



# A Path with Heart

A Nonviolent Communication & Social Change Telesummit



## Gayano Shaw

*Peaceable Revolution Through Education*

*This is a transcription of one of the interviews from A Path With Heart, the 2013 telesummit on Nonviolent Communication (NVC) and Social Change, produced by Alan Seid of Cascadia Workshops and the Blackbelt Communication Skills Program. More than 1600 people from over 40 countries registered for this event. Each call had live listeners and a question & answer period.*

Gayano Shaw is a Certified Trainer with the Center for Nonviolent Communication and holds a BA with honors in Anthropology. Her work includes counseling, running centers and cafe projects for people with special needs, care work, natural nutrition and a wide range of family-related experiences.

“It’s not just these huge big things that are happening, but it’s happening all the time. In families and communities, what people are up against and what social change looks like at that level is deeply meaningful for me. I want to validate those, what seemingly could look like smaller or lesser experiences or doings.”

~ Gayano Shaw

Alan: Hello everyone and welcome! This is Alan Seid.

We are together here, and this is A Path with Heart, a telesummit on Nonviolent Communication and Social Change.

The reason I created this telesummit is because this is a topic whose time has come.

Our planet's life support systems are going through significant stress. At the same time, human society is in an unprecedented time historically.

Never before have there been so many humans on the planet at one time.

Never before have we humans been so interconnected, and starkly aware of our interrelatedness and our interdependence.

Never before has the human family experienced such promise, such peril and such opportunity.

Marshall Rosenberg's process, Nonviolent Communication, which was named out of a sense of alignment with Gandhi's movement of truth-telling and compassion, is a world-famous, proven, time-tested methodology for:

- creating exceptional personal and professional relationships,
- for offering compassionate understanding to others (and knowing when and how to ask for it ourselves),
- for preventing and resolving misunderstandings and conflicts,
- for speaking our truth in a way that is more likely to lead to harmony than conflict,
- and for creating mutual understanding without coercion.

In this interview series, I'm conversing with NVC trainers for whom I have a great deal of respect and whose work I admire. Please keep in mind that I'm keeping all the lines muted, for now, to preserve the quality of the recording for future listeners.

I mentioned that I'm still getting to know some of our guests and Gayano is no exception, so looking forward to this call.

Alan: Gayano, hi.

Gayano: Hi Alan

Alan: Excuse me, fighting a little cold here. Gayano has been living in Southwest Wales for the past 13 years with her three children, age 27, 17 and 9 years old. She has spent the last 6 years deeply inspired by and immersed in the consciousness and living of NVC. She is passionate about creating, offering and holding nourishing spaces and events for individuals and communities of all ages that can enable and support the experiencing of compassionate connections. Lived experiences include family and community living, homeschooling, un-schooling, self directed learning, marriage, divorce, single parenting, step families, special time and creative listening, counseling, running centers and cafe projects for people with special needs, care work, natural nutrition, living with debt, self employment and studying in her late 40's for a degree in anthropology. Wow, Gayano, that sounds really fun!

Gayano: It's really interesting having you read it back to me. It lends in a very different way in which I'm enjoying. And please forgive me, I'm running a cold too, so the two of us are both in that same place.

Alan: Tell me about the events and spaces that you create.

Gayano: I guess, a way to connect and answer that is, I went to an IIT, pretty intensive, training with Marshall Rosenberg, in Albuquerque pretty quick after I got involved with NVC. I'd gone with a question. As I'd started to explore NVC in the UK, nonviolent communication in the UK, I was wondering where the spaces were for families, where I could go that I could include my children, or any children really. I remember sitting around a table with a bunch of trainers and participants and just really wanting to work with this question. Who's offered spaces for families? Who's offered all ages spaces where we don't have to segregate children, we don't have to keep them occupied while the adults do something? Around the table there was still a kind of prevalent sense that we needed to keep things separate. For me I've been wanting to explore it, I've been exploring it at home with my own children, and then I started to explore it by coming back to the UK and developing , back in 2009 was the first, all-age camp that I helped to start with two other NVC characters. And they were characters and are characters. Since that time, we came together with a high ideal just to come together and see what would happen. I wanted the possibility of being alongside someone, alongside my children and being alongside others where I could envisage sort of being camping and having circles where the kids could

come in and out. We weren't needing to look for a separate space. We weren't needing to find sort of crush facilities and other facilities for children to be in. I experienced myself when I'd been in camps before where there was a beautiful crush facility set up and I really wanted to attend that class but my child didn't want to go to the crush and I remember standing between the crush and the workshop just in kind of fury and frustration with my then probably 2 or 3 year old. There was something really longing in me to have something different and I've been experimenting with that ever since.

The spaces have included camps, we've run 4 camps at Desi's Rainbow Mill Camp in Norfolk in England and the last two years and hopefully this year, we'll be running a camp with Catherine Cadden and Jessie Wiens and the Play in the Wild team. The other spaces I've done is, in my home space, inviting my home learning with NVC has been very much including the children. Often we've sat around with empathy and honesty circles and deep sharings and something my daughter, who's now nine, has grown up bearing witness to adult sharing and sharing very deeply, and receiving each other with deep compassionate care. Those are some of the spaces I've, it doesn't quite fully land. I'm not quite sure how to fully answer you because the kind of opening to spaces is a kind of natural, seems to pour out of me. Whatever I'm interested in, I've been putting together events and setting up times and spaces where we can actually get together and experience community as often as possible and in many different ways.

I just want to mention here that one my inspirations for this, one specific inspiration is my dear friend and colleague Vickie Pierce, who's been running NVC living events for many years and she's somebody who didn't want to offer kind of a normal training but really wanted to live this experience. We would gather together for five days at a time, a group of up to about twelve, and live in community together. Vickie held and role modeled this quality of NVC as we met and lived with each other. I've attended many ten's of those luckily. So taking that quality of what I've been receiving and then going out and looking at how are the different ways that we can come together and be an all age spaces. And it's not just about all ages it's not that I'm wanting all the time to include little ones. I think I'll stop there because I'm not sure what else to say.

Alan: Is there a vision that's been motivating you to work creating spaces for this sense of community that you're talking about?

Gayano: I guess there's less of a vision and more of a kind of, I'm following an inner lead a lot of the time. I'm following an inner longing. I'm guessing it's coming from a place where my two youngest children Don and Jessie have never been to school and I've never educated them. They very much have learned what they've learned by being within the family and within the community. I guess the longing to include them was to look at, for me NVC was a huge, it changed my life completely. What it brought to me and what it helped ground inside me is very much. I was very clear that in order for me to live this I needed to be in supportive environments as often as possible because to change, to look at my ingrained patterns of doing things, my kind of habitual patterns, for me to change those, I pretty much needed to keep myself surrounded by giraffes. Maybe that was the longing or that was the vision. If I really wanted to embrace this, and I really did, I guess made me, because of what that could contribute to my kids and to other kids, my friend's kids. I guess that was it really, that longing to nourish myself in order to find ways of showing that with them and giving them a different strength.

Alan: Wow, that's beautiful. I hear that that's such a need that parents have, is having more community so they're supported, so they can show up more fully, but also I really like what you said about, it was a way for you to sustain the personal transformation you were going through.

Gayano: I mean we started, I guess the original spaced when I first came across NVC I had a small daughter and I was studying and I didn't imagine working out how to travel to go to a workshop and I ended up with Vickie the trainer coming to my home and offering a workshop, and introduction to NVC with myself and my friends. We had our kids with us because they were little at that time, or very small anyways. From that place we started regularly meeting as a community and coming together in the kind of NVC consciousness in the way of supporting each other and beginning having a kind of really deep, nourishing community in which to slow things down and more regularly hear ourselves and each other and begin to chip away at some of those kind of habitual ways of reacting to each other. It was really deep in me, OK, if I'm going to do this, if I'm going to live this I need lots of support. I need care and support around me in a way that's going to help bring that out. I know that that's part of, that part comes very naturally to me to move out and create, to make a weekend happen, to make a long weekend happen, to make a bigger weekend happen just so we can have those kind of spaces.

Alan: So your choice to un-school your children, what significance has that has in your work and in your life?

Gayano: I mean, I think, I guess, it obviously is a choice. At the time, often it's not felt like a choice. I was, again, following a gut instinct. Something about me wanting to very much provide space again for the children to find their way before they were up against the level of demands and structures that are naturally within the school system. And I suddenly didn't experience it as something I thought was the right thing to do. It was kind of the only thing I could do. I had huge levels of criticism, using the un-schooling, sitting back and not teaching my son to read and write, and at ten and half he still couldn't. Then at ten and a half he picked up a book and three weeks later he'd read the whole first Harry Potter book. So, I was really wanting to sit back and give room to what was inside them without wanting to get in the way, to watch and create an environment as much as possible and to allow them space and time to live at their own rhythms and pace. Dan used to spend ages out in the woods or the hills. There was a lot of longing just to give space for them to find their own way and to find their own interest and to explore. And so that carries very much into how I work with people, that longing to meet people where they are, to meet with a curiosity, with a quality of not knowing and to bear witness to and encourage and provide fertile ground in which each of us can flourish as best I can.

Alan: Gayano, can I tell you something that's going on for me right now?

Gayano: Yeah.

Alan: I feel like I just got, and again this is informal NVC, I feel like I just got a glimpse of something significant. So, because I do want to get back to the theme of social change and yet I think you just gave me a little window to peer into the future. You know, after we've accomplished all this social change, so what? And the possibility that in the future we could live a different way. When I hear you, I experience such a sense of spaciousness in your voice, this calmness. From your consciousness I get this sense of spaciousness and I just have this insight that you're, maybe you were giving me a window into the future. So anyways, I just wanted to say that.

Gayano: Thank you. You brought up wanting to get back to social change and I'm aware that, I mean I did a beautiful, I love using Robert Gonzales's work, he does meditations on the beauties of needs. What a treat that is to stop and take time to explore how equality lives in me, how equality of love and so the title of my talk



came out, *How Does Social Change Live in You?* I chose to do that exercise this morning with my very dear friend Vickie and you know for me, I mean your invitation to be here has been a sweet gift to me and I've been sort of taking note of how it's been living through me and what things come up for me and, you know, it was curious, this morning, you know social change doesn't actually live in me. It's very interesting that the kind of, I know that the huge amounts of living energy that live in me that longs to reach out and does reach out in all sorts of ways in all sorts of times. But I recognize that the words, social change, you know for me change is going on all of the time. I was trying to get at this huge, what is it that we're trying to get at when we use the label social change? I was connecting with quality of social change that happens when a woman, or a man, who finally leaves a difficult and challenging and maybe threatening relationship after many years, the small things that potentially don't get labeled in social change. Those things really live in me. The grandparents who brought their children and grandchildren to the camp a few years ago, even the children and the grandchildren, it wasn't really quite their cup of tea, but that effort from the grandparents to move towards doing something different. I've listened to some of your calls, and heard grandmothers talking about how challenging it's been to bear witness to some of the experiences they've seen for the grandchildren and I don't underestimate their efforts and the words and the quality that they might be bringing to their grandchildren.

I think there's something about me just wanting to name that for me social change is happening all the time. It's happening at varying different levels other than the potential ground level. When I think about the word itself, its life somewhere, I see it as an umbrella. If we all go into a room and say let's define what social change is, I think as Robert said in his talk, I'm guessing all of us would have different awarenesses and different experiences of what it is. There isn't a thing that it is, it lives differently in all of us. And yet I think we're trying, I sort of got the sense that we're trying to name some quality of, when we speak about being social change agents or wanting social change, have a sense of if I try and track that back down to the living energy in me, the quality of being in me, that might show up inside me as somebody who creates spaces for all ages for example and somebody else as tending to polity inside [?] It manifests in different ways and I was curious about whether social change itself, that kind of umbrella label, was tapping into a longing for all of us, a longing underneath just the individual, the longing for us to have something to work alongside in companionship and connection. I don't know whether that sounded rambling or not rambling. It's very much a deep exploration for me and my energy and attention holds these places where it's not noticeable. It's not just these huge big

things that are happening, but it's happening all the time. In families and communities what people are up against and what social change, what change looks like at that level is deeply meaningful for me and I kind of really want to validate those, what seemingly could look like smaller or lesser than experiences or doings. I'll stop there.

Alan: It's sort of like taking this gigantic thing, that's sort of abstract, that in some ways may be tempting for an individual to think they can directly influence, but at the same time it, what I hear you expressing is bringing it down to a human scale. Bringing it down to my day-to-day. You used the example of someone in an abusive relationship leaving that relationship. That's social change. Are you familiar with a book by Steven Cubby called *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*?

Gayano: I've certainly seen it. I haven't looked too deeply at it.

Alan: One of the concepts that he brings up there is this distinction between our sphere of concern and our sphere of influence. Our fear of concern may be the whole globe, but our fear of influence may be in our family, at our children's school, groups that i volunteer in. He says that when you're trying to work on change, if you spend all of your energy on your circle of concern outside of your circle of influence, then you're just going to drain your energy and you'll probably end up depressed and not having accomplished much. But, if you keep your focus on your circle of influence, your circle of influence actually grows. That's just something that what you're saying reminded me of and really bringing this giant, amorphous thing to a human scale. How does that resonate for you?

Gayano: Yeah, it really does resonate. I really like when you talked about it grounding in the human scale and within that I'm also holding those who might label themselves or get labeled passionate and get worked tirelessly in the sphere on concern, that that's how life is showing up in them and what a challenge it is what you've got a really strong idea and longing to do something. The deep sort of energy that's inside and it kind of seems obvious to me that unless we keep ourselves, in NVC terms topped off with giraffe juice, topped off with things that are going to keep us going that are connected in the sphere in our families and our communities. It's very difficult to maintain a kind of focus on changing. Just change itself. When I think about wanting to change a habit of mine, and certainly when I remember wanting to change ex-partners, it seems you walk toward somebody saying, 'I want you to change.' For me, autonomy kicks in in all sorts of ways both [?] people and it can make it incredibly hard work



to sort of have an ideal, have a longing inside of oneself, wanting to change something and not fully getting what you're up against. It's not just the system, it's people who're deeply invested in where they are and if nothing else, deeply invested in a need for autonomy and it kicks in strong. There's a kind of wanting to honor that in both parties, the passion and resistance that shows up in people when we meet them. We think you need to change whatever it is that we've decided. There's partly a curiosity of me about, what is it to meet people where they're at?

I still love hearing, there's a friend of mine called Ray Taylor and I remember him being at the camp I think three years ago now and he passionately wanted people to stop flying and he talked at the time as I remember it, and it may be different as he remember it, but what stuck with me is he started to just talk to me about why they wanted to fly instead of starting to talk to people about why he didn't want them to fly. As the connection grew there may or may not have been an opportunity for him to start vocalizing what was important to him. I just really liked that reminder that when we go to other people with an idea of something that we're longing for and that we're passionate for, actually to spend time feeling and experiencing what it's like, what's going on for that person and that person is a representative of a system too. For me that's a really important piece and it can be kind of easily, I can easily lose my curiosity about what's going on for the other. I like Ray's story to remind me also about one of the aspects that I'm studying, naturapology [?], remembering looking at an environmental anthropology scenario of a beach in Greece where the conservationist wants this beach and the villages wanted to be just like the other villages to have the road and become prosperous and this went on for tens of years with neither of them getting very far with each other because neither of them had taken the time to check in and hear each other's perspectives, to really feel the way in and to see what might happen after that.

Alan: And to create that level of trust where, not only do I trust that you understand my needs, and you trust that I understand your needs but that we both trust that each other's needs matter to the other person. When you can get there then problem solving becomes collaborative. How can we bring economic prosperity AND preserve the beach, are there other strategies? We can really butt heads on the strategies. Gayano this really reminds me of a time I spent here locally with one of the big industries in the area I lived used to be forestry and it still is and typically that still happens through clear cutting where they just take down an entire section of forest. I remember I volunteered in a few groups here locally and one person who was also showing up was this old retired logger.

The first time I ever had time with him, we were sitting in his truck and it's a V8 and he was leaving it running, and he's telling em how much he hates environmentalists. And I'm thinking, 'oh boy, he doesn't know who he's talking with,' because my background is very deep green, but I kept my mouth shut and let him hear his story. I kept hearing his story and it turned out that a friend of his had lost his arm when a bandsaw exploded from a log going through it that had been spiked by "environmentalists." So this man could no longer support his family because he lost his arm and it was all due to "environmentalists." Fast forward a couple years later, there's one thing I said, because I firmly believe in something you said about meeting people where they are, not expecting them to see it our way, but helping connect with how the kinds of changes we'd like to see could actually meet their needs.

Anyway, I'll end my story with just one more piece about it which is that, I was talking about sustainability and, I live in a rural area, very mountanesque. Some of our biggest challenges out here are high-speed internet and cell phone reception. We were at a meeting and I said, 'Listen, my great grandparents could never have guessed that the challenges that my generation would face in this area would have to do with hi-speed internet or cell phone service.' Sustainability has to be primarily about preserving options for future generations. I saw a lightbulb go on in this older retired loggers head. He got it that sustainability was about preserving options for future generations, so now he's talking, he's bringing sustainability to loggers who can hear it from him and who wouldn't hear it from me. I just thought I would share that in the same vein of meeting people where they're at.

Gayano: For me there's not time frame with that. When you talked earlier on about when we get to needs and we understand each other's needs, there are many times when that isn't going to be a shared understanding. How do I still stay present with where I am and what's alive inside me and make choices that are still, or even be able to listen to what's possible as a choice. For me it's been a slow crawl back to what it's like to live with a quality of feedback, from my body, from my instincts where I have access to more choices. It's a quality of listening and curiosity, many layers of patterns over many years are taking time for me to fully begin to heal what's in my heart and be able to act upon that and to move towards having a choice about what I move towards. That place at which we might be able to meet the other and needs be fully heard may be generations away. It sounds like it was a few years with this particular guy you met. I kind of want to give thanks to that too. How do we stay alive and how do we stay in integrity with ourselves and with our own values while were longing for something

different to happen and yet not wanting to walk towards that pace of coercion or perpetuating violence as we can so easily slip into that place of thinking that other people should change or that they ought to get our message. There's a kind of huge complexity there for me about how we do meet other people and how we keep staying very present and alive to what's doable in any given interchange. For me just recognizing, I think that's why I was trying to name those small ways, the seemingly, there are many, many people. I hear people trying at home with their families and those for me are incredibly sweet seeds. They are definitely each one of us attempting to show up differently in that moment when we want to resort to the same old patterns, the same old shaftings [?][35:28], the same old put-downs, is enacting something that has the possibility of contributing to change further down the road.

Having my daughter here, my 9 year old now, she's been involved with us with NVC for probably five years, six years maybe, and I have been bearing witness to what she has access to inside her. She's been in circles and watched men and women cry and men and women tend to each other. That's become her learning and her capacity to go out in the world and to speak to these places. She speaks to the place inside her recognizing, "Hey it's not really great to blame is it? It's not very nice to blame." She can really feel those things and I think what we've just been doing is give her a natural ground for her to tap into what is already there in her, and I think what's already in each of us. In watching her and witnessing how she can react to challenge, to my loud voice when I get cross and frustrated and I lose it yet again, regardless of any intentions I've got. I have a sense of how deeply we're hardwired for love and the impact of not receiving, of not being received in love, which I think very few of us are, is huge. So bearing witness to these seemingly small changes that are going on in families and homes and communities all over the world I guess is what enables me to go at my own pace. It enables me to have that longing at times but to sort of really soften to what's doable inside me at any given time.

There are many places in which I would like to stretch further than I am able to. Having Robert Gonzales's work is certainly impacted me hugely, obviously. Literally it's Marshall and what he's brought in his incredibly beautiful simple model of feelings and needs. I've been lucky enough to be along Vickie Pierce and her bonds where that quality of living together, it was like being at the best nursery school I could have taken myself to. It was a place in which compassionate care was brought into the room day in and day out when people were challenged. It's almost recreating family spaces and there's a lot that's up there. I felt my body change. It wasn't just that I was working on my thoughts and

working on my own experiences. My body was bearing witness to what it was like to have compassion and care role modeled to me and again coming back to that space, I guess that's been part of it, wanting us to be alongside each other so we bear witness to each other and can support and encourage each other. I guess whether we're doing something we might label really big or really small. I'll stop again, I've no idea how long I've been talking.

Alan: You've said so much of value. There was one thing that you said about the rate of change and the pace and how it may take some time and I'm curious what, in terms of really connecting with ourselves and connecting with others and changing habits and how we see changes happen. What would you say to someone who experiences, for example, an overwhelming sense of urgency. They can cite the data on climate change. They can cite the data on species extinction. They're alarmed and they're saying, 'This is a huge threat that we need to turn around in a short time frame, like a major major retooling and restructuring of society.' What would you say to someone who has that sense of urgency around seeing changes at a really massive scale?

Gayano: I mean I guess initially I wouldn't really know what to say. There's an individual in front of me and there's a whole heap of pressures and lived experiences and I'm guessing fears that will be part of that energy, saying "We've got to change this, we've got to change this" We've got to change it, and wanting to change it is so alive, and yet for me the reality of what's doable inside another person is still there and so the longing for that kind of level of change and the potential, what we're then asking of others who've lived their own experiences and have got their own patterns and behaviors and routines and fears and so there's a meeting of that. At this point I'm not saying anything to that person, I'm just holding all of those ingredients. I guess what I'd want to do is spend some time with them.

What keeps coming up, I kind of almost felt tearful as you spoke it. I'm not sure at which point but it's that deep place of, for me one of the things that NVC had brought access to me is the quality of grieving and the quality of being with the despair. It ties in with Joanna Macy's work which I did some years ago. I kind of listen to Eve Ensler, she's the woman who wrote *The Vagina Monologues*, and one of the snippets I remember deeply from her is when she's going around Africa tending to women who've been genitally mutilated in numerous ways. What keeps her going on that day to day level, which potentially looks very small, is her capacity for tear, her capacity to keep her heart open through crying. It's a kind of funny example here. I learned so much through all my kids, but Jessie in

particular, we were going along these Welsh country roads and Jessie's pretty scared of spiders. She pulled down the sun visor because she wanted to see whether the big blob of ice cream that felt like it was all over her face was really all over her face. As she did, this pretty big spider, like an inch across, dangled right in front of her and she absolutely screamed. She said afterwards, 'I've never done that kind of proper scream before. That was a real scream.' This was a chunk of time afterwards. I was on a country road driving and I couldn't do anything. I couldn't stop and I just needed to stay focused. I tried to get the spider away and in fact it got worse and it got closer to her. Anyway, it was driving along in the car and keeping focused on the driving knowing I had more space in me, because normally I might have reacted and might have said something. I don't know what I might have said, but probably not very helpful. And what I bore witness to was JC's scream and shaking of her body eventually turned to tears and the tears kind of cried themselves and as she cried her tears, I witnessed it, the whole process of the tears moved and then eventually she was in the laughter.

Kind of that and then another experience, I'll just briefly explain what Jessie shared with me some time ago. It was bearing witness to the quality of keeping ourselves alive through the process of being able to grieve and allowing those feelings to come through us. She'd witnessed her dad, not long after he and I had separated some time ago, and she'd gone running up the road after him to wave goodbye. She came in and she was like, 'Mom I've got all these voices in my head, like a million voices saying don't go, don't go, don't go.' I got a piece of paper and we just sat there and we drew, we started writing don't go, don't go. We stayed with it and the end result of that was she got to watch what was going on for her and she said, 'actually mom what I think the voices in my head were screaming don't go so they could make me cry so all the pain would be washed away.' It's this ongoing quality for me of relearning what it's like to be in a human body and what it's like to have what for me is an extraordinary quality of keeping life flowing when we can access letting that despair so you know whatever that person, I'm coming back to that person you asked about at the beginning. I don't know what I would do for that person but I would want to do what I could to stay present and give room for the depth of their experiences and their fears and their longing and to see if they had any room maybe to allow the formance of that feeling to wash through them maybe so that they can maybe pick themselves up and keep going day after day. I'm kind of nervous that that's not the right answer but that's kind of how it is.

Alan: You know how much of a stickler I am for right and wrong answers.

Gayano: It's the same old, it still hits in all sorts of places. Gosh, I suddenly catch up with myself and hear what I've been saying and I'm not sure if that's my, kind of, nervousness.

Alan: Well, one of the things I love that you shared is that I think those of us who are longing for social change who do feel a sense of urgency and who are, frankly really alarmed at the trends that we see, I think that would be so helpful to just have somebody be present and not agree or disagree, or not try to change us, or not try to brainstorm, but just offer that quality of presence so that our need for empathy would be met. So that we're more grounded, more centered, more clear, more connected to our needs, more clear what our requests might be. I loved your response and that's just what it led me to is I think those of use who are experiencing a sense of emergency and alarm do need that kind of care and compassion and presence. I had no idea what you were going to say and I loved it! So, do you have more you want to say or I was going to switch track so, if you have more...

Gayano: No, let's, I'm happy to switch tracks.

Alan: Well, on our telesummit website, at the bottom of your informations box where it says, 'visit me online,' there's a little button and it clicks to [giraffesocialenterprises.org.uk](http://giraffesocialenterprises.org.uk), so this is your website, [giraffesocialenterprises.org.uk](http://giraffesocialenterprises.org.uk). Tell us about what this is and projects that you're most excited about.

Gayano: Well, it's, thank you, that was completely unexpected. I, it's funny, I've just written to two other trainers actually and said, giraffe social enterprises got set up last year because of a particular idea I had. I had an idea for a giraffe. I called it a giraffe. I saw it as a fundraising opportunity for the Family Council last year. I mean, for me, making spaces available for people that can't normally afford it is really important. It's challenging to be creative around that and I keep looking away but one of the ways that came up last year was the sudden impulse to run a giraffe. What I did was that I invited UK trainers who were delightfully supportive, and also Robert Gonzales, he was supportive and I asked the places on trainings and events or one to one sessions so this giraffe went up on the website and friend of mine Peter Kinsey put together this kind of long image and we had balloons and we had things like a tuition place, a beauty of needs, so we've got somebody coming and Robert Gonzales is coming to do his training



next week and they're coming because they bought a ten pound giraffe ticket. I really liked the idea. I can't really remember how it emerged.

What I liked about it was that maybe people who would never go to a training would end up being able to go to something because they wouldn't normally pay, or wouldn't normally think to invest that kind of money towards something. I like the kind of way it networked out. It was another way of people getting seen. There was just a sense of just real, I just love that so many of the trainers in the UK said, 'yeah, ok, I'll give a place or I'll give a one-to-one space.' So I decided I needed a formal bank account and a separate thing for this and that's how giraffe social enterprises appeared in a week. I got a couple other people to say will you be directors with me. It kind of sat there dormant with the bank account for the camps last year and the giraffe. Actually, this year, I've begun to realize I often join the dots backwards and I'm going to venture into something much different this year. I'm hoping it's going to employ me as a director. What it's ended up being at the moment is, it's a not-for-profit organization and it's become a platform for a group of us, six countries, six of Europe have come together to apply for some funding for an NVC coaching possibility of some being over two year periods.

This thing that started out as an idea because I needed an organization to house the giraffe. And the other thing that started to fund this year, or support, was my to-be husband Jason. Through Giraffe Social Enterprises we've been supporting him who's gone out to work with another NVC trainer in Baltimore with your friend Bert in fact. He's been with him since December there as a volunteer. It's become this whole other project. The vision quickly came that I wanted a place where people could ask for the types of training they wanted, we could potentially fundraise to fund individuals or groups to put training together, it could act as a network as information so that, networking has seemed to be something that lives through me quite effortlessly and quite easily, so how could I connect ideas and could it become an umbrella for different trainers to be able to work together on ideas and become the basis through which they could apply for funding. I saw it as very much based around what it could do for community and the bigger picture as well as that camp and the giraffe and whatever else started to emerge. The other idea I got for it which is sitting there is, I've got an idea, well it wasn't an idea, it came to me to do a giraffe bust some years ago when I was in India I was with my two younger children and I had this idea of doing an NVC yuptra [?]. A yuptra in India is a walk with intention and I was thinking about setting off in the footsteps of Satish Kamal [?] who walked around the nuclear capitals of the world in the 60's with no money. I had this kind of vision of me and

JC Blubell [?] and a few others setting off from home with no money walking, and just connecting with NVC.

Part of that is about, it's all very well when people leave their communities and attend a workshop and then they go back and there's no one else that's done anything. What does it look like? How does this stuff reach somebody if they're in the highrise flats and this, what I can take for granted accessing? How does that even begin to touch others and so this vision began to grow and a couple of years ago it turned out that instead of a walk maybe a bus would work. A bus would arrive, this idea of a giraffe bus and a giraffe bus that could go and park in community center car parks and we could do coffee and honesty and empathy and we could go to festivals. This idea had been sitting there, or this seed, this life has been sitting there and it's still there and I see Giraffe Social Enterprises being able to be a place maybe where that starts to take fruition. Ultimately what I would love is a kind of home base, a home base for people to come and go, to live alongside each other. To come and experience living alongside each other. For part time or full time. I've got kind of no limits and at the same time feeling quite shy and naive about some of the ways I put things together and watch them grow. A part of me doesn't quite know where it'll and there's a part of me that's really hopeful, not hopeful, curious. Jason working with Wes Taylor over in Baltimore has come up with this idea of empathy angels in the trenches. I've been looking at a model and I set up a home support scheme which supported families with children under five. That was some years ago. I've been looking at that model, you know, what does it look like to support teens and volunteers that then go work in places like hospitals and organizations and prisons and so there's all sorts of ideas bubbling around. Slowly the possibility of support and kind of companionship and people to lean into and people to inspire and people to pick me up, for me to pick them up when I'm feeling low and don't think I'm getting anywhere. I'm kind of just open and curious as to where it's going and delighted that it appeared and very happy that it's there.

Alan: I hope you can save me a seat on the bus.

Gayano: Haha, yeah, I mean the bus, I want it. Yes, just the extended family, people coming and going and being a part of the journey for a while and, yeah.

Alan: Definitely save me a spot on that bus. How do you feel about the possibility of opening it up to question and answer?

Gayano: Yeah, that's fine.

Alan: So press 1 on your phone keypad if you have a question or comment for Gayano. Questions or comments so far, I did see a high-five come up earlier. Here we have a hand raised, Hi Sandy.

Sandy: Hi. Thank you both for today. I was wondering, Gayano you mentioned one of your areas of activity and interest is creating cafe's and other I guess safe nurturing spaces for people with special needs and I was wondering if you could, I'm kind of one of those people and my set of special needs is chemical sensitivity which makes it really difficult to be in a lot of rooms even if there's nobody else in them, much less if there is. Isolation is a huge problem and there's just a huge problem. There's a crying need. There's actually millions of people dealing with is so, I was just wondering about your activities in general in this area and if you have any ideas for this specific set of special needs that I and many others are dealing with, thanks.

Gayano: Thank you, did I catch your name, it was Sandy.

Sandy: Yes it is, and I spent a week in Wales many years ago. It was wonderful.

Gayano: Well, hello Sandy. Um, gosh. This touches for me, It is quite a long time ago since I was running a cafe project and I certainly didn't have NVC at my hands, but what it does touch in me is that I've got a kind of awareness of what it's like to be in different bodies and a real deep recognition about how people experience the world very differently. I'm wondering a kind of concise way or quick way to speak to that. You're naming chemical sensitivity that goes on for you and that has, I'm guessing it was for yourself wasn't it and not for a child.

Sandy: Right, yeah. But there are plenty of teenagers and children dealing with this as well. In a way it's a little more distressing because at least I have the memory of having been able to participate in the world in a 'normal' way. Being able to be physically present in the community, and there are a lot of children who have scant experience at that.

Gayano: The impact on your life or on their life is, I'm guessing incredibly, it's profound, it had any range of numbers of feelings attached to it. I'm guessing part of what you're up against is people's lack of awareness or judgements or people just not getting it. Because it's really difficult to see inside another's body, but for me it connects with something that I'm aware of called Handle, which is a holistic approach to neuro-developmental learning efficiency. For me it talks about our

root system and our body, our sense of touch, our sense of smell, our sense of body in space, our muscle. All these things are aspects that support us when they're functioning well. When our root systems, our root developmental systems are functioning well, we can be in the world in a pretty reasonable way. When they're not functioning well they can effect our bodies in all sorts of ways and we can get labeled as disruptive or difficult. Certainly with children. You might have a child that spends his time falling under the desk and the only label that we might find for them is that they're being naughty. Actually what they might be doing is trying to reduce the light sensitivity, and issue of light sensitivity under bright lights. But the capacity to get heard in that or get seen for what's actually going on inside their bodies and for even the basic care to arrive, the bearing witness to. The being seen for the reality of their experience, the reality of your experience right now. Yeah, right now I just hold a kind of, it's a place where I stop and connect and just touch that that's what you're up against and recognize the potential huge level of isolation that that can contribute to not only because of the actual chemical sensitivity that you're up against but for many people the capacity to have a curiosity and to have an awareness of walking towards you, of what that's actually like. That curiosity isn't well practiced in us I don't think and it's very easy to get triggered and overwhelmed by those who don't respond to the world in the way that everybody else seems to. There's part of me in this moment, on this call where there's other people around, I have a quality of quietness and I don't think it's speechless but I'm recognizing there's very little by way of this distance to offer you and there's a real strong sense in me of what you're up against and some of the implications and some of the experiences that that must be for you.

Sandy: yeah, well thank you for, you are understanding a lot of it, that a lot of people don't readily grasp. I also was wondering, Handle, are you talking about the Hondle institute, I think in Seattle?

Gayano: Yes, they are in Seattle.

Sandy: Oh my gosh, I came in contact with somebody who worked with the founder of that years ago and I never knew what the acronym stood for, Holistic Approach to Neurologic what?

Gayano: Neorodevelopmental learning deficiency. For me it's given me a huge insight into the reality that our bodies really do function differently. Some people will look at you using their peripheral eye sight, their eye vision, for example. It's a huge, it's kind of a whole other topic but I know that it's given me a huge level

of space in terms of the body as an expression when it tries to look after its own needs. Peoples need to fiddle or to move and we can ask them to sit still but in fact actually they're needing to move in order to try and concentrate. It's for me run deeply alongside my NVC consciousness and it holds a quality of insight around the body for me that has made a profound difference in my ability to stay curious and open when I witness what might be going on in another person, their behavior, their actions. I'm enjoying, you know that's the first time I've had people say, 'ah, I know about that, or I've got some kind of connection.'

Sandy: Yeah, I mean the entire area of invisible disabilities, or so called invisible disabilities is huge and I think unfortunately growing because the toxicity of the environment, the air and water causes a lot of things like damage. They can be very subtle changes in the way that the brain operates which shows up in terms of behaviors like you were talking about that are sort of generally unexpected, that people don't understand. It's an important area and it's very much tied into concerns about the earth, the environment. In many ways I sort of feel like a member of an endangered species. I feel very much in fellowship with endangered species and extinct species.

Gayano: It strikes me Sandy that it's people who are experiencing the world directly in the way that you are that your voice and your experience matters. For those people who are desperately looking for wanting change in the environment to be able to, it's not just about the environment what it does to the land but hearing the voices of those kind of potentially less obvious effects. You've got to, people experiencing things in the way that you are, for me are important voices as part of this process. As part of getting heard and as part of getting seen. It takes time because what you're up against, people can't get ti. It's very difficult to take time to recognize that it genuinely is effecting your body in that way. It's just kind of a lot of care for me and gentleness both for the people that find it really difficult to understand and for yourself on the side of what you're living with day in and day out right now.

Sandy: I agree and thank you.

Gayano: Thank you Sandy.

Alan: Thank you Sandy. Right now that was the only hand, so if you have a question or comment for Gayano press 1 on your phone. Gayano is there anything else that's alive for you to share with us while we're still on the line? And I just saw another hand go up.

Gayano: Nothing came up in that moment particularly.

Alan: Let's hear from Bonnie. Hi Bonnie.

Bonnie: Hey Alan, Gayano.

Gayano: Hi Bonnie.

Bonnie: What a privilege it is to have this extra time with you. Listening, you've brought up a lot of questions that are not new for me. It seems like the theme that's running is between the contrasts that we often think we have to choose either this or that. Alan was talking about the urgency that we feel sometimes about, things have got to change and they've got to change now. And putting that together with the patience of knowing that it really isn't our job to determine that pace or the way or even the course of life. That it's something that's bigger than we are that we're responding to so we have to do it in the time of creation rather than thinking that we can make it all happen in the time period that we see it.

Gayano: I was just connecting when you used the words, 'urgency' and 'patience.' Took me back to Alan's question to me. I guess, I don't know, behind the word urgency, we talk about a feeling of urgency but I'm guessing that we're feeling something in our bodies. When we talk about urgency I'm guessing we're feeling anxious and sick or, there's any number of qualities that are going on that shows up in the word 'urgency.' There's potentially a panic I guess and it's a very intense energy and I guess for me, again, bringing that quality of NVC of tracking the actual feelings and of meeting somebody when they're talking about that urgency and often we can hear a quality of urgency in someone's voice. How we walk towards that and tend to the deep fear that's there. The scared feeling that the reality of what that's like living in that body and giving that room. For me, what you speak to, I guess my way of connecting to it is that kind of ebb and flow, that rising of fear, and once that gets tended to it's not so much a quality of patience for me but a quality of being that grounded in a way where I just do what needs to be done the next day and I keep going day in and day out because I resonate with you that there is a pace that's over and above whatever our perceptions of urgency or whatever our feelings of fear or scaredness is triggered inside us. Many of us, most of us are doing just what we can in the way that we can do it. As I tend to the life inside me, as I listen in to the fear, I think more opens up inside me and I can keep moving. I can keep flowing and I keep walking towards something that is important to me and has value to me. But



keeping that overall context which I think is what I heard you naming, that there is us and there is our individual striving and there's the bigger context of which we cannot know the overall picture.

Bonnie: Yes. I hear that and if I could give an example from my life that might be useful. Some years ago now, I had the privilege of hearing a group of people that had gotten together to speak about the realities in Guatemala, what has been happening politically and historically for them and what their situation was at the time and what they had been involved with and working with. I had been very naive of the costs of the genocide campaign that went on in the 1980's there to the individuals and the really shocking horrendous experiences that have been visited on them there. So my response to it was I needed to involve myself. Not knowing about it, oh, has a certain cost to it, but then knowing about it and not doing anything about it at all would really be painful for me. And so I studied more and it felt like I needed to do whatever I could do today. That next week wasn't soon enough, it wasn't sufficient to take time to get prepared, I needed to just go. It was really in relation to that that this idea of urgency, because urgency is the motivation for it. That I can't not do anything any longer. It's really motivating and yet it needed to be monitored with a certain amount of wisdom or patience or whatever word we put with it.

Gayano: I love that. It sounds like something landed deep inside of you in terms of it touched something. And whatever was touched in you moved directly into action. For me, I really value that place where something land in us in such a way that we just know. It sounds like it stirred something deep inside you and that's what moved you and your word was that, 'I couldn't not,' and at the same time you were holding that quality of patience. I think you used the word 'wisdom.' For me that's how, we see something around us that happens to touch us in that moment and if we can listen to that life and support it to move towards whatever that's there that's important to us. That for me is keeping that kind of life flowing.

Bonnie: yes, I hear you, and I think that our reality that I've often thought about and talked about, that we live in a binary world that, being manifest in bodies, there's that which is and that which is not and that's the kind of contrast that defines things for us to be able to. I hear you talking about the peace that settles in when we allow ourselves to relate to one another in a way that allows us to meet our needs and we become almost comfortable, but then right next to that we need to have this sense of a vision of something that would be more promising, more life-giving, more sustainable. Whatever that vision that we're

holding that gives us motivation to work on something. If we were too complacent then that doesn't keep us alive either.

Gayano: No.

Alan: Thank you Bonnie. Do you feel like you got the response from Gayano and that what you feel you had to share was heard?

Bonnie: Absolutely. I love being engaged in these conversations Alan, thank you so much.

Alan: Thank you, Bonnie.

Gayano: Thank you.

Alan: Gayano, any other thoughts from you or anything else that you would like to share?

Gayano: I guess there was just that one bit there, enjoying what Bonnie touched in me. It still, there's a place of wanting to speak to what I experienced in Bonnie is that she had a very personal experience that drove her and gave her vision and motivated her and often we can talk about people needing to have a vision. For me there's a complexity that goes on in an individual and what awakens something inside them that stirs them enough to move forward in a particular direction. I guess I'm just thinking of speaking to that place that our visions are our own, and if we get to hang out and be alongside others who share that same vision, and as we share that vision other people get caught up and engaged and want to come along, there's a deep sweetness in that. And there's this place where, and for some people it's not doable, and again just holding this recognition of some of the deeply entrenched challenged patterns that individuals are in. When we're looking and inspiring to change and imagining what people might need in order to change is to sort of really, for me, hold this quality of curiosity and recognition that I really don't know what's lived through that other person and what's possible or what's doable. Something about just wanting to name that, more than anything else.

Alan: yeah, being willing to enjoy a space of, 'I don't know,' and that curiosity.

Gayano: Yeah, thank you.

Alan: We have another hand up and it's Kate. Kate, did you intend to raise your hand?

Kate: Yes I did, sorry, I just had to un-mute.

Alan: It's ok.

Kate: Hello there Gayano.

Gayano: Hello.

Kate: I am so loving this call. I got up at 5 a.m. to hear you and I'm so enjoying lying here listening to this and just hearing more about how you live this in the world and the beautiful example of your daughter Jessie. I suppose I'm just inspired on the inside of how great the curiosity of each other can be, each other's experience. I suppose it just has me realizing my curiosities could do with some growth and some expansion on the inside to really almost lift aside and have this image of just following the meandering. This walking along the bank beside somebody's river and beside each other rather than creating definition and dams and lakes and things of each other's ideas. I don't know. I'm just really appreciating how you've expressed it living in you, how enormous it could be and what a gift it is to be with each other's experiences. I really appreciated your response to the urgency, that I often feel. Yeah, what else is going there and the opportunity to hold somebody when they're really feeling the urgency and hold myself actually. That was a bit of a ramble but I'm just really appreciating the way you've expressed this and hearing about how you live this in the world, so thank you.

Gayano: Well, how delicious you got up at 5 o'clock in the morning. That's very moving and touching for me. I guess, it's something about recognizing the edge we're up against in an attempt to stay curious with each other. The other that you mentioned was when you're with somebody and they're in urgency, for me if other people are in urgency it affects me. It can spin me out and I can get anxious. What I hang on to or what serendipitous moment arrives is when I remember to take a breath and remember to reconnect with myself and reconnect with that curiosity actually. Ok, what is that in that other person. Giving presence and validation to their experience or urgency or whatever. I've come to realize lately that as a felt sense when my experience is validated, for me on a person level, it's like there's nothing left for me to fight against or look for. I've kind of unraveled my childhood experiences of being the odd one out and being

the not favored one and my sister and brother receiving things. I realized fairly recently as a felt sense, it wasn't that I wanted to stop it, it wasn't that I wanted things to be fair. It wasn't that I wanted anybody to stop giving or receiving, but there was a deep longing to know what it was like, what that experience was like for me and when that gets heard, when I'm validated wherever I am I notice that something in me blossoms and is able to sort of get back on with what I'm wanting to do again. I can't remember last being with someone who had that kind of urgency, but I'm appreciating you reflecting it back and checking it and how that will show up in another conversation. Thank you Kate.

Kate: yeah, I've got two cats telling me the urgency of breakfast time now. Thank you.

Gayano: Ok.

Alan: Thank you Kate. Ok, I'm really enjoying the quality of this call and the conversations. Gayano, do you have any closing thoughts for us before we end out time together?

Gayano: I mean, I don't think I have any closing thoughts from my own ramblings. There's an energy of I'm appreciating getting a chance to hang out with you Alan. Appreciating an opportunity I guess. I wouldn't have spent this kind of time exploring, or just, over the past keep I've just been aware of the call coming up. In fact, I went out to lunch with a friend and she said, 'oh when's the call?' I thought it was weeks away and she said, 'It's next week,' and I said, 'oh gosh, is it?!' And then since that week it's been a real gift to me where it's taken me to inside myself and where it will continue taking me to. I guess my closing is an appreciation of the opportunity and the gift that you've offered. That you've paid attention to what's alive in you Alan and how you've let that live and the bit you shared with me just before we started the call, that definitely exceeded by far where you thought it would go, it's kind of just tickled me. I'm delighted. I'm completely delighted and aware of the extra work that you've had, but yeah, my love and appreciation and thanks.

Alan: Thank you Gayano. I'm really curious where the 1,500 of us who are part of this event, where do we want to take it. Where do we want to take this energy after this week? So, Gayano thank you so much for taking the time and for sharing of yourself with all of us.

Gayano: Thank you Alan.

Alan: And before we leave I'm going to un-mute everybody so we can say bye to each other.

Everyone: Bye, thank you.

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*NOTE: Any inaccuracies in this transcription are solely the responsibility of Alan Seid and Cascadia Workshops. Minor edits have been made for reading clarity. Please consult the original recording as needed.*

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