

# Winter Fishtrap

# CAN WE TALK?



## From the Director



Dear Friends,

*Can we talk?* Can we still have conversation in a time of conflict? Can we learn to see past our divisions—political, social, generational, spiritual—and focus on the values we share? Can we still learn from each other, grow together, and build community, not in spite of our differences, but instead seeing diverse perspectives as strength?

Is it possible to come together to do the hard work that's required to respond to the serious problems of our times if we don't?

*Can we talk?*

This Winter Fishtrap weekend is an optimistic and emphatic "yes!" We've gathered experienced folks from our region to talk about how they've successfully created new relationships through conflict at work, at home, and in their broader communities. As we explore these issues together, we'll take inspiration from their stories, pick up and practice new tools, and most of all, learn from each other.

*Can we talk?* We can if we learn to listen, are open to learning from those we agree and disagree with, and focus on connecting as people first. That's where community starts.

I'm looking forward to learning from you,

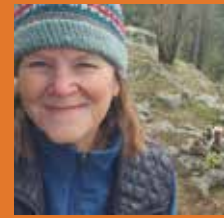
A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Shannon McNerney". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping tail that loops back under the name.

Shannon McNerney  
Executive Director

## Fishtrap Staff



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Media Coordinator



Jennifer Hobbs  
Development & Outreach  
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Fishtrap could not do what we do without the support of our Wallowa County Community. To the many local volunteers, writers, businesses, family, and friends who help us throughout the year, we send our heartfelt thanks!

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# 2024 Winter Fishtrap Schedule

## Friday, January 12

- 6:00pm Opening Reception
- 7:00pm Opening remarks; Keynote with **Dr. Kristine F. Hoover** - Gonzaga University

## Saturday, January 13

- 8:00-9:15am *Reconnecting: A Listening Mandala* with **Seth Kinzie** and **Craig Pesti-Strobel**  
In this participatory dialogue session, individuals are asked to speak from the heart about their dreams and anxieties concerning our community and our planet. This process encourages intergenerational relationships and nourishes deep listening through sharing and reflecting together.
- 9:30-10:45am Panel: *Working Together When We Don't Agree* with **Nils Christoffersen**, **Beth Estock**, and **Chantay Jett**  
Moderated by **Shannon McNerney**
- 11am-12:30pm Workshop: *Depolarizing Within* (Part 1) with **Steve Radcliffe**
- 1:30-3:00pm Workshop: *Depolarizing Within* (Part 2) with **Steve Radcliffe**
- 3:15-4:30pm Conversation: *Talking Across Generations* with **Jacy Sohappy**
- 7:00pm Screening: *The Color of Conscience: Human Rights Movement in Idaho* followed by a Q&A with the film's producer **Marcia Franklin** of Idaho Public Broadcasting.

## Sunday January 14

- 8:30am Continental Breakfast & Conversations
- 9:30-11:30am *What are we willing to risk?* A conversation and performance about connection and boundaries with **Jason Graham** aka **MOSley Wotta**



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## 2024 Winter Fishtrap Presenters



**Nils Christoffersen** is the Executive Director of Wallowa Resources. He has diverse experience in place-based natural resource management from working around the world, including ranching in Australia, farming in Israel, fishing and forestry in Norway, and forestry and wildlife in southern Africa. He is passionate about working landscapes and the role of rural communities in their stewardship. Nils is a graduate of both Williams College (B.A. in Economics) and Oxford University (M.S. Forestry) and has served on many local and national boards - including the National Commission on Science for Sustainable Forestry, Oregon Board of Forestry, and World Forest Center. He also served on the Enterprise School District Board from 2004-2017 and the Winding Waters Medical Clinic from 2014-2020. He

is currently the chair of Rural Voices for Conservation Coalition's steering committee. RVCC advances place-based policy solutions from across the rural West to advance stewardship economies associated with public and private working lands.

**Beth Estock** has had a complex relationship with the church her entire life. She is the progeny of a Catholic and Protestant marriage in rural Pennsylvania. When she finally professed her allegiance to Methodism her Catholic grandmother told her she was going to hell. Being the inquisitive type, Beth took a few theology classes in college to find out if her grandmother was right. That experience and her love of church camps compelled her to go to seminary at Emory University. She pastored churches in Georgia and Oregon for many years before she finally broke up with the church. She also worked at the Wallowa Lake Camp as the Family Program Director for six summers. Now she is a Master Certified Integral Leadership Coach and a Meditative Yoga Instructor. Beth has written two books and co-hosts a podcast called "Church is Changing". Most recently she followed her bliss back to Wallowa County and has fallen in love with church again as the pastor of Joseph United Methodist. You can find her there on Sundays at 10am with a huge smile on her face incredulous that Love has brought her home.



**Marcia Franklin** has been a producer and host at Idaho Public Television since 1990. She is currently the lead producer for "createid," the station's program covering the arts in Idaho. For more than 25 years, she was the producer and host of Dialogue, a statewide conversation program focusing on the humanities. She also produces programs for the station's history and outdoors series. Marcia has also produced special documentaries, including "Barbara Morgan: No Limits," "Hearts and Minds: Teens and Mental Illness," and "The Color of Conscience." Her programs have garnered some of the highest media honors, including a George Foster Peabody Award, the Silver Gavel Award of the American Bar Association, and five regional Emmy Awards.

**Jason (McNeal) Graham**, better known as **Mosley Wotta** is a Windy City Heartland transplant living in Central Oregon. Wotta's work spans nearly two decades of exploration in multiple mediums including writing, painting, performance, and video. Mosley Wotta's music, literary performance and visual art have been featured internationally, including: Living Future Con, TED X, Fishtrap, Oregon Community Foundation invited speaker, Goddard College (Resident Scholar), High Desert Museum "Desert Reflections" Exhibition, Street Con Dubai, Valley Forge Fiesta, Diverse Intelligences Summer Institute, and the Portland Art Museum. Jason is an Arts Beautification & Culture award recipient, Individual Artist Fellowship Recipient, Fields Fellowship recipient, City Club Community Leader Honoree, Oregon Slam Poetry Champion 2008, Creative Laureate (Bend, OR.), Oregon Humanities Conversation project leader, and a Bridging Oregon (North Coast) Facilitator.







**Dr. Kristine F. Hoover** is a professor and chair of the Master of Arts in Organizational Leadership program where she leads the Change Leadership concentration. Some of her past leadership positions include director of the Gonzaga Center for the Study of Hate, chair of the Washington State Legislative Ethics Board, and trainer for the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM). She came from Bowling Green State University in Ohio to Gonzaga in 2009, drawn by its Catholic, Jesuit, Humanistic mission. Under Dr. Hoover's directorship, the Gonzaga Center for the Study of Hate has continued to publish the Journal of Hate Studies, a peer reviewed academic journal, and honored the legacy of holocaust survivor Eva Lassman through the Take Action Against Hate and Student Research awards. She designed new courses at the freshman, senior, and graduate levels to support students' understanding of why people hate and leadership to counter hate. Her most recent publications include Countering Hate: Leadership Cases of Nonviolent Action, which explores the leadership of ordinary people who have accomplished extraordinary things to build inclusive communities and counter hate groups across the United States

**Chantay Jett** has served as the Executive Director for the Wallowa Valley Center for Wellness (WVCW) since 2015. She holds a Master's degree in Psychology with a child, couple, and family emphasis, and a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration. Chantay's history in the mental health field includes working with children in an inpatient psychiatric unit at Children's Hospital, private practice, Administrator of Wallowa River House, a residential treatment facility for people with severe and persistent mental illness, outpatient mental health clinician, and WVCW's Operations Officer from 2013-2015. Chantay believes that everyone can discover improved health, mentally, physically, and emotionally by creating communities and environments that support this.



**Seth Kinzie** is a peace ambassador and pianist from Joseph, Oregon. He was a 2021 Rotary Peace Fellow at Makerere University, in Uganda, where he received a post-graduate Diploma of Peacebuilding and Conflict Transformation. He performed field research on the indigenous research methodology for a grassroots peace index in Ethiopia, Somalia, and Malawi. In 2022, he founded the African Peacemaking Database, based in Malawi, where he works in partnership with the Ministry of Peace and African Union. He has previously served as an interfaith director for Peace Ambassadors Pakistan and Monks Without Borders. He currently works as a piano composer and teacher, and writes for the impressionist instrumental quartet, Kinzie Steele.

**Shannon McNerney** has served Fishtrap's Executive Director since 2015. Fishtrap's mission to cultivate clear thinking and good writing in and about the West aligns with her passionate belief that the power of storytelling, creativity, and art can bring together and transform community. Shannon spent the first part of her career working in music as a classroom and studio teacher, singer, in music publishing, and as the Executive Director of the Portland Symphonic Choir. She received her Bachelors degree in Music Education from the University of Oregon, and will receive her Masters of Arts in Organizational Leadership from Gonzaga University in 2024. Shannon lives, writes, sings, cooks, attempts gardening, and snuggles with her ridiculous beasties in Joseph, Oregon.





**Steve Radcliffe** is a blue-collar boy from Western Pennsylvania, now retired on a mountainside in Southern Oregon. He spent the first half of his working years with the tools and the rest with a necktie. And he's a Bluegrass guitar player with a degree in philosophy. Radcliffe co-organized the first Braver Angels Workshop in southern Oregon, a Red/Blue, late in 2018 and then a Common Ground Workshop on the abortion issue a year later. Since then, he has been working to develop a local Braver Angels Alliance and is also working on a statewide initiative to address the Rural/Urban Divide in Oregon.

**Jacy Sohappy** is an enrolled member of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Reservation born and raised in the Mission/Pendleton area. She grew up in the tribal longhouse, traveling Indian country on the pow wow trail and medicine dances, learning how to preserve our cultural identity and teachings from her grandmother, Loretta "Lonnie" Alexander (Pinkham). Following in her footsteps as a gatherer picking berry, digging and drying corn. The outdoors have always been a retreat growing on the Umatilla river with her Uncles fishing, hunting with her brother Rob or gathering wood and tipi poles. All these teachings have seeped into her artwork expressing her dedication to preserving our culture and identity for the future of our children. One heart. One mind.



**Craig S. Pesti-Strobel** grew up in Boise, Idaho, the oldest of eight boys. After graduating from Borah High School in 1974, he studied Theatre and Biology at Willamette University (B.T. and B.S. in 1980) as well as Ministry and Religion and the Arts at Yale Divinity School and Pacific School of Religion (M.A. and M.Div. in 1986). He also has a Ph.D. in Interdisciplinary Studies (Religious Studies and Performance Studies) from the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California, which he received in 2001. His dissertation looked at the embodied imagination practices of Deep Ecologist Joanna Macy, whose work will be utilized in his workshop for Winter Fishtrap. In addition, he is a graduate of the two-year Academy for Spiritual Formation. Dr. Pesti-Strobel has served United Methodist Churches on and off since 1980, throughout Oregon and Idaho, including in Joseph, Oregon. He and his wife, Susan, moved permanently to Joseph in 2022.

**Braver Angels** leads the nation's largest cross-partisan, volunteer-led movement to bridge the political divide. Through community gatherings, real debates, and grassroots leaders working together, we seek to overcome the bitterness of our partisan divide. Launched in 2016, Braver Angels brings liberals, conservatives and others together at the grassroots level—not to find centrist compromise, but to find one another as citizens. We help Americans understand each other beyond stereotypes, form community alliances, and reduce the vitriol that poisons our civic culture. Braver Angels is a dues-paying membership, 501(c)(3) non-profit organization led by a small staff and many volunteers.



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Join us for **The NEA Big Read** as we celebrate *The Catalog of Unabashed Gratitude* by **Ross Gay**. Kickoff is **February 18** with **Anis Mojgani**, current poet laureate of Oregon, and we wrap up on **March 12** with an appearance by **Ross Gay**.



# <sup>37th</sup> Summer Fishtrap

Gathering of Writers  
July 8-14, 2024



Join us for a weeklong writing experience like no other. You'll **generate** new work, take risks with your writing, and **connect** with a community of writers and instructors — surrounded by the stunning scenery of Wallowa County.

Keynote: Aaron Abeyta

Registration opens  
February 5, 2024.



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### **Comparison of Dialogue and Debate**

1. Dialogue is collaborative: two or more sides work together toward common understanding.  
*Debate is oppositional: two sides oppose each other and attempt to prove each other wrong.*
2. In dialogue, finding common ground is the goal.  
*In debate, winning is the goal.*
3. In dialogue, one listens to the other side(s) in order to understand, find meaning, and find agreement.  
*In debate, one listens to the other side in order to find flaws and to counter its arguments.*
4. Dialogue enlarges and possibly changes a participant's point of view.  
*Debate affirms a participant's own point of view.*
5. Dialogue reveals assumptions for reevaluation.  
*Debate defends assumptions as truth.*
6. Dialogue causes introspection on one's own position.  
*Debate causes critique of the other position.*
7. Dialogue opens the possibility of reaching a better solution than any of the original solutions.  
*Debate defends one's own positions as the best solution and excludes other solutions.*
8. Dialogue creates an open-minded attitude: an openness to being wrong and an openness to change.  
*Debate creates a closed-minded attitude, a determination to be right.*
9. In dialogue, one submits one's best thinking, knowing that other peoples' reflections will help improve it rather than destroy it.  
*In debate, one submits one's best thinking and defends it against challenge to show that it is right.*
10. Dialogue calls for temporarily suspending one's beliefs.  
*Debate calls for investing wholeheartedly in one's beliefs.*
11. In dialogue, one searches for basic agreements.  
*In debate, one searches for glaring differences.*
12. In dialogue, one searches for strengths in the other positions.  
*In debate, one searches for flaws and weaknesses in the other position.*
13. Dialogue involves a real concern for the other person and seeks to not alienate or offend.  
*Debate involves a countering of the other position without focusing on feelings or relationship and often belittles or deprecates the other person.*
14. Dialogue assumes that many people have pieces of the answer and that together they can put them into a workable solution.  
*Debate assumes that there is a right answer and that someone has it.*
15. Dialogue remains open-ended.  
*Debate implies a conclusion.*

*Adapted from a paper prepared by Shelly Berman, which was based on discussions of the Dialogue Group of the Boston Chapter of Educators for Social Responsibility (ESR). Other members included Lucile Burt, Dick Mayo-Smith, Lally Stowell, and Gene Thompson. For more information on ESR's programs and resources using dialogue as a tool for dealing with controversial issues, call the national ESR office at (617) 492-1764.*

## Differentiating Dialogue From Discussion: A Working Model (Kardia and Sevig, 1997)

### Discussion

- A.  
*Discussions* are often conducted with the assumption of an equal “playing field,” with little or no acknowledgement of status and power differences in the room.
- B.  
*Discussion* can occur with social inequities and problematic power relations active and uninterrupted during the course of discussion (e.g., individuals with privileged social identities dominating the discussion).
- C.  
Individuals may engage in a *discussion* without an awareness or understanding of how the content of the discussion is related to the personal experiences of those in the room.
- D.  
The impact a *discussion* has on individuals in the room is often identified and processed outside of that room with individuals other than the discussion participants.
- E.  
In *discussion*, emotional responses may be present but are seldom named and may be unwelcome.
- F.  
*Discussion* tends to contribute to the formation of theoretical community—what society in general needs to understand to exist as a collective.
- G.  
*Discussion* is often aimed toward the identification and expression of generalities, frameworks, and collective truths.
- H.  
*Discussions* are often conducted with the primary goal of increasing clarity and understanding of the issue with the assumption that we are working with a stable reality.
- I.  
The goal of individual contributions to *discussion* is to say the “right” (intelligent, polished, etc.) thing.

### Dialogue

- In *dialogue*, these differences are key elements in both the process and the content of the exchange.
- Dialogue* breaks down and becomes untenable if such processes are not interrupted and addressed.
- In *dialogue*, personal experience is one of the key avenues through which participants deepen their understanding of conceptual and political issues.
- In *dialogue*, our goal is to identify, express, and work with as much of the impact of our exchange as we can in the moment and to bring the other after-effects of our dialogue back to the dialogue process.
- In *dialogue*, emotional responses are honored and highlighted as important information that can be used to deepen our understanding of personal issues, group dynamics, our content, and the implications of our exchange.
- Dialogue* works to form active and immediate community among the specific individuals in the room.
- Dialogue* works to uncover specificity, contradictions, paradox, and a deeper understanding of and respect for one’s own personal reality and reality as it is experienced by others.
- Dialogue* may promote understanding and clarity but is often aimed at disruption, disequilibrium, confusion, and the destabilization of personal and collective realities.
- In *dialogue*, our mistakes, biases, and shortsightedness can sometimes be the most important thing we have to offer to the process of bringing about personal and social change.

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## Exploring the Differences Between Dialogue, Discussion, and Debate

In DISCUSSION we try to...	In DEBATE we try to...	In DIALOGUE we try to...
Present ideas	Succeed or win	Broaden our own perspective
Seek answers and solutions	Look for weakness	Look for shared meaning
Persuade others	Stress disagreement	Find places of agreement
Enlist others	Defend our opinion	Express paradox and ambiguity
Share information	Focus on 'right' and 'wrong'	Bring out areas of ambivalence
Solve our own and others' problems	Advocate one perspective or opinion	Allow for and invite differences of opinion and experience
Give answers	Search for flaws in logic	Discover collective meaning
Achieve preset goals	Judge other viewpoints as inferior, invalid or distorted	Challenge ourselves and other's preconceived notions
Acknowledge feelings, then discount them as inappropriate	Deny other's feelings	Explore thoughts and feelings
Listen for places of disagreement	Listen with a view of countering	Listen without judgment and with a view to understand
Avoid feelings	Discount the validity of feelings	Validate other's experiences and feelings
Avoid areas of strong conflict and difference	<i>Focus on conflict and difference as advantage</i>	Articulate areas of conflict and difference
Retain relationships	Disregard relationships	Build relationships
Avoid silence	Use silence to gain advantage	Honor silence

Adapted by Tanya Kachwaha 2002 from Huang-Nissan (1999) and Consultant/Trainers Southwest (1992)



### **TO SUMMARIZE:**

The goal of DIALOGUE is to listen to and understand the other. I ask myself, “Am I coming to know and understand you better?”

The goal of DEBATE is to defeat the other’s position. I ask myself, “Am I winning this argument?”

The goal of DISCUSSION is persuade others, usually while avoiding conflict. I ask myself, “Is the other person agreeing with me and liking me?”

### **SOME QUESTIONS TO ASK MYSELF IF I AM HAVING TROUBLE STAYING WITH DIALOGUE:**

Am I honoring my own experience as valid...

*OR, am I feeling defensive about it?*

Can I trust others to respect differences...

*OR, do I suspect others are trying to force me to change?*

Can I trust myself to be permeable and still maintain integrity...

*OR, do I fear that really hearing a different perspective  
will weaken my position?*

Am I willing to open myself to the pain of others (and my own pain)...

*OR, am I resisting pain that I really do have the  
strength to face?*

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## **2024 Winter Fishtrap: *Can We Talk?* Resource List**

The following contains a list of resources—including books, videos, websites, and podcasts—recommended by our Winter Fishtrap presenters and Fishtrap staff. It's just the tiniest tip of a very large iceberg. If you have additional suggestions, please share them with us. Let's keep learning together!

### **Books**

*Active Hope: How to Face the Mess We're In Without Going Crazy* by Joanna Macy with Chris Johnstone

*Coming Back to Life: The Updated Guide to the Work that Reconnects* by Joanna Macy with Molly Young Brown

*Common Courage* by Andrea Vogt

*Compassionate Conversations: How to Speak and Listen from the Heart* by Diane Musho Hamilton, Gabriel Menegale Wilson and Kimberly Myosai Loh

*Conflict of Visions: Ideological Origins of Political Struggles* by Thomas Sowell

*Dare to Lead: Brave Work. Tough Conversations. Whole Hearts* by Brene Brown

*Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds* by adrienne maree brown

*A Hidden Wholeness: The Journey Toward an Undivided Life* by Parker Palmer

*High Conflict: Why We Get Trapped and How We Get Out* by Amanda Ripley

*How The Way We talk Can Change The Way We Work* by Robert Kegan and Lisa Laskow Lahey

*How to Think: A Survival Guide for a World at Odds* by Alan Jacobs

*I Never Thought Of It That Way: How to Have Fearlessly Curious Conversations in Dangerously Divided Times* by Monica Guzman

*In Search of Braver Angels* by David Blankenhorn

*Integral Meditation: Mindfulness as a Path to Grow Up, Wake Up, and Show Up in Your Life* by Ken Wilber

*Practicing New Worlds: Abolition and Emergent Strategies* by Andrea Ritchie

*The Righteous Mind: Why Good People are Divided by Politics and Religion*  
by Jonathan Haidt

*A Wild Love for the World: Joanna Macy and the Work of Our Time*, Edited by  
Stephanie Kaza

*World as Lover, World as Self*, 30th anniversary edition by Joanna Macy

## **Websites**

*3Practices for Crossing the Difference Divide*: Exercises and information centered on three practices for connection— I'll be unusually interested in others. I'll stay in the room with difference. I'll stop comparing my best with your worst.

<https://3practices.com/>

*Allsides*: assesses the political bias of prominent media outlets, and presents different versions of similar news stories from sources of the political spectrum in a mission to show readers news outside their filter bubble.

<https://www.allsides.com/unbiased-balanced-news>

*Facing History and Ourselves*: Facing History & Ourselves uses lessons of history to challenge teachers and their students to stand up to bigotry and hate.

<https://www.facinghistory.org/>

*Ground News*: Top stories from around you and around the world. Compare headlines across the political spectrum using media bias ratings driven by data.

<https://ground.news/>

*The Human Rights Education Institute*: The Institute celebrates diversity and promotes human rights by educating, raising awareness and recognizing the value of all humanity.

<https://hrei.org/>

*Not in Our Town*: Not In Our Town is a movement to stop hate, racism and bullying, and build safe, inclusive communities for all.

<https://www.niot.org/>

*Oregon Humanities*: Oregon Humanities is committed to bringing people together across differences of background, experience, and belief.

<https://oregonhumanities.org/>

*Wassmuth Center for Human Rights*: The Wassmuth Center provides programs and resources designed to bring the Idaho Anne Frank Human Rights Memorial's message into classrooms and communities.

<https://wassmuthcenter.org/>



## **Videos**

*The Color of Conscience: Human Rights in Idaho:* An hour-long [Idaho Public Television](https://www.idahoptv.org/shows/specials/colorofconscience/) documentary that looks at the development of the modern human rights movement in Idaho. It features the story of a small group of concerned citizens who fought against the Aryan Nations, ultimately bankrupting the neo-Nazi supremacist group in north Idaho.

<https://www.idahoptv.org/shows/specials/colorofconscience/>

*Consider This with Monica Guzman:* A conversation on creating connection across political divides. Guzmán is a bridge builder, journalist, and author who works to get people to talk across their perceived divides with Adam Davis, executive director of Oregon Humanities.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V97cowCvp4k>

*How to actively listen to others | Scott Pierce | TEDxBirmingham:* In this inspiring talk, Scott Pierce shows us that “Yes, and” is not just the first rule of improv, but it also touches on deeper lessons that we can apply to our everyday lives.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yq5pJoq3xuc>

*I grew up in the Westboro Baptist Church. Here's why I left | Megan Phelps-Roper:* What's it like to grow up within a group of people who exult in demonizing ... everyone else? Megan Phelps-Roper shares details of life inside America's most controversial church and describes how conversations on Twitter were key to her decision to leave it. In this extraordinary talk, she shares her personal experience of extreme polarization, along with some sharp ways we can learn to successfully engage across ideological lines.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bVV2Zk88beY>

*PEN America Town Hall 2023:* PEN America Annual General Meeting, Conversation Amid Crisis: Sustaining Dialogue in Divided Times, interrogates the challenge of keeping civil discourse alive amid deep schisms. This panel discussion examines not the conflict in the Middle East per se, but rather its ripple effects on the cultural, academic, and literary ecosystem back home.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=blvb\\_Y9Mhs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=blvb_Y9Mhs)

*Pro-Gun Vs. Anti-Gun: Is There Middle Ground? | Middle Ground:* Jubilee Media. Pro-gun and anti-gun people came together to see if it's possible to find middle ground on an issue as polarizing as gun rights, especially in light of mass-shootings in America.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3svs-nHtlNg>

*The Role Of Guns: An American Conversation About Learning From Different Perspectives | TIME:* Guns: An American Conversation follows 21 Americans with differing views on guns. They met in person to begin an experiment in communication. The experiment then continued online as the group expanded to include new

participants in a closed Facebook group. They will examine the role of guns in America across partisan and social lines, asking: Can we get past our differences and talk with one another where it really matters?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6AHJwsWUTL4>

## **Podcasts**

*The Braver Angels Podcast*: Braver Angels Media

<https://braverangels.org/podcast/>

*Clear & Vivid*: Alan Alda

<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/clear-vivid-with-alan-alda/>

*How to Be a Better Human*: Ted Audio Collective

<https://www.ted.com/podcasts/how-to-be-a-better-human>

*The Witch Trials of JK Rowling*: The Free Press

<https://www.thefp.com/witchtrials>

## **Other**

*1440*: a comprehensive daily newsletter, edited to be unbiased as humanly possible. “We scour the news so you don’t have to.”

<https://lp.join1440.com/>

The Developmental Politics Project Worldview Questionnaire: Take this 7 minute test and find out which “values frame” describes you best. Learn more about your own worldview, as well as about the worldviews of others.

<https://developmentalpolitics.org/worldview-questionnaire/>

*Theflipside.io*: Sends a daily email of curated news articles from left, center, and right that have been vetted for newsworthiness to “burst your media bubble.”

<https://www.theflipside.io/>

*Tangle News*: an independent, non-partisan politics newsletter that summarizes the best arguments from across the political spectrum on the news of the day.

<https://www.readtangle.com/>

# Dialogue: Intention & Invitation

**Dr. Kristine F. Hoover**

**Winter Fishtrap: Can we Talk?**

**Enterprise, Oregon**

**January 12, 2024**



# Debate

## CONTEST OF IDEAS

- Advocate
- Argue against an opposing viewpoint



# Role Play Challenge 1: Debate

## STATEMENTS

- The right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed.
- Banning books is an assault on the freedom of speech and, hence, liberty.
- Patriot is a good description of those who participated in the Jan. 6 events at the Capitol in D.C.

# Challenge 1: Debate



- First person (alphabetical):  
P1 Affirmative position
- Second person:  
P2 Negative position

- 2 minutes to gather thoughts

- 2 min – P1 Aff: Argument

- 2 min – P2 Neg: Cross-examine

- 2 min – P2 Neg: Argument

- 2 min – P1 Aff.: Cross-examine

- Argument: Advocate for your position; defend the truth and the best solution.
- Cross-Examination: Create counter-arguments against the opposing viewpoint based on differences or weaknesses

# Pause



# Discussion

## PERSUASIVE AGREEMENT

- Reach a collective understanding
- Solve problems





# Role Play Challenge 2: Discussion

## STATEMENTS

- Subsidized (Affordable) housing is the most cost-effective strategy for reducing childhood poverty and increasing economic mobility.
- Added regulation to protect coho salmon are unnecessary and would further restrict the practice of forestry in Oregon.
- The Oregon Climate Protection Program will reduce greenhouse gas, enhance public welfare, and accelerate the transition from fossil fuels to lower carbon energy sources.

# Challenge 2: Discussion



- First person (birth month):  
P1 Affirmative position
- Partner:  
P2 Negative position

- 2 minutes to gather thoughts

- 8 minutes to discuss

- Contribute to the formation of community or our collective understanding and truths
- Engage the other with persuasion and sharing information
- Two-fold Goal: find answers to a particular topic and maintain relationships



# Pause



# Dialogue

*Free exchange of ideas and information is of fundamental relevance for transforming culture – David Bohm*

## THINKING TOGETHER



- Agree no group-level decisions will be made
- Each individual agrees to suspend judgement
- Each individual agrees to be as honest and transparent as possible
- Individuals in the conversation try to build on other individuals' ideas

# Challenge 3: Our best selves

(Not a role play)

Abundance	Dedication	Kindness	Professionalism	Success
Acceptance	Dependability	Knowledge	Punctuality	Teamwork
Accountability	Excellence	Leadership	Relationships	Thankfulness
Achievement	Family	Love	Reliability	Tradition
Balance	Flexibility	Loyalty	Resourcefulness	Trustworthiness
Benevolence	Freedom	Mindfulness	Responsibility	Understanding
Calmness	Fun	Optimism	Responsiveness	Uniqueness
Caring	Growth	Open-Mindedness	Security	Usefulness
Collaboration	Honesty	Originality	Self-control	Vision
Creativity	Happiness	Peace	Selflessness	Wealth
Curiosity	Humility	Playfulness	Spirituality	Well-being
Daring	Independence	Proactive	Stability	Wisdom



Closing Challenge:  
Dialogue: Intention and Invitation



Thank you!

## Agreements

In order to enter into this circle of speaking and listening, there are a few agreements we make with each other. All participants will be expected to observe and follow these agreements.



- People at the inner edge of the circle should keep their feet out of the central space, also other objects like water bottles and tissues.
- Confidentiality is essential; what's said here stays here. A person's words in the Mandala are not to be referred to afterwards, including to the one who said them.
- No personal references to those present will be made, and no "cross-talk" or responses to what others have said.
- Concerns about our personal lives are as welcome as concerns about the world: it's all one.
- Feel free to speak in your mother tongue.
- Refrain from excessive comforting. When people are expressing heavy emotion, gestures of comfort may be taken as a signal to shut down.
- Please observe brevity in what is spoken. Speaking simply is most powerful. The Truth Mandala is not for lectures or reports, but for direct and simple expression of our pain for the world.

# Truth Mandala Listening Circle: *Sharing What Is Alive Within Us*



# About

- ✦ The Truth Mandala Listening Circle is a creative fusion of the Truth Mandala developed by Deep Ecologist Joanna Macy as utilized in the Work that Reconnects Network, and Listening Circles developed by educator Evelyn Swart for use in classrooms.
- ✦ The combination is designed to facilitate deep, truthful sharing of what is alive within each of us, be it anxiety, fear, confusion, hope, joy, etc. Before we can enter into deep empathetic listening to one another, we need to be aware of and name what is brewing and bubbling within us, beneath our words and interactions.
- ✦ Telling the truth about what is alive within us helps us claim our inner experiences and acknowledge their existence. Listening respectfully to one another as we share glimpses of our inner lives affirms the reality of these inner experiences, and can move our conversations from surface interactions to deeper points of connection. Speaking truthfully and listening respectfully and receptively affirms and strengthens our natural interconnectedness.

## Root Commitment

*Humane society is based upon mutuality and supportive interconnectedness. We weave humane societies through conversation, collaboration, consideration of one another, and empathetic connection.*

# How

## 3 Concentric Circles

- There are three circles: the inner circle is for people who are actively sharing what is alive within them; the next circle is for the group who is actively listening to the inner circle; and the outer circle will observe the process.
- The center of the circle is divided into quadrants representing Wallowa, Earth, Anxiety, Hope. As you are moved, come into one of the quadrants and speak about what is alive for you in regard to what that quadrant represents to you. It can be concerns, feelings, impressions, etc. It may be general or global anxieties or hopes. There is no right or wrong thing to share. The quadrants are there to focus our sharing.
- When everyone in the inner circle has spoken, the active listening circle shares what they have heard. This is not a time for expressing sympathy or offering solutions. It is simply to demonstrate that what has been shared has been received and heard.
- When everyone (who wants to) has reflected back what they heard, the two circles trade places and repeat the process.





## Depolarizing Within

### Part 1: Recognizing My Inner Polarizer

You can use the following questions to think about your inner polarizer. Don't worry: most of us think and feel some of these things.

1. How often do I find myself thinking about "those people" on the other political side without much regard for the variation among them? (Usually we're aware of great variation within our one group.

**Often**

**Sometimes**

**Never**

2. How often do I find myself assigning mainly self-serving or negative motives to the other group—and mainly positive motives to my group?

**Often**

**Sometimes**

**Never**

3. How often do I find myself focusing on the most extreme or outrageous ideas and people on the other side, thereby making it hard to see how a reasonable person could remain in that group?

**Often**

**Sometimes**

**Never**

4. How often do I find myself comparing the worst people on the other side with the best people on my side?

**Often**

**Sometimes**

**Never**

5. How often do I feel a "rush" of pleasure with friends when we ridicule those crazies on the other political side?

**Often**

**Sometimes**

**Never**

6. Which of the following is closest to my overall emotional attitude towards the majority of people who support the other side?

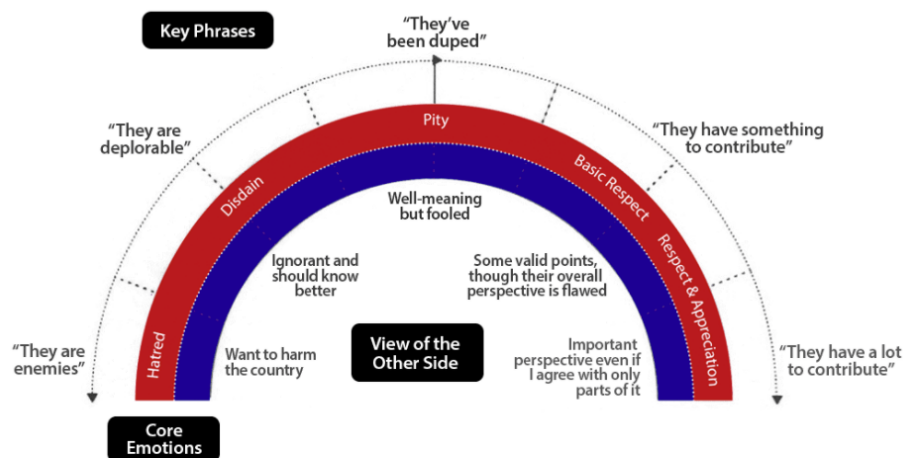
**Hate.** They are enemies out to destroy the country

**Disdain.** They are ignorant and should know better.

**Pity.** They are well meaning but duped.

**Basic respect.** They make contributions even if they are mostly off base.

**Respect and appreciation.** They make unique and necessary contributions.



The Emotional and Intellectual Transformation of De-Polarization



## **Part 2: Strategies to Counteract My Inner Polarizer**

We become agents of polarization when we use any of the **Four Horsemen of Polarization: Stereotyping, Dismissing, Ridiculing, and Contempt**. The following are ways to offset polarizing thoughts and feelings when you notice them arising in you. These are ways to “edit the story” you tell yourself about people on the other political side. You may also have other strategies that work for you.

### **Challenge your stereotypes**

Stereotypes are how outsiders over-simplify, dismiss, lump together, and disparage the “Other.” Based on Braver Angels red/blue workshops where we ask each side to identify the most common stereotypes they run into about their own side, these are the most common stereotypes:

<b>Reds think that Blues tend to believe</b>	<b>Reds are</b> racist, anti-immigrant, uncaring about those in need, homophobic, anti-woman, anti-science, bible thumpers.
<b>Blues think that Reds tend to believe</b>	<b>Blues are</b> arrogant/elitist, favor big government for its own sake, and are fiscally irresponsible, unpatriotic, anti-religious, against free speech if it’s not politically correct, and hypersensitive “snowflakes.”

### **Ways to counter stereotypes in your own thinking:**

- Tell yourself that the other side is more varied than the stereotype.
- Acknowledge that their political views and motivations are no doubt more complicated than the rhetoric you’ve been hearing.
- Read and listen to thought leaders on the other side who present complex arguments.
- Recognize that the life experiences informing their views are likely different from your own.
- Develop relationships with a variety of people who differ with you politically. Relationships tend to undermine stereotypes.
- If you want to go all out, you can work to develop an understanding of the history and current strands of thought on the other side.

### **Make depolarizing distinctions**

<b>Distinguish between <u>positions</u> and <u>people</u></b>	You can believe that a viewpoint is completely wrong without believing that everyone who holds it is stupid or ill motivated.
<b>Distinguish between <u>policies</u> and <u>core values</u></b>	Policies are means to ends, ways to support or enact values, not the values themselves. People can differ sharply on policies and have similar ultimate goals for the country and its people.
<b>Distinguish between <u>inconsistency</u> and <u>hypocrisy</u></b>	Resist the pull towards assuming that inconsistencies on the other side always reveal hypocrisy. Inconsistencies between stated values and actual behavior can also come from blind spots and from the inevitable tensions between competing values. Be reluctant to assign the label of hypocrite to large numbers of fellow citizens who disagree with you, even when their positions seem contradictory to you. (You seem inconsistent to them.)



## **Part 3: How to Talk about the Other Side in a Non-polarizing Way**

### **Avoid:**

- Using pejorative labels: (“wingnuts,” “bible thumpers,” “libtards,” “snowflakes”)
- Using the phrase “they all” or its equivalent “The Democrats/Republicans.” These are the classic stereotyping phrases.
- Painting all supporters of a politician with the same brush you use for the politician. If you go on a rant about a particular politician, make it clear that you are not putting all supporters into the same box. (“I’m talking about (so and so) right, and not everyone who voted for him/her.”)

### **Criticize the idea or the policy, not the motives of everyone who holds it.**

	<b>Say This</b>	<b>Not This</b>
<b>Blue Example</b>	“Climate change denial is the riskiest idea I’ve seen in my lifetime because we’re running out of time to prevent lasting damage to the planet.”	“Climate change deniers care more about the fossil fuel industry than about the planet.”
<b>Red Example</b>	“Climate science is uncertain enough that I don’t think we should start overhauling our way of life”	“Climate change supporters have a liberal agenda to over-regulate the economy and tax us to death.”

### **Criticize your own side too.**

- “We are losing that group because we haven’t listened to them very well.”
- “Sometimes our leaders talk as if they have the final answer to (a complex problem), and I don’t think they do.”

### **Say something positive about the other side.**

- “I read a liberal/conservative commentator who said something interesting about this.....”
- “I think their criticism has some validity even if I don’t agree with their solution.”

### **Try this “eavesdropper” thought experiment**

Ask yourself, “How would a rational and well-intentioned member of the other group feel when listening to you describe their side?”

- Respected (even if strongly disagreed with) or disrespected
- Understood (at least partly) or grossly misrepresented

## **Part 4: LAPP Skills for Depolarizing Conversations with Like-Minded People**

LAPP stands for **L**isten, **A**cknowledge, **P**ivot, and **P**erspective.

### **Listen**

Listen for the other person's values and emotions that are influencing the stereotyping, ridicule or contempt. Often it's from frustration, fear, worry for the country or groups in the country, or personal experiences of being put down by people on the other side. When there are strong emotions, there's a deeper story there.

### **Acknowledge**

Acknowledge what you are hearing.

- "I'm sorry you've had to deal with those put downs in your family."
- "I hear you and I'm with you on your concerns about...."

### **Pivot**

A pivot is used to signal a shift in the conversation. Offer a context for why you are introducing another perspective into the conversation. Be personal here, and use "I-statements"

- "I've become so worried about our country's polarization that I've started to try to understand the other side better. I'd like to share some of my thoughts with you."
- "I'm with you on being very concerned about what's going on. Can I throw in another perspective?"
- "Since taking a Braver Angel workshop, I've been learning more about how (reds/blues) are thinking about these issues." [Wait to see if there is any curiosity from the other person, either verbally or nonverbally. If confronted with silence, then advance to, "Want hear about this?"]

### **Perspective**

Offer a depolarizing viewpoint. Here are **five** kinds of perspective comments:

**More Varied** - They don't all think the same way. "I've been learning that not everyone on the other side thinks that...."

**More Complicated** - It's more complicated. "I see more complexity in why some people support/oppose that idea. It's not just because they are uninformed."

**Different Backgrounds** - They are coming at this from different backgrounds and experiences. "It's easy for me to judge them for supporting \_\_\_\_\_ but I'm aware that I've not been in their shoes."

**Humility** - Our side hasn't been perfect on this matter. "I don't agree with them on this, but our side has ignored the problem for too long."

**Not Useful** - It's not useful to dismiss them. "They put us down and we put them down. And nothing's working in this country. I've come to the conclusion that we're going to have to understand and respect each more if we're going to solve our country's problems."

**NOTE:** Expect a pushback ("Yes, but" or "Wait a minute. Are you defending...?"). Use the LAPP Skills to respond.

## **Part 5: Practice Depolarizing Skills**

Now we're going to try and use these LAPP skills when someone pushes back in a conversation. Let's say you've tried to Listen, Acknowledge, Pivot, and share your Perspective. They're pushing back with "Yes, but. . ." or "Wait a minute are you defending. .?" We are going to use the following **Polarizing Statements** for the Listen/Acknowledge Practice.

### **BLUE Polarizer**

Conservatives say they are for limited government but what they really want is for the rich to get richer, and the best way to do that is to take from the poor and working class people. They believe in a society of winners and losers, with the winners deserving most of the pie and the losers being blamed for their own misfortune—even though the winners usually start out with lots of advantages. Reds are basically heartless about the poor and would strip away the social safety net if they could get away with it. What amazes me is how many Americans get duped by this conservative approach to government.

### **RED Polarizer**

Liberals say they want the federal government to provide opportunities for people on the margins, but they are hypocrites. They know that these welfare programs trap millions of people into dependency on the government. What that means is more votes for their party, and the government gets bigger and bigger. Blues want to create a society where everyone gets the same outcomes in life no matter how much effort they put into their own success. When they talk about equality, that's what they mean. Put the blues in charge and they will crush personal initiative and ruin the economy. What amazes me is how many Americans get duped by this liberal approach to government.

**For Pivot & Perspective practice:** "I'm glad you agree with me about this. I'm really worried about the future of the country if these people ever get to control all of the federal government. Most of them would follow their terrible leaders off a cliff!"

### **The basic steps to think about in this situation are to connect, share, and reassure.**

1. Connect with what they're saying by listening and acknowledging, (the L & A in our LAPP skills).  
*Ex: "I hear how important immigration reform is to you and how personally it affects your family."*
2. Share an additional perspective (the final P in LAPP).  
*Ex: "I don't agree on some of what their side has done but our side hasn't solved the problem yet either."*
3. This person is worried that your non-polarizing words mean you no longer share their values. So, reassure them before you go further in the conversation. Reassure them you're still with them in your core political values and beliefs. When a like-minded person senses you're continuing to come back with this "new" perspective you've developed, the conversation can turn into the other person thinking you are being a traitor. ("Hey are you actually defending what those people are doing?")  
*Ex: "I'm still a conservative/liberal but I've come to realize we don't always come up with solutions for all these problems either." Then you can try to return to a perspective statement like this one: "It's just that I don't think that demonizing the other side is helping anyone."*

## Exit

If you've repeated your LAPP skills a couple of times and the other person keeps pushing back with no softening, it's usually best to exit the conversation gracefully, or change the topic.

- "I'm just giving you some idea of where I'm coming from. We don't have to agree. Maybe we should just move on."
- "These are tough issues. I'm going to take a break and get a cup of coffee."

## **Part 6: Final Thoughts: A Long-Term Perspective on Being a Depolarizer**

1. Being a depolarizer is not just being high-minded. It's also being pragmatic about the future. Many of our differences today have been around in some form since the founding of the country—and they are not going to disappear. Our current whipsaw approach to polarized policy-making leads to undoing each side's policies every 4 years. The result is paralysis, and cynicism about government.

Quoting a Braver Angels workshop participant, "Neither side is going to vanquish the other, so we better figure out how to get along and run the country together."

2. Your depolarizing influence in your social circles is apt to occur over time. It will not necessarily come in any individual conversation or with every individual. If you come across as genuine and use your skills, people will remember what you said and think about it.
3. A long-term goal could be to be capable of explaining the other side's views in such a way that they would say, "You got it." This requires reading, listening, and suspending disbelief long enough to understand the worldviews and policy views of people you differ with. That's why it's a long-term goal for those who decide to embrace it.
4. If you really want to take a road less traveled, practice identifying your inner conservative side if you are a liberal, or your inner liberal side if you are a conservative. Make sure you see these as positive aspects of you, for example, the committed traditionalist in some areas for a liberal or the openness-to-rapid-change for a conservative. The lesson: The "Other" resides in me as part of what I value about myself.

## Appendix A

### GENERAL RESOURCES

#### Books:

- Jonathan Haidt, [The Righteous Mind: Why Good People are Divided by Politics and Religion](#). New York: Vintage, 2008. Psychologist looking at the moral intuitions of liberals and conservatives.
- Thomas Sowell. [Conflict of Visions: Ideological Origins of Political Struggles](#). Basic Books, 2007.
- David Blankenhorn. [In Search of Braver Angels](#). Braver Angels, 2022. A collection of essays by the founder of BA.
- Mónica Guzmán, [I Never Thought of It That Way: How to Have Fearless Curious Conversations in Dangerously Divided Times](#). BenBella Books, Inc, 2022.
- Updated list on [Braver Angels Library: Bridging Divides](#)

#### News Sources

- [Allsides](#) assesses the political bias of prominent media outlets, and presents different versions of similar news stories from sources of the political spectrum in a mission to show readers news outside their filter bubble.
- [Ground News](#) Top stories from around you and around the world. Compare headlines across the political spectrum using media bias ratings driven by data.
- [1440](#) a comprehensive daily newsletter, edited to be unbiased as humanly possible.
- [Theflipside.io](#) Sends a daily email of curated news articles from left, center, and right that have been vetted for newsworthiness to "burst your media bubble."
- [Tangle](#) an independent, non-partisan politics newsletter that summarizes the best arguments from across the political spectrum on the news of the day.

### UNDERSTANDING THE OTHER SIDE

#### LIBERALISM

##### Books:

- Helena Rosenblatt, [The Lost History of Liberalism](#). Princeton Press, 2018.

##### Magazines:

- [The New Republic](#)
- [Nation](#)
- [The Atlantic](#)

##### Voices:

- [Heather Cox Richardson](#)
- New York Times:
  - [Ezra Klein](#)
  - [Nicholas Kristof](#)
  - [Thomas Friedman](#)
  - [Jane Coaston: The Argument](#)
- Washington Post:
  - [Richard Cohen](#)
  - [Eugene Robinson](#)

##### Party Platform:

- [Democratic Party](#)
- [Democratic Socialist Party](#)
- [Green Party](#)

#### CONSERVATISM

##### Books:

- Arthur C. Brooks, [The Conservative Heart: How to Build a Fairer, Happier, and More Prosperous America](#). Broadside Books, 2017.

##### Magazines:

- [The National Review](#)
- [The Federalist](#)
- [Reason](#)

##### Voices:

- [Glenn Loury](#)
- New York Times:
  - [David Brooks](#)
  - [Bret Stephens](#)
  - [Ross Douthat](#)
- Washington Post:
  - [Ramesh Ponnuru](#)
  - [Megan McArdle](#)
  - [George Will](#)

##### Party Platform:

- [Republican Party](#)
- [Conservative Party](#)
- [Libertarian Part](#)





**Debates.** Please consider attending a national or local debate. Braver Angels debates use a special parliamentary format that encourages everyone to participate by speaking or asking questions. We tackle challenging topics that matter. Debate participants gain a deeper understanding of other points of view, a better sense of common ground, and a renewed confidence that we actually can talk about controversial topics respectfully.

For a list of upcoming debates, visit:

<https://braverangels.org/what-we-do/debates>

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**Workshops.** There are also many other workshops in the Braver Angels catalog. Each workshop extends your skills in depolarization. We encourage you to experience the full set.

Take another workshop - <https://braverangels.org/what-we-do/#workshops>



**Podcasts.** Finally, there is an extensive amount of Braver Angels material in video and audio/podcast form - including a YouTube channel and podcasts on Apple, Spotify and other major streaming platforms. Check it out - we are sure that you will find an interesting topic for exploration.

Braver Angels videos and podcasts - <https://braverangels.org/media/>

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### **Become a member!**

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Join Braver Angels today - <https://braverangels.org/support-us>

