around confirming the rumour and chaos is about to break out which is war. To watch the outreach workers in action as they get on the phone, they talk to people, they calm people down. Say, "Hey, it's just a rumour. It was just two kids fighting over a girl. There's no war on. You can put your guns down. You can trust me that this is what's really going on in the community."

It's been invaluable for me to then be that communicator when I go out and speak to people.

Philip: Nice. I just want to reflect, Brian and Alfred, that also in some of the people and the work I've seen across Africa that rumour control is critical to helping thin the spread of violence.

So it was interesting to hear also. We have a question here from [Participant] in Bay side. It's kind of a specific question. Is Father Gregory Boyle involved also with this movement? I don't know if that name is familiar to you.

[0:50:08]

Brian: Yeah, we know Father Greg very well. He's a hero out here. Father Greg has started a non-profit called Homeboy Industries which provides jobs for people who are ready to leave the gang life.

So it's a very important component of the big picture that people need jobs and they need something to do other than gangbang. So he provides that in addition to being a really inspirational great guy.

Philip: Nice. That kind of leads in your website you say that any group can do it on its own, but the importance of collaboration. Can both of you speak just briefly about collaboration? We'll wrap it up here.

Brian: Sure. Just to rehash the importance of that, it can't be overstated. It does take everybody. The idea that we've now listened to the community and listened to outreach workers about what the solutions are is an amazing first step, but the next step is for them to be merged in with the rest of the community so everybody can help.

So you take a child for example who's surrounded by gang violence, who's isolated that nobody, the teacher, the probation officer, the police officer can't reach because of lack of relationship. The outreach worker plays this critical role in reaching that child and developing the relationship and the trust and kind of bringing them in, changing the mind-set and the attitude and opening them up to hope.

Then it takes the rest of the team, the community, the village so to speak to make sure that kid does well in school and has places to play and be able to get a job and all of that. So those relationships which were never there, nobody in the traditional service has ever wanted to work with an outreach worker. Even churches used to close their doors.

The fact that we're helping bridge those relationships that they all can come together is a critical piece of the puzzle and just one last thing to jump on. What you said about Africa, we also here had a lot of conversations with people from all over the world, London, Iraq, Columbia, Afghanistan and everything.

The issues are the same. That's one of the most exciting things about this idea. Everywhere that we've gone around the world, the issues seem very similar in that kids and people and youth get isolated, cut off into this dysfunctional lifestyle and everybody abandons them.

Breaking down that barrier, fear and isolation, making them part of the solution to create peace you have to have the people who have their finger on the trigger. You have to be part of the solution. So I hope people can envision that that what's going on here is not just a South L.A. thing. It's really part of a world strategy I think to change the way we approach this problem.

Philip: Thank you, Brian. Go ahead, Alfred, please.

Alfred: I just want to touch on the collaboration thing there, on the intervention part was that as Brian mentioned about the village, that's so important and crucial particularly with outreach workers coming out of a lifestyle of violence. We've not have an academy that professionalizes the outreach workers.

So the collaboration, the vetting process is very important and it's part of the bigger picture as they say. So we give people an opportunity to enact change in their life. Then we provide the tools that allow them to do that work. So the collaboration effort is absolutely incredible.

Philip: Any final words, Alfred, for our listeners, that you'd like people to hear?

Alfred: Sure. I'd like to say that it's an exciting time in Los Angeles. Recently, there was an article that said that Los Angeles is one of the biggest safest cities now in America. Part of that obviously is a collaborative effort.

So knowing that our communities and children of these communities are seeing better tomorrow is really an exciting time. I must also say that as coach was saying, we must continue to just keep moving forward and understanding that we can get this work done, but it's speaking that language that everyone can wrap their arms around this effort and the work that needs to get done.

[0:55:20]

There's a lot of children experiencing post-traumatic stress. There's lot of other underlying issues that we need to address. So as we continue to move forward, we're just thankful that everybody comes to this table with the mission and the same heart.

Philip: Wonderful. Thank you, Alfred. Brian, any final words here?

Brian: Well, thank you and The Shift Network for doing this and connecting so many people from all over the world. I just hope that people would allow for people to reach out to us because we'd love to learn what's going on in other parts of the world and to share what we're doing here and to find a way to connect with everybody so that we can create a movement for how we think and how we talk about these issues and how we approach and solve these issues.

So I hope a lot of people will connect through this effort so that we can work together for years to come.

Philip: Wonderful. Thank you. Thank you both, Alfred and Brian, for who you are and the lessons learned and your openness and being with us here on the Summer of Peace. So thank you both very, very much.

Brian: Thank you.

Alfred: Thank you.

Philip: I have to say I was just in L.A. and I went to one of my favourite place, it was the Lake Shrine with Mahatma Gandhi, some of his ashes were there. I don't know if either of you have been there before.

Brian: No.

Philip: Yeah, Lake Shrine Sunset Boulevard just before the beach, there's a world peace monument there to Gandhi. The only place I know with some of his ashes outside of India.

Alfred: Oh, wow.

Philip: It's a beautiful, beautiful to place to visit. Again, thank you all. Again, just for being with us. For people listening, we're going to continue tomorrow. We're going to be talking with Nicole Lee of Urban Peace Movement from Oakland. She's working with young people in Oakland and also with the city.

So we continue our journey with urban peace. Brian, please pass along my gratitude to Coach Carroll and then just the rest of your staff.

Brian: Will do and cheer for the Seahawks this year.

Philip: Oh, that's right. I didn't go there to ask questions. I see the play in Denver in the second game. I was from Indiana. I said curious, "What do you think about playing against Peyton Manning?" So...

Brian: Next time.

Philip: Next time. All right, my friends. Thank you.

Brian: Thank you.

Philip: Everybody around the world whether it's morning, afternoon, evening or night, just have a wonderful peaceful rest of your time there. Okay. Bye-bye.

[0:58:06] End of Audio