

Summer of Peace 2013™

“Moving Beyond Gun Violence” Mini Summit–Session 2 with Dot Maver, Heart Phoenix, and Jeffrey Weisberg (Sep 10)

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Philip: Hello, everyone, and welcome back to the Summer of Peace, a celebration of common humanity. This is Peter Hellmich, the Director of Peace of the Shift Network.

And today, we are looking at moving beyond gun violence. And the second discussion here is building upon the one previously where we had Jamira Burley and William Killebrew in a very powerful conversation because both Jamira and William have suffered a loss of family members to gun violence and are both powerful peace builders working on city levels and national levels and just really doing dramatic work.

And this session here, it's going to be another powerful one as we're going to the town of Gainesville. And before I introduce our special guests, I would like to remind everyone to join us on Facebook Summer of Peace, [facebook.com/summerofpeaceshift](https://www.facebook.com/summerofpeaceshift), and we welcome comments, shares, and engagements. And also on Twitter, you can look at [@peacesummit](https://twitter.com/peacesummit) or just look up twitter.com/peacesummit. We encourage people to engage in dialogues.

And this session here is I have been really looking forward because I'm a big admirer and fan of the River Phoenix Center for Peace Building in Gainesville and the people involved there. So let me provide a brief introduction of our three guests.

Heart Phoenix's work, service and activism has spanned over five decades, even though Heart is much younger in heart than five decades of work. And she's having worked as an educator, activist, champion throughout the United States and numerous countries on environmental and animal right issues, social justice, peace building and gender equality. She brings the passion and energy of her name, Heart. She is the Chair of The Peace Alliance Educational Institute and co-founder of the sister organization, The Peace

Alliance, a nonprofit that takes the work of peace building to the center of national discourse and policy priorities.

She is currently living her dream as President of the River Phoenix Center for Peace Building, in honor of her son. And there's much more that we can say about Heart, and we'll learn more here in a few minutes. And that's Heart Phoenix.

And then we have Dot Maver who is also a member of the Wisdom Council for the Summer of Peace. And Dot is an educator, peace builder whose keynote is inspiring cooperation on behalf of the common good. And Dot is very, very good at this.

She is the President of the National Peace Academy in the U.S.A., a founder of the Global Alliance for Ministries and Infrastructures of Peace, serves as Executive Director of The River Phoenix Center for Peace Building, and lastly, helps coordinate Push4Peace. Her work in education, politics and grassroots community organizing is focused on applied peace building utilizing a shared responsibility and shared leadership model.

And then we also have Jeffrey Weisberg as the Director of Programs and Outreach of the River Phoenix Center for Peace Building. Jeffrey has designed, developed and implemented a wide range of programs and services in Gainesville, Florida, which we'll hear about, and also throughout the United States. His work with youth includes peer mediation, juvenile diversion programs, youth empowerment and coming of age programs. Jeffrey serves as a Florida Certified State Mediator and mediates cases involving juvenile offenders, family disputes and small business conflicts.

So, Heart, Dot, and Jeffrey, welcome to the Summer of Peace.

Heart: Thank you.

Dot: Thank you, Philip.

Jeffrey: Thank you.

Philip: Thank you all. Thank you so much for being with us. This is such a delight because now we're going to look at a community wire approach to peace building. And first, I just love for people to know a little bit, just briefly about, what inspired you to get

involved in peace-related work. So, Heart, let's start with you, and then we'll go to Dot and Jeffrey.

Heart: Okay. Well, I've been, as you so noted, an activist in various areas for many, many years, since my early 20s. It was that time when many people realized that there was an opportunity to use our own power and creativity and voice to change the world. So I feel like I was privileged in the '60s to be part of that generation.

And I became very interested in the environmental world and as things were changing in the animal rights and just peace and justice in general to every living creature.

But more recently what happened through the wonderful, wonderful evolution of my life and practices, I realized that I really, really, really wanted to bring it local and that without humanity understanding peace within themselves and the oneness of all that we couldn't as much as the environment as I work so hard to try and do, and the same thing for the animals, that until humans could come to the place of deep connection with the whole universal realm and the earth realm, the work that I personally was doing was not enough for me, and I felt really, really called to helping to bring this particular modality of peace building closer to the human heart.

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Philip: Great. Excellent. Beautiful, Heart. Thank you, thank you. And, Dot, yourself.

Dot: Yes, thank you, Philip. I have to say as I've listened to Heart share as she does so eloquently through her heart, I realized as a young person, a teen and in my 20s, I wasn't considered a peace activist even though at those times in the '60s and '70s there was ample opportunity. I always came at it through the lens of education. And in my heart, I know that education shapes society, and that's both formal and informal education.

But at the same time, essentially for me, life is all about relationship. And so when we talk about peace, I consider that pretty much the science of right human relationship with self, others, and the world around us. And so gradually my path became dedicated to helping to make violence history and to help raise

awareness of recognize, realize a culture of peace, and thereby defining the emerging fields of peace building, peace learning, peace education, et cetera.

So it's been a wonderful, joyful, challenging, heartfelt journey.

Philip: Excellent. Beautiful. I love this phrase, Dot, the science of right human relationship. Excellent. Thank you. And, Jeffrey, how about yourself.

Jeffrey: Well, I am the youngest of four children. And in most households, there's fighting and conflicts. And that dynamic in many ways is very normal, but it also can be very, very painful and I remember seeing people fighting and just in my body having a visceral experience of unease.

And I'm also a Libra, so I really strive for balance and order and peace and justice. And so it's been a big part of my personal path to find ways of being in that right relationship and supporting people to come to greater understanding. And certainly a big part of that was working with the Peace Alliance and finding new ways of looking at solutions rather than the problem. And so that's a big part of my orientation.

Philip: Okay. All right. Excellent. Great. Let's go into -- I think Dot talked about how you want it to bring it local. What was the inspiration for the River Phoenix Center for Peace Building?

Heart: Well, all of us were involved with the Peace Alliance. You've had them on this program. I think they're co-producers actually. And love the national work, love the international work. But again we just felt like we had learned so much we were so privileged of being a part of that from lobbying to meeting and seeing all these different, wonderful modalities of solution-based programs that could be used. And we were starting to work with the Youth PROMISE Act that was promising that if it passed this legislation that it would bring many of the things that we wanted to see in communities. And we thought, well, why don't we just do it? Why don't we do it? We want this to happen, but in the meantime, we already have the tools.

And so we brought it to a small town, not so small. It's got the fourth largest university in the country, Gainesville, Florida and

University of Florida, and we live in this area. And we said we're going to try it here. We're not going to make a big deal of it. We're going to be quiet about it outside of here, because we don't really know if a city needs exactly what it is we have to offer. We just thought this is going to be a holistic approach, and we were going to see if we could really collaborate with existing agencies that were already doing wonderful, wonderful work.

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But with felt that cities needed folkalizer, an organization that was not doing just domestic violence or just anti-bullying or just changing the programming of the Juvenile Justice system. But if they had somebody that could hold that overarching vision and be available to spotlight any of it, it would serve all. And that is pretty much what happened.

And, of course, personally in all of us, it's very personal because it's named after River. It is his legacy. It's always what his activism from a young, young boy. As many of you might remember, he was out there as one of the first young teenagers to share his passion for the earth and the animals and for justice. And his idea was always to go for what works and not just talk about the pain and all the injustices, but rather what are the solutions. And we felt like we had some kind of a handle on it. We're learning more and more every day.

Philip: Okay. All right. Excellent, excellent. And this is also -- I mean, just think about how to approach this. Dot, could you tell a little bit more about ... you're starting the center. You've got this big idea, you don't know, it hasn't been tested. So how did you get started?

Dot: I love those questions. It's an emergent co-creative design process that started with Jeffrey and Heart and myself and some of the family members sitting down and saying okay, as Heart just shared. Here is this probability in a community where a comprehensive approach based on what with all know and we mapped. We did some asset mapping of our own resources, of the cities' resources, who we should meet with, who we should talk to. And the reason that we all brought to the table and bring to the table in terms of both best practices that are out there, proven, researched based practices and -- as the three of us are fond of calling them -- next practices, those that are really proving to be cutting edge and

making a difference. And much of that candidly is within the field of restorative practices that is just beginning to be evaluatively and longitudinally proven, and we're part of that model here in Gainesville.

So that's what we did. We basically did some mapping, mind mapping, and asset mapping and resource mapping and all of that. And then the three of us took ourselves to meet with everybody around the community, and we did a whole probably six months of that meeting with folks and saying, here we are and we designed materials, and then we're very blessed with a beautiful logo -- thanks to Shepard Fairey -- and put together a brochure. And so we took ourselves into offices and meetings and networking opportunities. And we went to listen and learn and then offer support based on the needs that we were assessing and what folks were saying would really be helpful.

And so that's what we mean when we say a cooperative, co-creative emergent design process. And I add a word every time I say it because everybody has different ideas, and it's like self-organizing in a way and yet we have a coordinated effort and we've got an infrastructure. We landed a suite of offices so that people could come to us. We've got mapping and calendars on the walls around us. We did some of the very typical things in terms of organizational development; however, the three of us tend to think very outside the box and are very willing to be spontaneous and go with what is showing itself rather than thinking we have to do a certain thing, a certain way.

So gradually, we started to partner with some of the people and organizations in the community including the University of Florida and law enforcement and others. And Jeffrey as director of programs can speak to that much, much deeper actually than I can right now. But that's what started to happen.

And so our contact list grew. We started to get invited to speak and then to do some programs. And from that, we are beginning to develop a cadre of programs that we offer through the River Phoenix Center as well as bringing into the community some of these practices. In fact, one of them is TED, The Empowerment Dynamic. Another is Be More Heroic. Another is Nonviolent Communication, and I could go on and on.

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But that's basically the journey we've been on. And we are celebrating a year out in the community, of really being out in the community doing this work, and the momentum is amazing.

So over to Jeffrey.

Philip: Excellent. And, Jeffrey, before you go into the program, could you describe a little bit of the receptivity because it sounds like there's a combination of humility and boldness here with this initiative because I love the fact you're going to listen and learn, and then there's also boldness showing up.

So, Jeffrey, what was the response from those initial meetings? How did people receive it all?

Jeffrey: One of our first meetings is -- I've been a mediator here in the community for maybe 12 years or so. And so a number of years ago, I used to be the lead mediator for juvenile offenders who've been charged with domestic battery. And these are like little kids. The youngest kid I had was 9 years old. And we would bring them in and do mediations with their family.

And then they drop the funding. So then a few years later when we started the center, we went back to the state attorney's office and met with the Director of Victims Services. And we shared who we were and what our thinking was and our approach. And she said, "Oh, no. I don't think that's going to work. I just don't think there'll be receptivity for the governor," blah blah blah. And she really was a bit of a naysayer, just like didn't really think.

But we just, the three of us, stayed in our hearts and stayed on message, if you will, of our belief, of that what's necessary here is for everyone to learn to resolve conflicts through healthy communication in relationships.

Then she pushes her chair back, and she says, "Okay. We're going to start referring cases to you guys. Can you do it next month?" And we were totally floored and stammering and stumbling and saying, "Duh, uh, uh. Okay, maybe a couple of months we'll be ready." And she has become one of our biggest allies through the state attorney's office, and she introduced us to the Department of

Juvenile Justice who now we have an amazingly close relationship with here locally, and the Secretary of the State for Juvenile Justice Department has visited with us, and we have a meeting in a couple of weeks again with her to further this overall mission.

But a lot of it I really think to echo what Heart and Dot are saying is that our approach and our style are one of offering solutions rather than hammering on the problem. And what happens we find is that people then ... there's nothing to push against. There's not the resistance in the fight. They go, "Oh, okay." While, we clearly recognize that there's this issue and this need and your idea of the solution. Let's give it a try. And so we really had a number of doors open even though we don't have some of the same credentials.

Dot has her PhD, but Heart and I don't. A lot of it is based on who we are as people. And so anybody who feels like they don't have the credentials and get stopped there, I would just encourage you to become as competent as you can in your craft and skill and be able to deliver that well. And that alone will open some doors from many people.

Philip: Okay. All right. I want to open this up because I know the three of you can be so dynamic in talking back and forth and co-creating. So I'd love to stay here just a little bit more about what are some of the things that could oust you in this process? What are things that are working, some anecdotes? And, Heart, I know you've also lived in Gainesville for years, too, is that right?

Heart: Yes.

Philip: Yeah. So what is that life to be in your own community and how that's emerging? What are some things that have been standing up for you all?

Heart: Well, for me, it's really interesting because when I was here before for the 25 years -- I was here before this -- I was very private. I live in the country. I have my friends, but I was not really interactive in the community because it was too close, because of my family being some of them celebrities. I was very, very protective.

And so coming out in this way was huge, but it just was the time. The need was great, and I think it was my need was great. It was time to do that and to have something really substantial to offer.

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And so now, it's just absolutely amazing to me, I think for each of us, because we've been activist for so long in a broader scope to come into a community and actually get to know the sheriff, the deputy, the Director of the Department of Juvenile Justice to know how they think and why they think, to get to know law enforcement in a way, to move into the realm of the University of Florida, and to feel their desire to enter the community, to share their expertise in that way. It's a win-win for all of us, which is just such a beautiful evolution, I think.

Certainly, from my limited way of thinking, I thought I was very progressive and that I have an incredible capacity to love. And I see that I had many judgments and tightening around certain areas. And I thought, well, I don't know about law enforcement and I've seen the mayor, government, or all of those labels, and then people that are at risk and the kids that do things wrong. All of that is just blown away.

And we have been able to kind of walk through these waters or been invited to walk through these waters and swim together and honor each other and help each other. It's pretty astounding, so we celebrate greatly. And it's not that we don't see the pain and the despair and the hopelessness of many, and that's why we're here. That's why we're here.

Philip: Powerful. Dot, you again, elaborate a little.

Dot: Yeah, I would love, Philip, thank you. And thank you for calling the question in this way around such a powerful title for this particular piece of Summer of Peace: Moving Beyond Gun Violence, and in a way, it's about moving beyond violence because it's all inclusive.

So there are two things that ... there's so many things that make my heart sing and why I pulled up roots full year ago now but really two years ago committed to this work here in Gainesville and moved from Vermont South.

And the first thing is the theory to practice idea. And as you know I'm big on applied peace building. And theory to practice is an academic phrase, I guess you would say. And what I have been

talking about and thinking about and being part of visioning for so many years, we're on the ground doing it, making it visible, testing the waters, experimenting with what works and what doesn't work in ways that are just magnificent. And I know there are other groups doing great works throughout the country. This piece for me in my own experience is the most comprehensive local work I have ever been involved in, and I am loving it.

And the second thing is the youth response. And actually, Jeffery can speak to this better than me, too. But like going to the graduations of the seven-week Communication and Self-Esteem courses that Jeffrey and his team facilitate for youth here, and then just recently meeting one of the leaders of the Dream Defenders who's excited to cooperate with the River Phoenix Center and so many other youth throughout the community stepping up, interns from U.S., and some of the youth who are a bit challenged in this community.

The positive response has been so heartening that I know that what I've been saying for 20 years is true. We are one generation away from realizing a culture of peace.

Philip: Wow. Wow. Wow. One generation. Okay. All right. I mean, that's just kind of like a floor stopper.

Jeffery, I want to know about the nuts and bolts scenario like what is it that people are responding to so favorably? What is it that's being offered here that people are excited about?

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Jeffrey: Well, Marshall Rosenberg in his work around nonviolent communication, he has traveled the world and worked with so many different kinds of people and has found that we all have common needs. We have universal needs or needs are universal.

I think that some of what we're tapping into in this community and really in the world that I don't think there's very many people that really want to fight ultimately if they had another way. I believe that people want safety and connection and love and meaning and so forth.

And so what we're tapping into is giving people a language to communicate and identify what is that common place and how could I be in a relationship differently with one another.

And one of the classes that I teach that Dot mention called Communication and Self-Esteem, one of the things I ask the kids is, what do you want? What's in your future? Now, they're not asked that question that often. So that's one of our strategies, just ask this young people in particular deeper questions. And we find that they respond.

However, in this particular meeting, a lot of the kids ... virtually, all the kids were speaking of a car and clothes and money on that level. And there's one boy who turns out had six felonies and comes from a very broken home and just quite tortured actually. What he wanted most was peace. And talk about a floor stopper or a show stopper, for me, it just stopped in my tracks because this particular boy I would never in my wildest dreams imagine that that's what he wanted most. And so he's not alone. All these young people are seeking something deeper.

And so in this topic of what's beyond gun violence or -- I forget exactly how it's phrased -- one of the things that we talked about, especially after the Trayvon Martin incident and killing is, what do you imagine would be different if both Trayvon Martin and George Zimmerman were well trained in communication and conflict resolution and understanding their own and each other's needs? What do you imagine would have been different in that interaction between those men? And it helps the kids put that in perspective because they all say that it would have been different.

And so a big part of our work is how do we not only inspire and instill those skills but give them practice. And so in that particular training the last class of the seven weeks the kids teach it to their parents and their probationary officers and their community, and we find that it becomes more embedded in their experience and in their thinking. And then we tried to hire one or two of those young kids to become assistants in that training. And I have now two young African American kids, the boy is 17 and she's 14, who are training to become facilitators. And they are just alive with it. They're so grateful for the opportunity, particularly the boy who's a little more developed. He just wants to do this kind of work. And so

we want to give more young people that opportunity to be in relationship and find their own power and voice in a different way.

Philip: Excellent.

Dot: And so how that works pragmatically, Philip, in terms of your question about what's happening in the community is then we think, okay, so who -- oh, FloridaWorks. So we'll go have meetings with FloridaWorks and we'll discuss what we're doing and what they're doing for youth jobs, the job works program for youth and see how we can cooperate to deepen this and make it available more fully.

Philip: Okay. And I just want to pick up just one little thing. What's it like when the youth would go through this go back and teach with their parents? What's the response from the parents or the juvenile officers?

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Heart: Well, the first class that we had, we had a juvenile judge there. It was a pilot program. They were given everything that we've done as in pilot. We didn't charge. And we've just done it, and we said if it doesn't work, fine. We haven't set roots down yet.

And the judge along with the state attorney's office and the parents who sat in circle, we brought everyone in the circle when these kids were doing it. He said hands down, "Let's do it." Now, it is mandated by the court for some of these kids to come to this program.

And the same thing in parents for the most part, what happens with parents is they can't even believe that there's a conversation. They're included in the conversation where they get to see a part of their child that they don't often see. This is not a confrontational event. And this isn't a time to do anything but to really see where this kid has come from the time they entered the program to the end of it. So it's very, very exciting.

Jeffrey: One of the big challenges though is that so many parents are ... their needs are not being met, and they are so struggling financially or self-esteem or domestic violence. I mean, you could go on and on and on. And so to help be an intervention in that

cycle of violence is really, really important. And it's one area that we haven't been able to bring to bear as many resources as we would like is to support parents.

We do offer something called Redirecting Children's Behavior for parents. It's kind of like a parenting workshop which is fantastic. But I think in our communities across the country and really around the world for parents to get more support and resources in their help, because it's just a cycle. It's just they pay it forward, if you will, and it's either a positive thing or a harmful thing. And, unfortunately, we see a lot of that harm, because all the kids who go through the system or the vast majority of them have either experienced it directly or witnessed violence in some form in their families.

Philip: Okay. All right. And I know the three keywords of your work is prevention, intervention, and healing. And can you talk a little bit about the intervention. And it sounds like these trainings are also part of prevention, is that correct? And healing?

Heart: Yeah. We don't work with just at rescues. We offer workshops all along the way. We do communication skill building. We do men's work, women's work. We do gender healing work. We offer programs on peace leadership. We personally learn as we're offering these programs, and then we see that. We see the people that actually come to these workshops are people within the community. They're university professors or they're waitresses or they're somebody who works with juveniles. So it's a wide variety and the same thing with kids.

We just did a workshop this weekend, and we had a couple of high school kids come, which was so wonderful to see the deep desire to understand and be part of the solution using peace building skills.

Philip: Okay. All right. Powerful. It's just interesting because it was the sort of peace we talked about peace from the inner to the international, and you're really taking this comprehensive approach to breaking cycles of violence in Gainesville. And I know that this was kind of an initiative to see what was happening. And it sounds like you're having -- would you say that you're having more success than you even imagined when you first started it?

Jeffrey: Absolutely, absolutely. I mean the fact that we're offering this one training on Restorative Justice in October for our community peace building month. And we're already full. And we have a waiting list. And the police department is sending five representatives. The school is sending five representatives. The sheriff is sending someone. University of Florida is sending four or five people. And so we are breaking the cycle of violence, I mean, slowly but surely. And the fact that people are saying yes because they're recognizing this movement. They're recognizing that our normal or traditional methods are not working.

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I mean, just look at the population and recidivism and so forth. And so I think people are just -- I wouldn't call it desperate but just longing for a deeper, a more effective way. And what happens is we got asked to facilitate a dialogue between African American youth and law enforcement. And so we had 60 people, 35 African American youth and 35 law enforcement folks. And so I facilitated that circle for an hour and a half. And through that conversation, the young people got to understand where the adults are coming from. And the adults got to understand where the youth were coming from in an entirely different approach. You only have to see that once to go, "Oh, my goodness. There's a different way of building a stronger relationship within our community."

Dot: And I would say also, Philip, that I won't say much to our surprise but almost, we find ourselves at the nexus of helping local to global, and in this case, local and national, the shift from a punishment model to a restorative model. And that has profoundly moved the three of us, individually and as a group and really owning that and the new language that's emerging, the practices that are emerging, and all of that, and really bringing that into everything we do.

Philip: Excellent, Dot. Go ahead, Heart.

Heart: Yeah, I was just going to say that the school services have asked Jeffrey to do a short training on Restorative Justice, introduce it because we are doing that restorative circles in some schools now. We're being called a lot. And that's not our sole focus, although we just absolutely love that work.

So that's happening, we go into lockdown, the juvenile jails. We go to detention centers. And so what's happening which is amazing with law enforcement they're doing a training really soon. They've just contacted us and said they would like some training also. They're doing a Restorative Justice training and then they just want simple communication skill building. I mean, to us that's just so exciting.

Philip: Yeah. I want to pick up a couple of things here because some things just kind of dawn on me here. When we're talking about from the inner to international at the same time in the community, it sounds like you're working on the inner because you saw at the workshops are having an inner transformation for people, the interpersonal and the communication. And then the community in terms of weaving together the different parts of the community that may have not been working together.

So it's interesting to think of inner to community being all those levels. And then, Dot, you talked about how you're linking with the national and the international. So you are at the nexus here. This is a nexus experience of applied lesson.

Can you reflect on that a little bit because this is innovative just thinking, realization for me. And they've been obvious to you. So please go ahead.

Dot: Well, thank you for naming it. One of the things that we're actually prepping for this week is for me to fly to Geneva on Thursday, and I will participate in the Global Alliance for Ministries and Infrastructures for Peace Sixth Summit there in Geneva. And I will be bringing with me a report from the River Phoenix Center for peace building to share, to present there as an infrastructure for peace. And so, of course, the term that so many of us are using these days is glocal because the truth is there is no thing separate. Nothing is separate on the planet. And we talked about that in many ways.

But, yes, we are excited about that and recognizing that this model, this process model that is developing itself really as we ride the wave as intentionally and consciously as possible has tremendous potential to be translatable to with for other communities, at least in this country and who know perhaps elsewhere.

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So, yes, we are understanding that on all kinds of levels and we reflect on that often. And that's to tell you it's been said before by great sages, "Joy is a special wisdom." To play a role like this and where our unique group contribution is this kind of comprehensive approach that is indeed seeding a culture of peace and helping with the shift in our own culture, from punishment to restoration with trauma healing at the heart of it also is just a very great joy.

Philip: Beautiful, beautiful. Very nice. Interesting. You know what, it's interesting also just to think about the positive ways of the interconnectedness into the system that is happening. We know it's so easy to see the challenges and the problems when we watch the news. And the fact that you're bringing in -- it sounds like you're bringing lessons learned from other places around the world and introducing them in a gentle way to see what takes hold in Gainesville. And now you're also sharing the lessons learned which then can be replicated and adapted in culturally appropriate ways in other places.

Dot: And taking what's already working here, particularly in Gainesville where there is so many great things already happening and helping to be the connective tissue that from one side of the city to the other, it's like, oh, that'd be great. We should be cooperating. And then we just step out of the way. Yes.

Philip: It's interesting. Well, I have to say connective tissue is kind of a fun one for me having studied massage in Gainesville.

Dot: Oh, that's right. He went to the Florida School of Massage.

Jeffrey: Oh.

Philip: Yeah. Interesting. Let's stay with this for a second because this came up Sunday at a peace forum in Berkeley. There were several local groups there. I mean, someone just stood up and said, "Why isn't there more collaboration between the different groups?" And so can you tell us a little bit about the way that you're bringing this joyful approach into helping facilitate collaboration?

Dot: Yeah. Well, that is a very big topic. That could be a whole other conversation, Philip, because cooperation is so challenging in the

way our world view and systems approach operates on the planet today.

So we are helping to realize a new way of being together in that way by giving everyone a voice and a way to bring forth their work. The three of us say all the time, "We don't really care who gets the credit for whatever. Let's just get the job done here."

So that collaborative model that we are calling forth -- honors and appreciates and celebrates the peace that every individual and group brings to the table recognizing that we have the potential to be a living demonstration of the whole being greater than the sum of its parts.

Some of these truisms that are often termed clichés were really striving to live them. So that's how it's happening. And so people are showing up with their piece of the puzzle, and there is no thing lesser or greater in our minds or way of looking at it. Everyone has their unique contribution, and we celebrate that. That's how we're doing it.

Now, the great challenge systemically and traditionally among peace groups is everybody is looking for the same piece of the pie in terms of money and resources and all of that. So we really strive to think and work outside of the box there also and help get everyone supported. It isn't just about the work that we're doing. Our work is everyone's work and vice versa.

Philip: Okay. Okay. Wow. This is very rich. Heart, let's come back to you a little bit. What does this like for you to see this involvement? You touched upon it earlier about becoming part of your community, but just seeing in the legacy of your son and so forth and a little bit from your heart about what this likely to see.

[0:45:00]

Heart: Well, I mean, we often feel like River is the wings of this organization. I mean to say that everybody can go out and start the story and we'll give you a few good tips and this is going to happen. I mean, this is magical because in a sense ... first of all we know that you can't start something like this without money. You can't walk into a community and offer pilot programs and pay salaries without having some kind of substantial equity to start it

with. And so we have that. And interestingly enough this organization which is the River Phoenix Center for Peace Building Inc. was actually originally a nonprofit that River started 22 years ago to save land that was being destroyed because of rainforest timber. And there was money left in that account. And what we eventually did was transfer that. The IRS approved our changing the name and mission, and so we have this actual fund that we could fund this organization.

So actually it's really River creating this and hiring some really adept people that for 20 years we've learned how to do this.

How does it feel? I mean, it has so many layers of incredibleness to it. Personally and for the legacy for my son, it's wonderful for our whole family. It's wonderful. But it's really wonderful because it's really working. And it's helped each of us to do ... as I said earlier expand our horizons and expand our capacity to love and respect and honor the diversity of all human beings. I couldn't have gone to school and learn any of this. And particularly our partnership, being with Dot and with Jeffrey, we've worked together for so many years.

And we know from lobbying and we know that offering is one thing. Demanding or making someone wrong is a whole other thing. And it's kind of helping to move that out of our own selves in terms of all of our relationships, being so much more open to connecting with people to truly connecting our people where they're at.

So it's such a blessing for me -- I'm 68 years old -- to be able to be a part of something like this. It's like maybe my cyst coming, but this is the best so far.

Philip: Beautiful.

Jeffrey: I just want to make a quick comment about that. I know we're almost out of time. So I don't know if you're going to open up the phones. But for me, Heart and I, we've been married in together for 20 years. And so it's just a profound experience to be able to work and walk together in this way and as partners like this in so many different respects, and it just feeds our soul to work as a team with the three of us. And that it's really a part of our spiritual path. I know it is for me, because when someone feels safe enough to

open and share some sliver or chunk of truth that to me is sacred ground. And to particularly give people who might not have that opportunity or that safety in their life normally, to give them that or to be in the company of that and help facilitate that is what makes this work a soul work. And fortunately to get paid to do it as well is a wonderful thing but this is what we commit our lives to.

Philip: And so the two of you are really embodying the masculine and feminine here?

Jeffrey: I mean, I couldn't do it without her and she couldn't do it without me, and then have Dot as the holy trinity of some sort. Or it really is the strength of a pyramid, if you will, where we all bring in different strengths. But certainly the masculine and feminine, because I can have a certain boldness at certain times and Heart has her certain tenderness and then we go back and forth. And her boldness and my tenderness I think is a really wonderful model for a lot of people.

[0:50:08]

Philip: Okay. All right. Beautiful, Jeffrey. Thank you. It's interesting because so much of what you're saying there I heard reflected from Chief Phil Lane in a summit he did on Reunion of the Condor and Eagle where he talked about the importance of the balance of masculine and feminine, head and heart, and the intergenerational cooperation. And Restorative Justice also has good and indigenous tradition. So it sounds like you really manifested some ancient wisdom here.

We do have one quick question here from the webcast and then I'd like to invite each of your closing comments because so I know you got a training coming up in a half hour there. One person wants to know, "I wanted to know specifically how they do the collaboration with other organizations and think outside the box around money so there's no fighting for the same piece of the pie. I realize it's a big question. So anyone wants to take that on.

Dot: It's a very big question. I actually I would invite on email I'm happy to have that conversation. You can reach me dot@centerforpeacebuilding.org.

There are basic principles of peace and peace building that we strive to embody, and we've described some of that in this call. And when we sit down with another group, for example, I think we shared early on about a grant that has come in to the community. It doesn't come directly to us. It comes to somebody else. We become one of the providers. And there are other providers sometimes as well, and we help think through what that might look like as a team in the community representing five or six groups where everybody then gets a piece of what's coming in to the community very intentionally. So that kind of thinking. And we also celebrate one another at events. The local theater, for example, would have an event celebrating one of the nonprofits, might be us, might be another. We all attend and then a piece of what comes in goes to that nonprofit and we all support that. There are lots of ways that we are striving to embody that.

Jeffrey: Well, another example is we are partnering with Peaceful Paths which is the domestic violence center here in town for unity day which is the March and vigil to end bullying and domestic violence.

And so we're each bringing some of our resources to the table. We're bringing money. We're bringing talent. We're bringing support. And what happens from that place is then we just magnify the outreach and the impact into the community. And there will be certain cases where you could split the pot, if you will. But a lot of it has to do with our efforts in securing financial support and then how do we magnify and multiply the impact in work that we are all seeking to do.

Philip: Okay. Excellent. This is very great. It's going to be interesting for you to start sharing the lessons learned in Geneva and other places and then see how other communities can adapt because we've found that things would need to be adapted to local context.

Heart: One of the things that we created within the model aside from the fact that we wanted to do the personal growth workshops that we do is that's also a way that we get funding for the organization. We are a nonprofit. We rely on donations. We're also receiving some grants. But we're also offering these workshops. And that is really good ... anything is a really good model so that you're not totally relying on any one area to walk you through this whole offering.

Philip: Right. Excellent, excellent. We've only got a few minutes here, Heart and Dot and Jeffrey. I just love you all so much. I'm just so tickled by just really grateful for the work you joined and that how you're really grounding and weaving together there in Gainesville. Any final comments here for our listeners?

[0:55:07]

Dot: Well, let me start by -- on behalf of all of us here at the River Phoenix Center -- thanking you, Philip, and everyone at Shift Network and Summer of Peace for the work that you are doing to help tell the emerging story and really making visible the infrastructure for peace that is beautifully emergent on the planet.

And I would close as I loved to these days with just a thought for all of us. May the spirit of peace be spread abroad in our hearts, through our groups, and throughout the world.

Jeffrey: What I would leave us all with is this continual challenge and dance of when do I lean forward and when do I lean back. Our tendency for a lot of us is to want to go in and mess with it and fix it and get away from pain and go towards pleasure. It's just a fascinating journey that we're all on around when do we lean in inspired by what I call spirit for appropriate action and when do I want or need to lean back and trust in the divine process that something is going to emerge here that will be more and better than what I could do myself.

So I also thank you so much, Philip, for this and the Shift Network, and bless our work together.

Philip: Yeah. And Heart?

Heart: Yes. I also obviously I'm really, really, really grateful to this opportunity, and we're certainly available. If anybody wants to email us, you have Dot's email and we each of us have our name, heart@, jeffrey@. And we look forward to more collaboration, not just in this town but wherever because it's a beautiful thing that things are working out this well, and it feels like the yearning is so much greater than it was just even a year ago. So the times are changing.

Philip: Wonderful. Well, on that, I just want to thank you all again and again just who you are, how you're being and for practical grounded nature of applied wisdom. Very grateful. Thank you for being with us today.

Heart: Thank you.

Dot: Bye-bye.

Jeffrey: Thank you, Philip.

Philip: We will have our next call on Restorative Justice. Youth in Action: Restorative Justice Practices for and by Teens, Communities and Their Schools, and that's with Laura Snider being interviewed by Molly Rowan Leach and that would be Thursday morning, 9:00 a.m. Pacific, 12:00 East Coast Time.

So wherever you are in the world whether it's morning, afternoon, evening, or night, have a peaceful rest of your time now. Thank you all. Bye-bye.

[0:58:22] End of Audio

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