

# Summer of Peace 2012™:

## Philip Hellmich

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Stephen: Well, good evening everyone and welcome to a very special event during the Summer of Peace. This is Stephen Dinan, the founder of The Shift Network and I get the distinct honor and privilege of introducing to you the depth work of our director of the Summer of Peace, Philip Hellmich.

Philip is not only a remarkable man who has been catalyzing the work of the Summer of Peace and just bringing together peacebuilding groups from around the world. He has gone deep into the heart of transforming violence, darkness, conflict himself over the course of many, many decades now even.

He has served with Search for Common Ground for 14 years which was one of the leading peacebuilding organizations in the world and he also served for four years in the Peace Corps as a volunteer in Sierra Leone where he lived and worked in small remote bush villages.

Out of that journey in the bush of Africa to the frontlines of conflict, a red transformation he has created a book called "God and Conflict: A Search for Peace in a Time of Crisis" which had a Foreword by Lama Surya Das.

So what I can say about Philip is he is truly a man that walks his talk. He emanates peace, he's always making people happy all around him, he's really truly committed to his mission and committed to service, and he's probably the most committed meditator I know as well. So he's really deeply committed to the inner work of transformation and bridging that to the outer world and really creating a wave of peace around the world.

So he's the perfect man to have been spearheading our Summer of Peace initiative and really the perfect man to be doing the kind of conflict transformation work that he's been doing for many decades. And so today, we're going to get the chance to learn more about the book and the journey behind it that has forged this modern day peacebuilders, so welcome Philip.

Philip: Thank you Stephen.

Stephen: Well, let's begin. People may know you from the voice of interviewing other people and now you're in the spotlight here. So we want to begin by really getting to know who you were starting with the Peace Corps. What was it that brought you into the Peace Corps and how did it literally become an initiation into your work as a peacebuilder?

Philip: Sure Stephen. Thanks. It is kind of funny to be on the other side of interviewing. So if I switched into interviewing you I'll step back from that but... Yeah, I grew up in a family of ten kids in Indiana, fifth born, small remote, just a small town in Indiana, old White County and during college, a couple of friends signed up for Peace Corps. I had a brother who had been a medical doctor and he did stay in Liberia.

I wanted to see more of the world. I wanted to serve in some capacity and so I signed up for the Peace Corps and I actually picked Sierra Leone to go to because it was next to Liberia. And it was off and running. One of my friends who was supposed to be in that same group but then cancelled, and I often wondered how she had changed my life by pointing out Sierra Leone.

But I went from a small town in Indiana, large family, old White County to suddenly Sierra Leone, West Africa and after two months of training I was out in a small bush village, Cadbury, with about 30 houses, 300 people. I thought I was going to be staying two years and I ended up staying for four years and it was a profound experience.

I often think Peace Corps' biggest gift is the impact it has on the volunteers and then what they do afterwards because everything that I knew up to that point was mirrored back to me, everything. Suddenly, I was a wealthy person -- even though my father had worked in a factory, now, I'm suddenly a wealthy person just because I have a couple of pairs of shoes. I had a Peace Corps motorcycle which no one else in the area had a motor cycle.

And then the important thing was that just by living with people where there was no electricity, no running water, my friends were subsistent farmers which meant that they grew most of their own food, and suddenly I was just there and there was very little media, there was a little bit of shortwave radio but I didn't listen to that too much.

And so, suddenly I was just there with people living closely with the earth and everything, everything was absolutely mirrored back. And then there were these rhythms of life that just slowly started to work on me. The

rhythms of the moon, following the moon because when there was a full moon, there'd be light in village but then there was new moon it'd be dark, and then there was the rainy season and dry season and cycles of the crops, and all these rhythms.

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And then also people living with a sense of spirituality of a secret society that would initiate young boys and young girls into adulthood and take them out into the bush where they would have ceremonies to connect with their ancestors and then also with the spirits in nature. And just being exposed to this without being able to go into those ceremonies it was just like, "My God, there is..."

Even though I came from a close-knit family that it was so powerful to be with people in a tight community living so closely with the earth whose lives depended on the earth, whose houses were made out of mud and sticks that just came up out of the earth, and then to have the sense of spirituality. It just really started to transform me overtime.

Meanwhile, I was doing projects you know, water well and fishing lures, and I stumbled into some work that actually contributed to the wellbeing of my friends. But it was just a profound experience. I mean, my friends lived on less than a dollar a day and in some ways they seemed to have a deeper sense of connection with earth, family, community and a sense of happiness than the people in the States, even though their lives were tough and difficult at times.

Particularly, the fact that one in every four child dies before the age of five and sometimes women died in childbirth. But still, it left a profound impression on me that the western pursuit of happiness is not everything is made out to be. I fell in love with the people in Sierra Leone. They became my family, my extended family there in Africa.

Stephen:

Yeah, it's almost like a perfect antidote to the world in which we are raised here in the west which so much focus on material acquisition. And yet in a world like that, it's like people often don't see the beauties of what they've inherited and then they get exposed to the west and they feel inadequate and want to just pursue the material acquisition or so strongly influenced that they don't see what they have as a value in many things.

Philip:

Yeah. And that was a painful aspect. That was a very painful aspect because the global economy is where -- Stephen, I could see the impact to the global economy on Sierra Leone is things that we never even realized. Our individual pursuit of happiness affects people thousands of miles away in ways we don't realize. I mean for instance like Goodwill and Salvation Army can't move all the clothes that's donated.

That clothing gets dumped into Sierra Leone and other countries across Africa and probably other parts of the world. And so the local industry can't compete with it. I've been deep in the bush of Sierra Leone. I went to a village once to do a census and they had not seen a white person in decades and so everybody was hiding; and when they came out they were wearing T-shirts and pants and things from the United States along with some traditional clothes, and that just permeates the culture.

And then meanwhile, people do want the materialism, they want the western ways. The way it manifested was like, there was a lot of corruption and so you'd have the corruption in the government, people driving fancy four-wheeled drive vehicles and then meanwhile my friends barely had -- sandals made out of spare tires to wear.

And the President of Sierra Leone was dying and one of the richest men in the world because there was diamonds. And so, you could see there's global economy coming in there and creating dynamics and fueling dynamics around corruption and then materialism, and then at night I sit there and watch a full moon with people walking by the village with a sense of community.

But where it really, really started to get disturbing from me was like -- and this is jumping ahead a little bit, but like right when I was leaving, the movie Rambo was playing in Sierra Leone and there weren't many theatres. This was prior to videos and so forth. But I remember watching kids in the big city, Freetown, acting like Rambo on the streets.

That's jumping ahead a little bit, and we can get into that a little bit later about the impact of Rambo and other films. But you're right, the global economy, it creates an alluring dream that pulls people out. I know there's a documentary film called "The Economics of Happiness" that really looks at this and it mirrored what I saw in Sierra Leone. It's a really powerful thing.

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Stephen: Well, yeah, let's zoom in forward a little bit. I think there are so many fascinating lessons to be learned from this time in Africa. But part of what really began to transform you I know was when the situation escalated into violence and civil war there, and what happened to this previously materially poor but idyllic in other ways community.

Philip: Yeah. Well, when I came back from United States Stephen -- I left in '89 and at that time people laughed saying, "The Army doesn't have bullets," which was true and it would just seem like such a peaceful place and at the same time, Peace Corps volunteers were like, "When are people going to get upset?" You complain about the corruption and everything.

I came back to the U.S. and just one part, just the reverse culture shock was just astounding. It just was astounding to see water being sprinkled across golf courses and to walk into a grocery store and see hundreds of cans of cat food, and just a tremendous waste and how fast and busy everybody was. I would see all these consumers and all these waste and everybody being in a hurry to make more money and this and that.

And then the violence on TV just astounded me because after four years without media to see all these violence. And I was sitting back, I was so aware like, "Wait a second. We're not as connected with ourselves, we're not as connected with the environment, we're not as connected with family and community and we're consuming vast amounts and this global economy was affecting Sierra Leone."

So I was pretty angry and upset about that and actually I met a yogi, Mickey Singer at that time. But it really ramped up for me. I was teaching on the Navajo Reservation and the first Persian Gulf War was happening, at the same time that a war neighboring started to spill over into Sierra Leone.

I knew in my gut, in my heart that that war was connected with the global economy and the western pursuit of happiness. And sure enough blood diamonds were being traded to buy AK-47s and RPGs and everything else, and then clear cutting of vast rainforest for hardwood timber to China to make products to be sold to the U.S. and elsewhere were being used to buy these weapons.

So, there I was on the Navajo Reservation teaching school and going out and sitting on this Anasazi rooms, and by them, and just looking out to the distance. It was just like, "What is going on here?" There was a profound awakening. Now, this was 21 years ago -- of just realizing. It's

like, "Okay, everybody wants to be happy, everybody wants to avoid suffering." We all have that in common.

At that time I just really committed myself to, "I want to explore the relationship between inner peace in the global situation." I want to explore peace from the inner to the international. And then that started a journey, it just took me to Washington, D.C., I tried it to Peace Corps for a while, I tried it to a few different places.

And then meanwhile, Sierra Leone was going to hell in a handbasket and I didn't know what was happening to my friends. I had no idea. I would just get these reports about the atrocities, about the use of children as weapons of war.

Charles Taylor in Liberia had really introduced the fact that thousands of young people, some as young as the age of eight years old could be psychologically, emotionally destroyed and turn into soldiers. So it was tough. Meanwhile, I'm diving into a meditation practice. We had interviewed Jack Kornfield earlier. One of his books was Sierra Leone.

So there I am diving into a meditation practice, trying to work on peace projects in Washington, D.C. and then after several years I got a job with Search for Common Ground and we were working in Liberia. I got back in Liberia and then they ask me to go back to Sierra Leone to go in an assessment mission in 1998.

You can imagine, Stephen, so here it is having dealt with all these reverse culture shock, aware of the global economy, aware of the war and then having the chance to go back and the war was still going on, but the rebels had been pushed back and there was a West African peacekeeping mission, largely Nigerian. It took some effort. I couldn't fly directly in there.

I had to go to Liberia and then to Guinea and then take a plane with a guy who buys diamonds and I get into Freetown; just almost afraid of what I would find like, "Who would be alive?" And I got off the ferry from the airport and a person walked up and called me by name who had remembered me.

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Meanwhile, the city is all shut up, buildings are burnt down and he takes me to his auntie who used to make sandwiches for the Peace Corps, and

then she invites me to dinner, and she feeds me while telling me about how she almost starved during the war. I'm just sitting there like this love -- I mean Sierra Leonians are such a beautiful people and the generosity -- and then got to go back upcountry towards one of the villages where I lived and you can imagine.

So here I am going up this road and I'm just looking. There's all these checkpoints with military weapons. There's villages with bullet holes in them. And then we get up to one spot and there's all these cars that are burnt out and there had been an ambush there and the guy I'm with gets really tensed. He was like, "This is a perfect place for an ambush." A BBC person had been killed earlier that week on the same road further out.

I'm just sitting there like, "What is going on?" I feel like I'm going home and yet there are these signs of war. It turns out we got to go back to one of the villages where I lived and the bishop, Bishop Biguzzi, a Catholic Bishop took me back there and it was just a joyous reunion and I got to see my friends, the Kantey brothers, and it was just this joyous reunion.

They were sitting there with this -- I mean poverty had really gotten intense and their clothes were tattered. They're handing me everything they have, coconuts, kola nuts, palm wine, chicken. They're telling me about the water well is still there with the fishing lures and the projects we had done together are still there and then the atrocities. I'm sitting there with this joyous reunion hearing and about these atrocities and just wondering, "What is going on?"

After I left there, two hours later I came across a mob killing in this town where I pulled up, and there was a person who had just been killed by a mob. I didn't know what to do so I jumped out of the car which was naïve and just took pictures because I didn't know what else to do. I was on an assessment mission. And later when I looked at the picture, I saw that there were just hundreds of kids watching this, this body that was completely mutilated.

Again, I came back to the U.S. after the assessment mission just a little bit in shock because I had never seen someone with the head cut off and heart cut out, and let alone I just seen my friends, and then the war came back through. The area where I had just been was over ran again. The Catholic Bishop who took me back to the village was captured.

And then I walked into the office and someone had left on my desk the New York Times with a picture on the front of a woman with both arms

cut off from the area where I had just been. At that time, Stephen, I just lost it. My meditation practice couldn't hold the anger and the rage. I just didn't know what to do. I was so pissed off.

On my desk I have a picture of me with my friends from a weeks earlier and then I'm seeing these pictures of the amputations. And so I didn't know what to do. So this is where it's interesting in the book. What I talk about is, I just threw myself basically at the feet of God. I'm meditating at this point with Yogananda Self-Realization Fellowship.

Yogananda had talked about really just throwing oneself at the feet of God and praying to the Divine Mother. So that's what I did. I know it's not great to talk about mystical experiences but at that point a range of experiences started happening. I started writing ecstatic love poetry. I've never written poetry before and then started having these experiences of just ecstatic love, and basically a very familiar presence.

I was like, "How do I bridge child soldiers mutilating people and the fact that there is this incredibly divine love that's accessible through a meditation practice.

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Stephen:

It's a great question. It's at the heart of so many people's exploration of a spiritual path. The question is, "How can we live in the beneficent universe with a loving God that allows such things?" That's sort of at the heart of so many theological questions and think, why we've ended up with this kind of very dualistic cosmology where we see God and the devil, or there's some sort of deep opposition between forces, worrying forces in the universe.

I'm just wondering, it would be easy to go to that place with what you've seen as just kind of see the war, the destruction, dismemberment through the lens of just the demonic and that is somehow not God and that it's not divine and that there's a fundamental opposition either humanity or a dark force and a light force. I'm just curious of how you've reconciled that.

Philip:

Well, Stephen, it has been a challenge. I mean, part of it has been to echo something Jack Kornfield talked about is I had to confront the anger and the rage and reactions inside of myself. Luckily, I had a mentor who has really helped with that. And then it was just a slow process, Stephen, of



going -- I started travelling extensively back to Sierra Leone and I crossed other parts of Sub-Saharan Africa.

I mean that's something like 11 different countries, Liberia, Nigeria, Congo, Rwanda, Burundi, all these countries and going in and out of meditation and then going in and out of these ecstatic experiences. It really took a mentor and studying just to really even have a cosmology where I could hold the fact that, "Yes! It is all God, spirit, universe," whatever language works for you. I know "God" is a loaded word but...

That behind the pain and the suffering is it's really a misuse of freewill on a collective level and also having a cosmology of viewing. I remember I came back from one trip where I had gotten back to Sierra Leone and I'd heard more horror stories. I went to my mentor Rick Levy and I just was really angry. I was just like, "How in the world can God create this situation?"

He just looked at me and he just said, "Look. If you view this world as a place where everybody gets what they want to live and live happily ever, you're in for a serious disappointment. If you view this world as a place where souls come again and again and evolved over lifetime and it's governed by natural laws and rules, then it's perfectly designed to do that."

And so by going deeper -- part of that appeals to the intellect in me. But it has really been a slow process of the heart really embodying this fact that even inside of myself there's light and shadow, there's bliss and then there's pain that I see out on the world. And then starting just to observe from myself that the cause and effect of actions that I take, "What are the repercussions?"

Then to take that and add six billion plus people all with cause and effects that we can see that we're starting to put into motion a whole series of results that will impact people. And then to also hold the fact that living in a world where there are people with different levels or different types, different -- I don't know if you want to say "level," but different consciousness.

We've got someone like his Holiness, the Dalai Lama and we also then have Charles Taylor. I think at some point my mentor just said, "Look. You got to get out of your mind. Your mind cannot hold all of these." He was like, "You got to get out of your mind," and that has been the interesting part about the meditation practice is moving beyond the mind and going

into states of consciousness that in those states of consciousness being able to hold the dualities and to move beyond the reactive part.

It has been interesting, it took me a while, Stephen, also to get to the place where that wasn't as much a sense of escape as it was a moving into a deeper reality, and from that deeper reality then I can engaged in the world in a more calm and centered way because -- I mean, part of me for a while was like, "Just escape into meditation and forget about Sierra Leone." No. So that was a real process also.

Stephen: Many levels of what you're sharing here, I'm wondering if you can bring it -- so the meditation practice helps to hold the polarities and kind of create more space, but then when you're back in the fire and confronted on a very human level with situations like this, what did you learn about how to transform situations in the moment?

**[0:25:16]**

Philip: Well, in the moment is the Witness; the Witness is critical. I know so many different traditions talk about the Witness and this is one of the benefits of meditation, is it's really developing the witness, the part of oneself that can observe thoughts and the emotions, and by having a daily meditation practice, morning and night, being able to meditate and step into the Witness, then able to carry the Witness through the day.

And then to be able to be aware of what my thoughts, what my reactions are and then before reacting is to -- Jack Kornfield said, "Take a few breaths." So just really pause and just really reflect, "Is this how I want to react or respond to the situation?"

Now granted, there are times that I've experienced where what I was exposed to was more than what my Witness could even absorb. I think in that case something that has been important for me is then to do quite a bit of the inner work. My mentor is a psychologist advanced yogi. And so, with him, what I needed to do was also to clear out some of the trauma I had been exposed to.

I consciously asked for a healer in the same meditation tradition so I can work with him to clean out and just come to terms with the trauma I had been exposed to. So we used a few different tools on that. We used talk therapy, we used a little hypnosis but then after -- once moving through that -- releasing some of that trauma then the meditations is really the part that really moved that process.

Because with the meditation this particular tradition, I know traditions are different, is it's tuning in with a frequency that then helps tuning in. You can call it individual super consciousness or universal super consciousness, where that frequency by tuning in, in a daily basis starts to help dissolve some of the karmic seeds and to start to dissolve some of the pain and the trauma. It starts to open up to that place of bliss and love and ecstasy.

What's interesting in the book, I talk a lot about how comfort is a natural part of the human experience and it's from the inner to the international, and at the same time peace is our birthright. When going into meditation, one of the first signs of going into a deeper state of consciousness is a negative peace where there's just an absence of stimulation, and then there's a positive peace which opens up the bliss.

And what's interesting is by meditating on a regular basis and going on retreats and then starting to tap into that place of a positive peace that opens up to bliss. I slowly start to train myself, "This is more of my true identity. It's not my thoughts. It's not my emotions. It's not my body. It's granted." These are all extensions of this consciousness pulling through but it's the state of consciousness of bliss and so forth else.

It has taken several years, Stephen, to really come to terms with the fact that, "Yes, there are child soldiers in the world. And yes, there are horrible things happening. Yes, I have been exposed to them. And yes, they all are part of a larger whole. And yes, I can go in to these states of peace and I can go in to these states of bliss."

And then when I'm in a difficult situation go to the Witness, kind of lean back away from the situations that have just automatically reacting, and then allowing that state of peace and bliss to inform, "How am I going to respond to this situation?"

Stephen: Beautiful! Also, share a bit about moving to the other side, beyond the inner -- the role of media in helping to shape and transform conflict zones like West Africa. I know that that's really the foundation so much of the work with Search for Common Ground, is positive use of the media just as you saw the negative use with images of Rambo templating in to younger boys and then acting that out in destructive ways and kind of using that as their role modeling for what it means to be a man or kind of a macho masculine.

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So if can you share a bit about some of the work of how media can be a catalyst for transforming the underpinning culture that often fosters violence?

Philip:

Sure Stephen. Let me first start with the extreme, less unpleasant side. The extreme is Rwanda where radio was used to incite genocide and that was at a time where there weren't many radio stations. Something that I've seen across Africa in the last two decades is -- okay, so there was the Rambo movies being used to train, placing kids go on drugs and then watching Rambo movies and Chuck Norris and other violent films.

But the other thing that happened is that there's now a plethora of DVD players and it used to be VCRs spread all across Sub-Saharan Africa where people can pay pennies to go and watch incredibly violent films. And so, media is having an impact there where it's media literacy. I mean, kids can't tell the difference. And so it's similar to kind of the shootings we've been seeing here. It's just kind of like it just seeps into the consciousness.

So there is that wave that's happening and it's not discussed much and it's something I'd like to bring more awareness to is that. The industries whether it's Hollywood, Bollywood or Nigeria, it's really kind of seeping into the consciousness.

Now, the flipside of that side of that is Search for Common Ground did some incredibly pioneering work, where a year after the genocide in Rwanda there were -- in neighboring Burundi where there are Hutus and Tutsis, my colleagues had Hutu and Tutsi journalists coproducing radio programs.

Now, this is an important thing because going back to the world of duality it's like technology can be used in positive/negative and a whole wide range of ways. In this case, where radio had been used to incite genocide; radio was used to model the behavior. Stephen, this is what I really love about the Summer of Peace because I've known this for a long time.

Like Search for Common Ground, with that radio in Burundi and then also in Liberia and then Sierra Leone where we had where we had former child soldiers and former sex slaves producing radio program for children. And in the past we've interviewed Kimmie Weeks who was the whole inspiration for this.

I mean, Kimmie Weeks he was thrown onto a mass grave at the age of nine, thinking that he was dead and then he like swore he would help children around the world, and then he walked in the Search for Common Ground office in 1997. He said, "I want to produce a radio program for kids." Our staff worked with him and that now there are 20 countries around the world producing radio programs modeled after what Kimmie Weeks did.

Stephen, this tells me so much. First of all, it was like there is a spirit of peace that rises out of the human heart and soul. It finds unique expressions to help people come back, to move away from separation, and is expressing itself, and it's doing it through also media. And so, Search for Common Ground -- I mean, in Sierra Leone within a year of having these radio programs of Golden Kids News on the air, 89 percent of the country was listening to these programs.

We watched the change of attitude towards children. And so, the same tools that were being used to create child soldiers are being used to help people move beyond that dualistic thinking because here's the interesting thing and I go into a lot of details in the book, because I was really grappling with the sense of duality and fear because when there's incredible fear, duality and polarization intensifies. We see that in United States right now.

When there's incredible fear the extreme positions will drive the agenda and they would do it with fear and the problem is no longer the economy or social security or health care. The problem is the other, the problem is the Democrat, is the Republican. In Rwanda the problem was the Hutu or the Tutsis. So this is a psychological process. Duality is a part of our inherent nature; conflict is a natural result of these tendencies.

However, when there's the extreme positions driving the agenda with fear, then it's going to lead towards head on conflict. The way to win is to overcome the other and then you start to dehumanize, demonize -- stereotype dehumanize, demonize. And then once you dehumanize people, then there are less human and you can kill them. And that war is happening in the United States right now. That same language we've seen in Rwanda and other place is helping.

Now, meanwhile there are groups -- and this is why I think the Summer of Peace and The Shift Network is doing, it's like focusing on the positive. I mean, this is a yogic principle. Wherever you focus your attention, there goes your energy; that becomes your consciousness. So what we're

seeing is with these programs, radio programs caused Africa and fellowships and programs that Search for Common Ground doing is they're helping people re-humanize one another.

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We've heard in the Summer of Peace during the week of science that there are innate potentials of compassion and cooperation inside of humans. And so, with media what we can do and what we're doing with this telesummit is highlighting the positive potential and with media we can start to re-humanize with one another.

And then what that does is activates. It activates the human potential that's already inside of us and it activates the potential for compassion, and it activates the potential for collaboration. And then there, this is where the quote from Einstein comes really important, it's like you can't solve problems with the same mindset that created them.

When we're in an extreme polarization like we are in the United States and other countries around the world, there's only a certain range of solutions that are possible and those solutions will not solve the problems of this country or other countries.

However, once you move to a place you're starting to re-humanize the other and start awakening compassion, start awakening intolerance and collaboration, suddenly, that opens a person to a range of solutions that wouldn't be possible.

The other part that's interesting, Stephen, is from a yogic perspective and in science it's also reinforcing this. I get all of these into the book like Dean Radin talks about "Entangled Minds," that our thoughts are not necessarily your own. In a yogic perspective the idea is that thoughts are universally and not individually rooted.

And so, what that means is wherever I place -- whatever my predominant thinking is I tune in with that strata of consciousness that's in the universe. So for a child soldier, when you create a child soldier and destroy them on a psychologically emotional level and then have them watch Rambo movies, they're tapping into a consciousness, the same consciousness that was Leopold's Congo, Rwanda genocide, Cambodia, Nazi-Germany, young kids become instruments of that consciousness.

Likewise, when we can use media and positive examples of peacebuilding to help people recalibrate their thinking -- and this is why I thought Jack Kornfield was really good today where he says, "Don't expose yourself too much to the traumas of the world, just enough so you know what's going on but also be aware of what your thinking is."

Because when we start to think, and by having the Witness you can start to see this in yourself. Where I place my predominant thinking, I am tuning in with that on a larger universal level. And then I can tap in to that universal consciousness of that strata to bring in creativity and ideas that I could not do on my own.

And so, therefore, I become an instrument if you will of the spirit of peace. When you do that you can do this on an individual level and on a collective level. In the book, I talked about a different experience of creating collective containers where you have many people working together to create a strata of consciousness where together we tap into ideas.

There are examples. Search for Common Ground has done this. I mean Search for Common Ground without using this language has created think-tanks or dialogues and there's a group called Convergence in Washington, D.C. It's where they have Democrats, Republicans and a wide range of people come together to look at very complex issues but they have ground rules that help people re-humanize one another.

Two tangible examples is they did a think-tank around health care for the uninsured and these people that normally battle each other developed friendships, and suddenly they came out with legislation that Obama passed for health care for more children in the world, and they're still working on the others. And then they also did another dialogue for a couple of years on how to move beyond terrorism.

And so, this little group of people that normally wouldn't be working together are forming friendships and looking, addressing the problem and they came out with a report that Madeleine Albright directly informed Obama's initial actions in the White House including in the inauguration, he reached out to the Muslim world.

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So there's a lot of science, there's a lot of very old yogic and other mystical traditions around human consciousness that is being leveraged

by groups like Search for Common Ground but we don't necessarily talk about it. What I think about the Summer of Peace is, we're finally starting to look at peacebuilding from this broader perspective, from the mystics, from the scientists, from the inner to the international and the human capacity for channeling peacebuilding.

We're on the frontiers Stephen. I mean, we're really on the frontier of -- I mean, granted there has been decades of work but we're really on the frontier of I think some profound breakthroughs of really understanding peacebuilding.

Stephen: Well, you are just a fireball of passion about this. It's so infectious and really quite beautiful the way your lifework has come together and what you're doing now in the Summer of Peace, and the opportunity ahead of us to list the consciousness at the root and to move beyond the polarizations, and to really create a lasting solution rather than just negotiated truces or suppressing violence that we literally lift up to a whole new way of being with each other. It's very exciting to listen to you.

Yeah so, I'm trying to think what would be -- are there areas that you're really wanting to make sure you share? I mean, your story is so rich with "God and Conflict," in the book and what you're doing now. Are there areas that you feel like or key gems that you're wanting to make sure that you can share with people, some of the practical wisdom about how they can become peacebuilders in their day-to-day life?

Philip: Sure. I'll get to the practical "how to" here in a second. Let me just first also say another part that's really dear to me is the Declaration of Commitment to Indigenous People, the call that you had with James and Glenn and the Grandmothers because when I was on the Navajo Reservation I was aware of the same mindset of the western pursuit of happiness.

It was a similar mindset left developed to consumers and that really drove people across the Americas, and basically, created the incredible wounding with Native Americans. The other part I've been aware of is what I've learned in Sierra Leone from traditional healers there, is that the war not only happens on the physical but it happens also on the spiritual level.

And also that the wounding, the souls that -- the people that are traumatically killed, the souls are -- that there's a need for ceremony to



help bring those souls to peace and also that the wounding is -- the energy of those wounding is left in the physical environment.

Stephen: Yeah, those have been the recognition for me as well when we're talking with Leroy Little Bear about that, that literally the rocks and the plants and the whole ambiance of an area gets permeated with the kind of negative ripples, almost like a disturbance in the forest. They use some Star Wars language.

Philip: Yeah. So this declaration for indigenous people for me is it's a very hard -- I mean, I just get really moved by (a) -- I mean when I was traveling out here to move to California, Stephen, I was in Michigan, at the Fetzer Institute and one morning I was woken up at four in the morning by a presence and it was a presence that I've took to believe was Native American.

And for two hours we sat and meditated together and I was basically informed, "There's a village at the top of the hill." I went to the top of the hill and there had been an old village there. So all across the Americas, North, Central and South are places, whenever I drive -- often when I drive I think, "Okay, what old villages am I driving over?" Having seen the impact of deadly war, it's easier for me to imagine what the impact would have been on these communities all across the Americas.

And the fact that that energy is still there and everything I've learned in peacebuilding, it's critical that we acknowledge the past atrocities and then also bring light to them and then healing and reconciliations. So for the world, I think it's critical for a couple of reasons, (a) we heal from the past; apologize, acknowledge, heal, look at the ceremonies that can help heal the land, heal the energy, heal the souls that died.

And then also look at how we can draw upon the wisdom from different traditions to really get at this root question of deep pursuit of happiness. To me, I really feel like there's got to be a redefining particularly of the individual pursuit of happiness, because otherwise if we do not address that core fundamental aspect, we're on a fast track on the world of increased separation, increased impact from the environment, increase battle over resources.

**[0:45:18]**

So I think this declaration of commitment to indigenous people and the essence behind that which can manifest in many different ways is really critical for healing and moving forward.

Now, in terms of tools and so forth, if people go to the website [godandconflict.com](http://godandconflict.com) they can download a toolkit and one of the things -- these are two of the appendices from the book that I have, and one of them is the Peace Continuum that just really kind of maps out from the inner to the international, the different ways that peace and/or conflict is happening.

Then I've got a section on tools, and I think one of the first tools Stephen, is to start to embrace conflict as natural and birth is our peace right. What I mean by that is -- I grew up in a family where we were conflict avoiders, you know?

Stephen: You might have meant, "Peace is our birthright."

Philip: Yeah. Well, what did I say?

Stephen: You said, "Birth is our peace right." I was like, "That's an interesting concept."

Philip: Well, yeah. Just luckily it's a little tough sometimes, thanks for pointing that out. Yes, embrace conflict as natural, peace is our birthright. And for me, Search for Common Ground really taught me this because I was kind of a conflict avoider and some of my colleagues said I was even passive-aggressive because I just didn't want to be in conflict. But just start to relax and embrace, okay, conflict is natural part of the human experience and it's an integral part of a spiritual path.

And I go into quite a bit of detail in the book and just by sitting with that that bin opens up. It was like, "So when there's a conflict, can I sit back and step into the Witness, observe myself, step into a place of peace instead of wanting to run from it or running to charge into it and then just kind of learn to navigate with it a little bit more?"

The other part is I just keep in mind constantly that there are natural laws in play. It's ancient. I mean what goes around comes around, you know the golden rule. So when I'm in that place of the Witness it's like, "Okay, I want to be aware that whatever energy I bring in to this situation is going to come back to me." And so in that case -- and Jack Kornfield was talking about it today, he was like, "You can't really dissolve hate with hate."

So if I'm in a conflict and I'm triggered, (a) the Witness, helps the person become aware I'm triggered. And I do this all the time. Well, hopefully not all the time but whenever I'm triggered I say, "Okay, I'm triggered, I'm aware of that, I'm aware that if I react from the place of being triggered, I am putting out the same energy that it's going to (a) come back to me and then also intensify the situation.

So for me, it's giving the meditation practice, developing the Witness and then getting to the place of being able to respond to stimuli in situations instead of reacting because that cycle of reaction, reaction, reaction -- I mean we see that. I mean we see it like Israel and Palestine reaction, reactions, reactions when it really escalates, we can see it in conflict situations, and we can see it in our lives; if I go tip for tap for someone that just spirals downward.

So again, the Witness allows the opportunity to pause, tap into that place of peace and then respond. And then also meditations depending on what -- there are so many different traditions and I always encourage people find the one that works for you and then also be careful about running from one to the other when things start to get difficult.

Again, Jack Kornfield talked about this today too, and you'll also read it in my book. It's like starting to meditate doesn't mean bliss and peace and happiness ever after. Now, granted, you may have been a Lama in your former life and you tapped into it right away but I don't think that was necessarily my case.

And so, when starting to meditate also to be aware that that will then create a space where I'm going to have to confront my demons or I'm going to have to confront loneliness or pain or different things because they will naturally start to rise up. My experience has been, when I start to tap into more positive energies through meditation that that starts to loosen up. You could call them Samskara or Karmic Seeds and so forth, and they will start to come up and become active and I go into detail in the book about what's that like. I call it "Kali Barbecue".

**[0:55:07]**

What it means is some old seeds in my subconscious are coming up to be released. One of my heroes in the book, Michael Singer, the author of the "Untethered Soul," I really learned it with him. It's like, "When those

things start to happen is really learn how to sit and be with them instead of run from them, trying to cover them up or act from them."

And that is a real art, and I have a whole chapter dedicated on that called the "Kali Barbecue," where it's writing through the burning off from the subconscious, different parts of myself that want to be released. And one way to hold that is to think -- an experience comes to us and if we react from a place of fear or from a place of grasping it gets stuck in our field.

It will continue at that vibration to attract over and over again, the same situations until it can be released from our energy field. And so when it comes up to be activated it doesn't feel like it at the time. It's actually an opportunity in a skillful way to let it be released. And to echo Jack Kornfield's word and in my book, I also talked about the importance of having a supportive community.

So I'm meditating alone and I'm also meditating with a group and I also have a tradition where I can go and talk with monks and nuns to get deeper insights. So I'm not doing it flying out alone. And then I chose to have a mentor on top of the meditation tradition to help me dissolve some of those seeds.

The other key part is -- and this is beautiful, Stephen, how the Witness really comes in here is developing the ability to listen and we can see this played out from the inner to the international is, (a) learning to listen to oneself, through meditation, listening to the different parts that are coming up. But also by developing a meditation practice a person learns to concentrate.

What I have found is by being able to concentrate when I'm in a conversation, I can focus like a laser beam on the other person. I can listen to the words, I can look at their different facial and body expressions, I can kind of tune in a little bit but I tend to be empathic, but that's beside the point. What I've noticed is the other person feels heard.

I'm able to repeat back what they've said, and this ability to listen is a profound game changer in conflict situations because it's critical for people to be acknowledged, heard and respected. And one of the practices I love to do when I meet people is, and I described this tool in the book as "Namaste practice," is when I walk up to someone and I greet them, inside just say basically, "Namaste. I honor the spirit in you that's also in me."

By doing that and really pausing, instead of just walking up and say, "Oh! Hi! How are you?" moving on. It's like being present, look in the person if it's culturally appropriate in the eye saying hello, asking how are you and then listening and internally acknowledging that person has a soul, that person is a part of the God, universe, whatever else, and then seeing that and recognizing it.

Many of our speakers from the Summer of Peace have talked about just the energy field goes out and entangle minds that it has picked up. Dean Radin talks about entangled minds. And that's a simple tool that we can all do. And then, again, when in conversations particularly when they start to heat up, we can witness our reactions, choose not to go with them, repeat back what the other person said and they just start to feel heard, and then if we play on the international level, but just imagine the power.

I mean for instance I had a young person from a country that's in conflict right now, Raitme, she had some questions in common, and I wrote back to her and she wrote back today and she was like, "Oh my God, I've been heard!" And she's in a country that's in conflict, deadly conflict and she was just like, "Oh, my God, I feel heard!" And just imagine if the United States were to listen to Iran as if they really mattered, and as if we really respected people from Iran.

So you can see these are real simple tools and what's nice is that they're all accessible to us and we can start practicing them on a daily basis. And if people go and they download the toolkit, they will see a bunch of other ones. There are other simple ones, positions and interests. Well, another one of --

Stephen: Where do people get the book and the toolkit?

Philip: So you go to [godandconflict.com](http://godandconflict.com). So that G-O-D-A-N-D [conflict.com](http://conflict.com) and then you --

Stephen: It's amazing that's still available. Do you think somebody out there was all over that, God and Conflict?

Philip: I know, isn't it surprising? Oh my God! Yeah, so God and Conflict is still up. It's there now and there's a toolkit and you can download the toolkit for free and then you can hit a button and then be able to order the book. It's available on Amazon both hard copy and also Kindle version is out now also.

Stephen: Well, one thing I just want to say about the book is just it really brings together the extremes of human experience in such a heart-centered way. It takes some of the worst atrocities and just the worst of humanity with the absolute heights of mystical bliss and union and living in a place of deep service and alignment and it brings them together.

I think covering that full spectrum is a lot about beginning to see our world through the eyes of the sacred and to really see the divinity in all things and to come home to ourselves recognizing this full spectrum. Because within all of us we have the most enlightened masters a part of our being and we have one of the worst killers as part of our being; the full spectrum of the planet manifest in each of us.

And so, to the extent that we're doing that in a reconciliation and peacebuilding between all this full spectrum of who we are and continuing to lift that up, we can do that in the world, and I see you as a really shining example on how to do that. The book itself is like a field manual for the practical mystic with their feet on the ground, concerned about the world not just going off into a cave and into some mud.

But really saying, "Okay, I want to dip into these states and really drink from the well of love and spirit and the essence of the universe and then to come back and do the hard work, hard patient work of building and transforming the world." It's really exactly the kind of epic journey that all of us are needing to undertake at this point, so I thank you for chronically living it and sharing it.

Philip: Yeah. Well, Stephen, thank you. You're welcome and thank you Stephen. Also, I just want to acknowledge being able to serve with the Summer of Peace and The Shift Network. My friends, when I was writing the book, they said it's missing a chapter just like you haven't lived at all yet. And so the last chapter for this edition is the Summer of Peace.

I just want to thank you for having that vision of the Summer of Peace and inviting me to come and be part of it and to be able to share this journey with a larger world and then also served the spirit of peace. And I mean the spirit of peace as the actual -- I heard Louise Diamond in one of our call say it's an actual entity and the spirit of peace is something that's in each of us and it's expressing itself through each of us in unique ways that's giving rise to a culture of peace around the world.

It's just delightful that the Summer of Peace is really taken on to showcase that wide range of how the spirit of peace is manifesting around the world. So thank you on that, Stephen.

Stephen: Well, may the spirit of peace prevail and may all of the work that we've done continue to blossom and may all those who are listening to this really be empowered in your next stage as a peacebuilder. We all have within us the capacity to be a beautiful spreader of peace in the world. I know that if you have enjoyed Philip's call here as much as I have, I encourage you to get the book at [godandconflict.com](http://godandconflict.com) you said or [.org](http://godandconflict.org)?

Philip: [.com](http://godandconflict.com).

Stephen: [.com](http://godandconflict.com) and the downloadable manual, and keep participating in the Summer of Peace and create peace circles, and we're going to be doing it again next year, and even bigger and more meaningful ways. So we're on this journey to creating a culture of peace and I just thank you for harvesting the gems that have come from -- facing the heart of darkness as well.

**[1:00:00]**

Philip: Thank you Stephen.

Stephen: Thank you Philip. Well, that's our wrap for tonight and tomorrow we have up -- Philip, who do we have up tomorrow?

Philip: Tomorrow -- let me pull this up. I had that earlier right at the tip of my --- tomorrow we have Dr. Naif Al-Mutawa who has created a superhero comic book that depicts Islamic people in positive lights, it's called "The 99." It's one of the bestselling comic books in the world.

And then, we also have Velcrow Ripper. Velcrow Ripper, the title of his talk is about "Love in a time of crisis," and he is a guy who's making films around the world that focus on the positive transformation that's happening in some of the most difficult conflicts and difficult painful places in the world.

**[1:01:00] End of Audio**