

Finding Common Ground™

Acknowledging the Impact of Identity Within Social Change Movements

Mary Mackenzie & Roxanne Manning, Ph.D.

Philip: Hello, everyone, and welcome back to *Finding Common Ground*, a *Summer of Peace* Summit. I'm Philip Hellmich and I serve as the Director of Peace at The Shift Network. My co-host Sister Jenna sends her regards. She's not available for this session. We have just been having an amazing journey. The first day, we were looking at personal transformation. Now, we're really going deep into the interpersonal transformation. We hope that you've been enjoying this as much as Sister Jenna and I have been. It just feels so timely, everything, these conversations. Just what are some of the real practical ways that we can approach polarization? How can we find common ground? How do we move beyond the anger in ourselves? How do we see the humanity in the other even if we disagree? How do we get to a place of compassion, as some of our speakers have said, even a place of love to engage people that we may not agree with? I hope you've been engaging with us on social media. Go to The Shift Network's Facebook page or Twitter, and again hashtag #SummerofPeace. That's #SummerofPeace. We'd love to hear your reflections, your thoughts, also what are some things that are working for you and stories of inspiration.

Now, this session here has been several months in planning. I just really want to acknowledge our friends at the Nonviolent Communication Academy. They are a key co-sponsor/partner with the Summer of Peace. I've been in conversations with Mary and her colleague Mark in planning this session. I also want to acknowledge Roxy. Let me provide an introduction to Mary and Roxy, good friends of The Shift Network. Roxy Manning is a licensed clinical psychologist and certified trainer of nonviolent communication. She infuses a deep, deep personal commitment to social justice more from her experience as an Afro-Caribbean immigrant into her empathetic work with people from all backgrounds. Roxy Manning has been a guest faculty with The Shift Network in the Peace Ambassador training. She's also been with us also in The Summer of Peace previously. There's a lot more I can say about Roxy and just really want to welcome Roxy here being with us.

Roxy: Thank you.

Philip: Mary Mackenzie is a CNVC Certified Trainer. That's nonviolent communication certified trainer. She's the executive director of the Peace Workshop International and co-founder of Nonviolent Communication Academy. She holds a master's degree in Human Relations and is a trained mediator. Mary is the author of *Peaceful Living: Daily Meditations for Living with Love, Healing and*

Compassion. Again, there's a lot more we can say about Mary. Mary, thank you so much for being with us here.

Mary: Thank you, Philip.

Philip: Both of you have just such a deep personal commitment to really helping people have the skills to be able to communicate nonviolently, and then also you have a commitment to transformation on a societal level. Again, it's just you're both so rock solid, grounded, practical and openhearted. I just really, really deeply appreciate everything, who you are and what you're bringing. Now, this session is going to be different than the other interviews. You're going to be looking at "Acknowledging the Impact of Identity Within Social Change Movements." Again, that's Acknowledging the Impact of Identity Within Social Change Movements. In many of these sessions we've really been looking at identity as an important part of preparing us to engage in common ground. We've had several speakers talking about this but this session here is more of the skills. It's even deeper into the skills-building, and so what I'm going to be doing is inviting Mary and Roxy to talk about what are the basics of nonviolent communication and then to talk a little bit also about why to look at identity and social change movements and then provide us with a demonstration. What I'll be doing is passing this over to Mary and Roxy for basically a teaching, and again we have two master teachers here. Then I'll come back in at the end to engage a little bit of Q&A to wrap this up. With that, Mary and Roxy, I invite you to take us on a journey to nonviolent communication and again looking at the impact of identity within social change movements with the idea that we're all going to come away with skills that we will be able to bring in our interpersonal interactions. Mary and Roxy, let me turn it over to you.

Mary: Thank you, Philip. Thank you very much. I'd like to start by talking about what nonviolent communication is and where it came from. That will be our starting point. It will give us a foundation for the rest of our session today. Nonviolent communication was originally created by a man named Marshall Rosenberg who was a psychologist. At the time, Marshall was doing some research on Holocaust survivors who at the end of the war had compassion for the Nazis. He was really blown away by that. Marshall himself was a Jewish man and he was raised in a non-Jewish neighborhood. He experienced quite a lot of abuse, ridicule and beatings when he was a young man, so he had a lot of anger. He was curious about how can somebody endure the pain and agony of the Holocaust and still have compassion for the Nazis, especially when he himself was as angry as he was about his daily life situations that didn't seem as horrific to him? He looked at what causes people to be able to maintain compassion for others. One of the things that he identified was it was somehow about remembering their humanity, the other person's humanity, and also their own individual humanity, that somehow when we can hang on to that, when we can remember that the

other person really is a person with humanity, then somehow that causes us to soften a bit.

The other thing he started to recognize is that even in the horrible way that the Nazis treated the Jews and others during World War II, that there was a guiding value that was guiding their behaviors. He realized that everything someone does or says, all action and all words is somehow in service of some deeper need or value and that those needs and values we all share. Those are things like love, support, caring, respect and consideration. All of these are some of the underlying values that drive all our behaviors. If we could focus more on that and less on the words a person uses or the actions that they choose, then we can somehow stay more connected to their humanity. I also want to talk a little bit about the word "nonviolent communication" because some people can be turned off by that and I can hear things like, "Well, what do you mean? I'm not violent." We think of violence like Gandhi thought of violence. On a continuum, anything from judgment all the way to physical harm is what we would call on the continuum of violence. We believe you end up on that continuum when you forget the humanity of another or you forget the humanity in yourself. Just take a moment and think about a time when somebody did something that made you angry or hurt your feelings in some way. Think about can you imagine the need that that person was trying to meet with the action, not that you might like it? Was it about consideration or care or wanting respect or wanting to be seen or wanting to be known? It's not that you might like what they did but somehow when you can connect to the deeper meaning behind it that we can soften a bit, and in that we can remember their humanity and we can also remember ours.

Nonviolent communication is relevant in any relationship. It can help us in any relationship and it's especially important we think in any social change kind of situation because so often we polarize our positions. We think, "We have the right answer so our cause is this. We're for this, and so we have the write answer and therefore you have the wrong answer." When we do that, we find ourselves more on that continuum of violence and more on blaming you or saying that you're wrong instead of trying to find ways to bridge our differences in ways that value both of us or all of us. That's a kind of quality that nonviolent communication can bring to any sort of social change movement or any relationship that we might have. I think with that, I'll pause, Roxy, and see if there's anything you'd like to talk about next.

Roxy: I think one of the pieces that I'd like to start to talk about to bridge the connection between nonviolent communication and the importance of identities is thinking about this really important fundamental principle of NVC, nonviolent communication is also called NVC, that you shared, which is that every time someone does something, even if it's something that's painful for us, they're acting out of some important value. One of the things that I hear often is that we

don't want to excuse or give permission to people to do these things that are painful to us just because they're trying to meet an important value. I want to speak briefly to that especially when we talk about social identity and we're talking about social change. What's important about this concept is exactly the piece that you named, that it invites us to open our heart and it's a beginning step to finding that common ground. If I can connect to what's important to you in this moment when you're taking these actions that are so painful to me and especially if I can see how what's important to you is also something that at some point is also important to me, then we can start to find a way to come together and hopefully find a different way for us both to get what's important to us, both of us to get our needs met.

When I think about identities and the different identities that we walk through life with, I think this is a really important factor to consider. One aspect of having these multiple identities is that we often have different strategies that we use to try to get those things that are important to us. Some of those factors might be determined by our different cultural experiences and our different cultural values. Some of it might be determined at our familial level, like what were we raised at, what was normal for our families. But we all come to any situation with different ways of being able to meet our needs, different ways to try to work to get our values realized. One of the things that NVC invites us to is that even though we have these incredibly different strategies, that focusing on what's important to both of us in the moment starts to open up that conversation. It starts to create a common ground in which we can find a kind of alignment and a path to move forward. I want to check, Mary, and see if that summarizes a little bit of, if that's enough of an overview of NVC that I should just dive into a little bit more about the identities.

Mary: Absolutely. Dive in, Roxy.

Roxy: I was super excited when Philip gave us this invitation to speak at the summit because this issue of identities is one that's hugely important to me. I've been working in and part of many different social change movements. One of the things that comes up often for me as a woman of color is, "Hey, we want you to join our movement. We want you to join our organization because we need more black people or we need more women." That invitation is so fraught with both excitement and peril. I'm always excited because I see the huge value that I could bring with my perspective as a black woman, as an immigrant, as a woman. I also am really concerned sometimes when I hear these invitations because I'm not sure how much awareness and insight the person making that invitation or the organization has in what it takes to really be inclusive. I want to talk a little bit about the value of looking at social identities when we think about growing our social change movements and then we can talk a little bit more about some of the challenges that that poses.

Some of the values that, and I think it sounds obvious but it's so worth really paying attention to, is that we all have different life experiences. People who are coming from different backgrounds with different social identities have almost a different way of walking through the world. One of the things that I remember is reading this really great article that was talking. This wasn't even a social change movement, but they were talking about our language constraints, what we're able to pay attention to. One of the things was that they were taking all of these young kids from the city into the country and they taught them, "This is what a mockingbird looks like." All of a sudden, these kids who grew up in the city had this language for the word "mockingbird." Before the kids went into the city, they never saw mockingbirds in their environment. All of a sudden they go into the country and they're taught what a mockingbird is. They come back into the city and some of the kids wrote and said, "Oh, my gosh! There are mockingbirds everywhere!" Once we start being able to name something, we start being able to see it. That's part of what our identities does for us.

As a woman of color, I'm really aware of some of the ways that my race might impact the way that people see me, the way that people are able to take in what I'm saying. I'm able to see some of the ways that, hmm, I'm actually just noticing I'm touched in the moment because I had a son who died recently. As a young black man, one of the things that I was helping him to recognize was how to separate out the way that people were responding to him because he was black and the way that people were seeing him as just his unique self. That's something that he had to learn to be able to see, that we grow our awareness in being able to see that, yes, our race does have an impact in how we're received and how we're treated by others. The more that we're able to see that identities have this impact, the more that we're able to stand up, to speak and to be able to address these things. When we invite people with different identities into our networks, into our movements, they're bringing an awareness, an ability to see things that might not be on our radars at all. That's so important if we want our social change movements to be relevant, to be able to speak and to address the needs of huge groups of people, not a very narrow community. I'm noticing I'm actually just touched in the moment and taking a moment to be with myself. Mary, I'd love to actually have you, it would be supportive to have you ask a question right now or to make a comment.

Philip: Let me just jump in here real quick also. Roxy, prior to this call you mentioned the loss of your son and I was deeply impacted by that. We worked with you a few times on the Peace Ambassador training and I just know the depth of your deep commitment to social transformation. I love how you're presencing being invited, wanting to make sure we have racial diversity, and that's something that's very dear to The Shift Network is how can we really walk the talk about the world we want to create. I don't know the details of the loss of your son. I

just want to acknowledge your depth of commitment and also how you and Mary and this session are really bringing an important voice that we've been highlighting throughout the years, like how do we really authentically engage? These issues that we're looking at around identity have impact on people's life in major ways. We also had another speaker whose African American son had died. I just want to presence the importance and again just really acknowledge you for your heart and depth of wisdom and I just wanted to acknowledge this right now. Let me turn it back over to you and Mary because I know we're going to get into a demonstration here.

Roxy: Thank you, and that really helped me connect to part of what is so important for us as we think about doing this work. So many times I hear people talk about, "Aren't we working for a world where we're getting past all of these identity politics, we're getting past using an identity and paying attention to identity?" I would see that as a huge loss because not only are people who are coming from different identities often impacted at how they're received and how they move through the world but there's a richness and there's such depth of culture, there's such benefits that we get when we're able to bring in the different qualities that our identities offer us. That's what we want to be able to do, to find a way to bring in identities both so that we can use it to enrich our organizations so that it shines a light on where we need to put focus that we might not be able to see and so that we can think about how to avoid the perils that ignoring identity might bring.

Mary: Roxy, I just want to jump in. I love what you just said and there's one other piece to it that I heard you speaking of that I really want to highlight. The part of it was wanting to be clear and open to why we want these identities. What are the values that are attached to it? Not just that we want to have more people of color in our group so that we can say we have more people of color in our group, but what are the values that are attached to that desire? The second thing is part of it is about celebrating and being clear about what we might receive as a result of inviting more people of color in our groups or more women or whatever kind of diversity we're working towards and to celebrate it. The old idea that "Oh, I don't see color," or "I don't see differences" is no longer acceptable anymore because we want to see them, celebrate it and be clear about the values.

Roxy: Absolutely. It's so easy to lose that celebration piece but it's also important. I wonder if we can maybe give an example of where it would be important to think about how these identities, how it might impact the work that we're doing in our organizations. One example that I can give is many, many people have talked about the concept of microaggressions. It's one of those really tricky issues that comes up often when we start to think about becoming more inclusive as organizations. In case people are not sure what a microaggression is, a microaggression is when we say or do something that's often seemingly

innocuous. It's really hard oftentimes for the person to know if what's happening is because of their identity, but someone makes a statement or takes an action that in some way minimizes, diminishes or negates somebody's experience that's related to their identity.

An example of that would be when I come into an organization, I've done a lot of organizing for retreats in addition to teaching and many times now when I show up at a retreat, even though I'm coming there as the facilitator, as the leader, when people don't know me, I often get people asking me things like, "Hey, I'd like to talk to the person in charge," or "I'd like to talk to the leader. I've got a question about this," or they'll ask me for logistics help. It's the kind of thing where, okay, I completely see how this could be a completely innocent mistake. I don't want to make a really big deal about it and it's so painful to continuously have this experience when some of my white colleagues or my male colleagues have a completely different experience. I have a male colleague I worked with for ten years and he almost never had someone come to him with these kinds of logistics questions. This is an example of a really small microaggression where I'm being treated or I'm getting questions or responses that are completely based on my gender and my race and in ways that are not huge. It's not like someone is calling me an offensive name but they still in some ways caused me to question the legitimacy of my position in the room, of whether or not I'm seen. When we think about building inclusive organizations, it means that every time I show up to teach, to contribute in some way, there's a part of me that's both putting extra energy and saying, "Okay, I can do this. I'm going to be valued. I'm going to matter in this setting," and then also feel scared. "Can I trust how I'm going to be received in this moment?" It's extra energy, extra work for me just to show up in a way that my white colleagues might not experience. These microaggressions are really hard to navigate partly because they're so subtle. Do I want to ask the person, "Hey, why did you ask me for help about this?" Am I making too big a deal about something? Or is speaking up a way for me to be able to take care of myself, to be able to say, "Hmm, hold on. This felt really uncomfortable and I want to check in on some of the assumptions that you're making"?

One of the challenges in dealing with microaggressions is I always have to navigate what need, what value am I trying to meet in the moment. Am I working for connection with this other person? Am I working to move ahead with our common intention in being there? Or am I working on that self-care, that trying to minimize the amount of energy that I'm putting out just by being in the room? A lot of times, if other people are witnessing it, I'm also aware that there's a third need that I might be trying to meet, which is I want to also set this frame that this setting truly is inclusive, and by speaking to these microaggressions when they occur, I help those around me say, "Oh, yes, this is a place where it's safe to talk about these things. This is a place where these

conversations can happen and where we're not going to shove everything under the rug and pretend that everyone is being treated exactly the same." There are many different reasons why I might choose to speak in the moment when these things happen.

I want to acknowledge that there's a cost in each choice to speak. If I stay silent when these kinds of microaggressions happen and I just move ahead and I say, "Okay, I'm really here to teach. I'm just going to answer this person's question and keep teaching," certainly it helps to create efficiency, it helps movement, it even helps that person feel comfortable, but then there's a cost to me. There's once again that message that, "I don't really belong. I'm not really seen for who I am." There's that cost to other people in the room who might witness this. "What's happening here? Is this an organization that's really aware of these issues where these things are valued?" If I choose to speak, there's the ultimate cost. Am I now creating or stimulating some discomfort in the person who spoke up? Are people now going to be worried, walking on eggshells, thinking, "I'm not sure how to navigate. Am I going to do the wrong thing in this setting?" There's always a cost to speak and that there's a cost not to speak. What we really want people to be aware of is to be intentional about how I'm going to choose to navigate these moments when they come up as we step towards more inclusive organizations.

Mary: Roxy, I'd like to just interrupt for just a minute and add one thing to what you're saying because I think it's an important additional concept. That is microaggressions come up so often. It's not like once in a blue moon something will come along and so you're making this decision. In many cases it's pretty constant, the microaggressions related to gender or race I would say especially but there are probably others as well. This decision that Roxy is talking about that we make about whether we speak up, it can be exhausting to decide, "Okay, so which one of these shall I address right now and which is most important and what should I let go of?" It's a big decision.

Roxy: I love the fact that you named that it happens often because that also speaks to the weariness that those of us who experience it often have to deal with. When I think about organizations that are working towards social change, one of the questions that often comes up is, "Who's doing what work? Who's putting what energy into the organization?" There often isn't a realization of how much energy the person from a targeted group, from a marginalized group might be putting in in ways that are invisible, how much energy it takes just to show up and deal with these kinds of microaggressions, these kinds of experiences over and over and over again on top of the energy that they're putting out like everyone else who's there to do the work. As organizations, the more that we can attend to and minimize these experiences for people who join our

organizations, the more we're freeing everyone up to be able to contribute fully in the ways that really would be joyful and meaningful to them.

Philip: I just want to acknowledge this conversation is so rich and it's so spot-on not only for everyone in the summit, for all of us at The Shift Network. We're looking at these questions. We're looking at how to be more embodied, the type of organizations. I just want to acknowledge I'm really appreciating this and want to share it with our entire staff because we're looking at these questions. I'm going to go ahead and step back again because I know you have a demonstration coming up so I'll probably turn off the camera here. Just this is so spot-on. Thank you.

Mary: Thanks, Philip.

Roxy: Yes. One of the things that we wanted to do with this demonstration, I'm glad you mentioned it, Philip, is one of the things we hear often is that people struggle with, "How do I respond? Okay, so I'm in an organization. We're really trying to be inclusive and I see something happen. What do I do that's actually going to be supportive and create connection, find that common ground rather than create more division in our organization?" We want to give an example about something that comes up often and I was really excited to share this example because it's one that's personally relevant to me and that can feel a little bit tender. As a black woman, there's a huge stereotype in American society, in U.S. society that black women are loud and black women are angry. One of the things that I often sometimes unconsciously but sometimes consciously do is I'm always trying to track myself, "Am I being too loud? Will this be perceived as being too angry?" Oh, my goodness, it's such a draining place to be. The demonstration we wanted to give was what happens if someone says to me in a group, "Oh, my gosh! What you just said is way too loud. You're speaking way too loud and you're sounding really angry. We're a group and we're about peace, we're supposed to be about peace, and this isn't how we want to represent ourselves." We're going to first demonstrate Mary responding what she might do because there's several choices here. Mary could respond to me as an ally. Mary could respond to the person who spoke in this situation, or Mary can respond in some ways to the whole group. Mary, I'm going to ask you to respond if you are acting like an ally to me in this situation.

[30:27]

Mary: I'm imagining that I would do this privately then, not in front of the entire group, just because I think I would want to make sure that you were, I wouldn't want to put you on the spot even more. If somebody had just said, "Roxy, you sound angry," privately I might say, "Ouch! Roxy, I imagine you're wanting acceptance for different speech patterns and expressions to be welcome in our group, all kinds of expressions to be welcome in our group. Is that true for you?"

- Roxy: Yes, it's like this is how I'm speaking and this matters to me.
- Mary: Yes, and I imagine it's also scary to hear that comment in our group because knowing how often black women can be silenced and told that they sound angry when they're expressing their passion or their feelings about something.
- Roxy: Yes, thank you for naming that because there is something around how weary I am of trying to always moderate myself to match what I think other people are wanting of me.
- Mary: Yes, and wanting to trust that you don't have to do that. You don't have to moderate yourself in any way. You can express yourself the way you express yourself. We're a group of people that can hear that and accept that, and not just accept it but actually appreciate it.
- Roxy: Right. Something about the freedom to speak up in the way that is true and authentic for me and to know that that would be met and valued in our group is important to me.
- Mary: Yes. I just want you to know, Roxy, that that's important to me too, because I know if you're silenced, then we all have that potential of being silenced for whatever reason. I want that for myself, I want it for you and I want it for our group.
- Roxy: Thank you. This would be the first example of how we might use NVC in a situation like this where Mary is choosing to support me, the group member, privately to help me connect to what's important to me, what was painful for me in the situation that happened and why it was painful. It creates a space for me to have my authentic experience and not to minimize or start to question, "Am I wrong for thinking that this felt painful or felt sad?" Mary is offering support that helps group members know your experience is seen and you are valued still in this group.
- Mary: Then the next thing that I could do if I wanted to be an ally is to say something to the full group and maybe not to Roxy because I don't want to put her on the spot again. But I could say something to the person who made the statement that Roxy sounded like she was angry. Really I think I might start with "Ouch!" again and say something like, "Ouch! I feel concerned when I hear you make that statement to Roxy because I would like us to be a group where all forms of expression are welcome. I want to start by first checking out maybe where were you coming from by saying that in the first place? Is there a part of you that believes that speaking with kindness is the best strategy for crossing the differences that we're trying to work towards? Is that it for you?" Another question I could ask is, "Is it that you're afraid that if people speak to the depth

of their emotion and their experience that somehow people will see us as an angry group and they won't give us any attention at all or they won't take us seriously?" Those are two options that I think I could say to the person who made the comment to Roxy in the first place.

Roxy: Yes. What's important to me about saying these two comments is that it's acknowledging, again this is going back to what you said at the beginning, Mary, that anytime someone says something, they're speaking out of a value that's important. They're not speaking to wound us or hurt us but they're truly coming from a place of connection to their values. You're acknowledging the values and needs that might have driven this person to make those comments. Those are comments and those are values that I could also agree with. I also would want our group to be taken seriously. I would also want us to find common ground and to find ways to connect across differences, but I wouldn't want to do it at such a cost to me or to others like me in the group.

Mary: Then the third way that I think a person could speak up in a situation like that to be an ally to Roxy is to actually not address Roxy specifically or the person who made the statement. Then the third way is just making a general statement to express my own values in the situation. In that way, I could say, "I just want to acknowledge that when Roxy spoke up, I didn't hear anger. I heard her speaking up for her passion and expressing her feelings in the situation. I would really like us to be an organization that values all expressions and doesn't try to quiet some people. I also feel scared when I heard the statement because I know that black women oftentimes are told that they sound angry when they're expressing their emotions, and I want to make sure that we're careful about that in caring and making sure that our black women in the group have a place to express their emotions just like the rest of us. I'm curious. Does anybody else feel similarly as I do?"

Roxy: What's really powerful for me in imagining you or anyone saying something like this in an organization is that it's making prominent issues that are often just hidden, often brushed away, and when those issues are brushed away, the impact is greatest on the people who have to deal with them continuously. The courage that it takes to speak up and to name these issues and to name them as your own helps to support those in the group who might be tired, who might feel more on the spot if I were speaking up for myself and once again putting myself out there. It's a risk for me to speak up when I might already feel that the way I'm speaking up, that the way that I am in the world isn't valued. This is in my mind truly being an ally, by taking on the risk of speaking up and knowing that not everyone might agree with you or there might be some backlash.

Mary: I can say for myself having spent many years not speaking up because I was afraid of that backlash that you just spoke to, Roxy, what I realized today is that

in itself creates backlash. It's just that it creates a backlash that's common, and so it doesn't stand out quite as much. But still it creates a backlash, and I want to be an ally today that is willing to act towards the life I want to have and life experience I want to have today.

Roxy: Mary, I just got this wave of relief hearing you say that because, especially as we talk about the impact of our identities in social change movements, this is the one place that I hear over and over and over again that especially people of color have an issue with. As one of the very visible nonviolent communication trainers of color globally, I've had the experience over and over and over again of people coming to me and saying, "This happened in a group I was in and no one said anything, and I'm never going back." We often don't understand why are people not coming back? I hear a lot of people who want to be allies, who want to have inclusive groups saying, "We invited this person from this group and they came to one session and they never came back." There's also often a miss around more people speaking up when these kinds of issues happened, or was the person feeling more alone and also worried, are other people agreeing with what just happened? There is a huge cost when we're silent. One of the things NVC offers is a way to speak up that holds care both for the experience of the person who's impacted and the person who spoke in a way that might not have been what they intended, might not have had the consequence that they intended. Thank you.

I wonder if we can talk a little bit some more about some of the other challenges that come when we try to make more inclusive organizations. I have gotten really excited about this area recently, one of the challenges is how do we actually create more inclusive organizations? I've had people coming up to me and saying, "Hey, I'm doing this workshop and I'd love to have you come because I really want to have a black person speak to these issues." That's a really painful thing to hear in some ways because when I hear that, I immediately start to question, "Are you wanting me to speak because I, Roxy, have something of value to share that's grounded in my experience, in my expertise? Or are you just wanting a generic black voice?" There's so many issues with that latter possibility.

The black experience is huge. It's diverse. As Philip said at the beginning of this interview, I'm Afro-Caribbean, which is different than Afro-American and has a very different experience of what it means. When people invite folks to join their organization because they want someone who's just from that group without any sort of specificity, it's really confusing what exactly of my being black, my being a woman, my being gay, whatever part of my identity you're reaching out to, what is it that you're wanting me to contribute to your group? One of the pitfalls that I often want to bring people's attention to is how confusing that lack of specificity is if it's just connected to my identity. It sounds like a catch-22. We

want to have more inclusive organizations. I want to invite you because you're a person of color, you're gay, or whatever that identity is, but now I'm hearing that that has a problem because it's not very specific. We don't actually know what that means. I think both of those, this dilemma is the one that we need to be able to hold as we start thinking about having more inclusive organizations.

Philip: I just want to jump in here again, Roxy and Mary. I am so much appreciating this conversation because it's one that The Shift Network has run into at different times. We'll receive comments that we don't have enough diversity and they will reach out, so it's a balance. Then what you say about diversity, Afro-Caribbean is different than other. Then we will have speakers where there's not enough in terms of shade of color but will still have diversity, will have 30% or 40% diversity but it's not the color that people are looking for. What I'm appreciating here is the wisdom on how to even just engage in a conversation. That's the part where I think it's easy not to know how to engage in a skillful way. What I'm appreciating in what you're offering is being aware that everyone has values, speaking to those values, and then also acknowledging the experience, my feeling experiences and then also the other person's, other people's feelings and experiences. It feels like the invitation is here is how to skillfully engage in these conversations. I'm really appreciating hearing what your experience is, Roxy, of different people inviting you to different conversations or what it could be for other people of color. I just want to acknowledge again the relevance of this and I'm also going to bring our attention to time. We're going to need to wrap up in a little bit but just some of the core nuggets, Roxy, we're getting that. It's like how to skillfully engage in these conversations and also when inviting people for more than just an identity, the depth of the experience of the person and you with a Ph.D. all this experience, so just a little bit more on that, an invitation here for people.

Roxy: Thank you, yes. I know we're getting short on time so I just wanted to check in with Mary because I would love for her to speak a little bit about the flipside of this. There are the challenges that I have when I receive these invitations that are nonspecific but there's also the vulnerability of being the person making those invitations and how to navigate that.

Mary: Yes, I'd be happy to, Roxy. When you and I were talking about what we were going to offer today, I learned so much in that conversation. Yes, there was a time not too long ago where I wanted to have a particular online conference and I wanted it to be a very diverse group. I did exactly what you said not to do today. I didn't know otherwise then but I set out to try to find people of color, people from different countries. I was looking for a variety of diversity. Gender is actually pretty easy in the nonviolent communication world but I was looking for gender, location in the world, skin color, all kinds of things. I was inviting total strangers to our conference because other people, first, I didn't know where

they were. I didn't know where these people were, especially people of color outside the U.S. I was sending emails out to friends saying, "Okay, this is what I'm trying to do." I got lots of names so I was contacting total strangers and inviting them but I wasn't connected to the value and the need behind, as you said, that's so important, why I was inviting them.

I would make an entirely different invitation today and to just take the time to figure out why do I want to have people of color? It's not just because I want to look good or because I want to say we did it. There has to be more value attached to it. What do I think these people from different groups will bring to the conference? What kind of voice will they bring that wouldn't be there without them? I need to make my invitations much more connected to that, each as individuals. I have to say that that in and of itself takes a little bit of thought for me because I haven't actually thought of it that way. I'm saying this because I imagine I'm not the only one. I imagine there are people listening to this right now that have said, "Yes, we're just trying to get more people of color in the group," or "We're just trying to get more women in the group," but without that attachment to the deeper "why," I think it loses some of its strength. It definitely, I think, loses the opportunity for people to want to join us.

Roxy: Yes, and I just got such a strong connection to, it also loses the connection to that person's humanity. All of a sudden, they just become this token, this example of that group rather than this individual person in front of you.

Mary: We're back to the beginning again, back to whatever we're doing in trying to be connected to our humanity and the humanity of the other. When we do that, we make better decisions all along the way. It's one way to think about it anyway.

Philip: Interesting. Well, my friends, this is so rich.

Mary: I know it's hard to stop.

Philip: Well, it is. It is. It's so rich. First, tell people a little bit how they can find out more about nonviolent communication because having the intention of wanting to be able to connect, wanting to be able to move beyond our own unconscious biases, being able to be more skillful and then having tools to be able to do that. Nonviolent communication is so well proven. It's used around the world. Let people know how they can learn, what book they should read, nonviolent communication. We're all learning here so please tell us how people can find out more and where they can go.

Mary: Thanks, Philip. I'd be happy to. First, our international office, which is Marshall Rosenberg's organization that he started many years, is the Center for Nonviolent Communication. You can find them online at CNVC.org. You can find

Roxy at BayNVC.org and you can find me at NVCAcademy.com. You also can look locally. There are trainers all over the world, over 600 of us all over the world. You can go to the international offices site, CNVC.org, and you can look for your local area and see if there are trainers near you. The NVC Academy is an online school for learning NVC so that's a place where you can learn online. There's lots and lots of offerings in person, however, all over the world. Then the books that I would recommend, Marshall Rosenberg has written many books. The one book that I would recommend for learning NVC is *Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life*. Then of course I'd recommend my book which is a daily meditation for living NVC, which is *Peaceful Living: Daily Meditations for Living with Love, Healing and Compassion*.

Philip: Roxy, I believe you have a course coming up also.

Roxy: I am doing a course with NVC Academy, actually. In September, I believe we begin. Mary, do you remember the exact title? I remember you loving the title.

Mary: Yes, I do love the title. I'll look it up.

Roxy: The course will be around looking at how to actually take this work on looking at power privilege in these kinds of systems and use NVC to change how to transform those dialogues.

Mary: Yes, Roxy's course is called, wait for it.

Philip: While you're looking for that, I just want to say again it's just nice to be able to have such a really well-proven methodology that we can engage. We can all become more skillful. We can translate our intention to be doing better and to do well and to make connections. We can all become more skillful at it. I just really want to acknowledge that and both of your years and years of commitment in this area. The need for nonviolent communication is greater now probably than ever before. With just the polarization, the anger and fear we see in the news, people may not realize that there's a whole network of training centers around the world, and so we want to be able to raise attention to these resources. Did you find the name of the course there, Mary?

Mary: I did. It's called "Social Change: A Radical Transformation of Diversity and Inclusion." It is going to be an excellent course and it's about teaching people how to deal with issues that come up. It's for teachers and NVC trainers and people who run groups. It starts September 25th.

Philip: Great! You can find that again where? Where can we find that?

Mary: On the NVC Academy.

Philip: NVC Academy.

Mary: NVCAcademy.com.

Philip: Also, if you bought the upgrade package, you get a 25% discount on that.

Mary: Yes, absolutely.

Philip: There's so much we can unpack in this, and again I just want to echo the relevance, the relevance for everyone listening, for the relevance where the United States or the world is at this time, the relevance in our life here of The Shift Network and I'm just really appreciating. Any closing comments from either of you? Yes, any closing comments here for our listeners?

Roxy: I think what I would want to say in closing is to encourage people to risk. It's so easy to be afraid that I'm going to speak up, I'm going to try to make things better and actually make it worse. People of color, women, people from marginalized groups are risking every single moment. When you risk with us it feels like companionship. If we want to find common ground, risk.

Philip: Thank you, Roxy.

Mary: Thank you, Roxy, for saying that. I just want to say one other thing and that is that I think we are being asked to be different than anything we've ever seen before. That is what this particular time is calling us to and that's why it's so painful because we haven't seen it modeled very much. All of us who are trying to live differently and trying to be more inclusive and trying to speak to the microaggressions that Roxy was speaking of, all of us are being asked to do that in a way that we haven't seen modeled before. It's a new way of being. It is risky and it's worth the risk because of the status quo. The other option is status quo.

Philip: I want to thank you for just naming the risk. One of our other speakers also talked about there's the comfort zone and then there's the risk on comfort zone and then there's the danger zone, not to go into the danger but at least leaving the comfort zone into the area where I'm a little bit less comfortable on a new area. You're right, Mary, that the world is in great need for all of us to take more risk. I know I bumble and stumble quite a bit and you both have been really gracious in the preparation for this session. Again, I just want to acknowledge that people know this was planned months in advance. You both put a lot of time and energy into it. I just really want to acknowledge you again. I'm just really deeply grateful for both of you.

Roxy: Thank you.

Mary: Thank you, Philip. Thank you so much for having us.

Philip: Yes, and so for everyone listening, it's time to crack open a nonviolent communication book if you haven't done so already. For a trainer in your area, sign up for Roxy's course in September, other courses at the Nonviolent Communication Academy, and stay tuned because we're going to be having more explorations of finding common ground. Day three we'll be going into the collective and you can see how this all builds upon itself. We've got the personal, the interpersonal and the skill-building on how to communicate nonviolently, and then the systems, looking at collective changes. There's a lot of hope and inspiration. There's a lot of homework for all of us. Again, engage with us on social media, Shift Network's Facebook page, Twitter, and be sure to use hashtag #SummerofPeace. My co-host Sister Jenna will be back with us in the upcoming sessions. Thank you all for being with us.

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