

Kay Pranis: The Art of Holding Circle by Awakin Call Editors

Kay Pranis learned about peacemaking circles through her work in restorative justice in the mid-1990s. Her initial teachers were First Nations people of Yukon. Since her initial "accidental" exposure to indigenous people's use of peacemaking circles, the circle has become the center of all of Kay's work: "The circle became a way for me to see how humans can live more successfully with each other and the natural world, balancing group and individual needs and gifts," Kay says. "The circle became a way to move to a kind of world that I want to live in." What follows is the edited transcript of an Awakin Call interview with Kay Pranis and moderator Molly Rowan Leach founder of Restorative Justice on the Rise, which she started as a response to her own witnessing up close and in person, the devastating effects of the punitive justice system. You can read or listen to the full version of the interview [here](#).

Molly Rowan (moderator): Can you share what the seven core assumptions are?

Kay Pranis: The seven core assumptions are a set of beliefs. When Carolyn and I were writing "Heart of Hope" we decided that it should be clear to our readers that they knew where we were coming from—where we set our fundamental beliefs of our practice and the way of using circle.

So the first assumption is that the true self in everyone is good, wise and powerful. Circle is very rooted in the idea that every one of us is born with a fundamental inclination to be in good relationship with others and that it is genetic because we've evolved in community and so our genes have to carry the information for how to be successful in community. We are born with powerful impulse to be in good relationship with others and that we are also born with knowledge of what it takes to be in good relationship with others. We talk about that as the true self, the core self or the best self in everyone that is good, wise and powerful. This assumption is that, no matter what happens to you or what you do; goodness is still there, though it might be deeply buried.

The second assumption is that the world is profoundly inter-connected. This is one of the most important things that I came to understand more clearly working with Indigenous people. This understanding of everything as inter-connected that you CANNOT disconnect. It's not possible in the nature of the universe. Once we understand that, it has huge implications for everything that we do, because then we understand that everything we put out also comes back to us through all of connection.

The third one is the truth that all human beings have a deep desire to be in a good relationship. That is a part of human nature.

The fourth is that all humans have gifts. Everyone is needed for what they bring. That we are all needed and not just humans, but every other aspect of the universe brings its gift.

Everything has a purpose and a role.

Fifth assumption—everything we need to make positive change is already here. We have it. We have the wisdom ourselves. We have the knowledge. We can find ways to access that together.

Sixth, Human beings are holistic. You just cannot work with the mind, or just with the body. Human beings have these other aspects; the emotional side and the spiritual side. They are always there and when we are not being paid attention to, they always impact us sideways and we don't really understand what's going on. Then we have to work with the whole human being.

The seventh assumption is the idea that in order to live from this core self that represents the best in us, we have to practice. Practices are really important and circle is a practice. If you don't practice it, it's harder than to use it when you need it. All of these things build on each other and can become habits of how you show up in the world—but only if you practice. Those are the seven assumptions.

It's interesting because, when we first wrote the book "Heart of Hope", we just tried to frame what was in it and then we discovered that a lot of people took those seven core assumptions and adapted them. I know someone who has created laminated sheets and puts them in the center of every circle. And another person created training exercise where they put people into seven small groups and each one is assigned a core assumption and each group does a little circle to deepen their thinking about that particular assumption and then they come back and present to the whole group. So it's been interesting to watch something we put out there, and see how other people have grown and adjusted it.

Molly: In your extraordinary journey, one of the people that you have worked with very closely is Howard Zehr, a criminologist and is considered to be a pioneer of the modern concept of restorative justice. He is the author of "Changing Lenses: Restorative Justice for Our Times". I wonder if you could share with us what it means to see life from a lens, in particular to the values that you just described. How do we walk in our lives, individually as well as in the system, from the lens of a circle?

Kay: Basically your lens is your paradigm—your mental model for what's true about the nature of the universe. All my work represents a very, very deep shift in paradigm in world view, in the assumptions we are speaking about; the very nature of the universe and therefore our own nature as well. So for me it colors and shapes everything—in having gotten into this work and having the opportunity to practice very frequently being in circle and thinking about interconnection. It just keeps evolving for me in terms of my own depth of understanding, my own sense of what this means for me. I think it's about how we build our social institutions, how we operate those social institutions. The implications of this work are for profound change and all of the structural relationship we have of these social institutions. Because, if we take those seven core assumptions, sadly those are not core assumptions of our institutions. That includes families and faith communities, social services, schools and the justice system. As usual, there are always exceptions.

So that's the lens. Those assumptions describe the lens through which you are making decisions everyday about what you do and don't do and how you see others, how you relate to others and the judgments that you make about yourself and others. I think that's why this work turned out to be even more challenging than people

thought at the beginning. The shift it represents is much deeper than many of us originally understood.

Molly: Would you share what you have seen in your processes with people across the country and how they might be having epiphanies of shifting from this paradigm of isolation and retribution to one of interconnection and resolution?

Kay: I led a training recently, where there was high consciousness in the room around racial equity. An African American man, who has gone through a lot of diversity work, was clearly immersed in that work and very knowledgeable about approaches. As we went through the three day training, it was just amazing to watch how something that had been troubling him in the diversity work shifted and things fell into place in a way that's going to be transformative for him.

For example, we were talking about the importance of stories. That storytelling is a source of wisdom in circle process. It's not about advice, nor about our usual intellectual rigor. Not that you can't bring that, you can, but ultimately the knowledge in the circle comes primarily as a story from our own lived experience. We were describing how storytelling is an important component of the circle process. This gentleman mentioned above raised the question that he was really concerned about storytelling. And I realized that he was kind of challenging the idea of storytelling—that in his experience in diversity work, the storytelling is sometimes used as a bludgeon. The story is used to beat up, in this case, white people. The question becomes how you tell that story, how you hold yourself up in relation to the person you are offering that story to or pushing that story on. So I said, "Oh yes! absolutely—it's not a free for all, where everybody just puts their story out in a way that might be inducing huge shame and paralysis in the listener."

What you do in circle is you first establish a value-based container, then you want the truth to be told and that truth might be extremely painful around these stories of harm. But they are going to be told in a value-based container, in a way that's not about shame and blame yet it is about a deep understanding and sitting with the truth before we try to figure out how we go forward. And so there were pieces like that, where he had been doing diversity work and feeling like we were not getting where we want to be, although deeply well intended and people working very hard at it. I used the term that I learned from Brenda Morrison called 'ontological security', which she defines as knowing who you are and where you belong, and so the conversation about the story-telling and that term ontological security, gave, for him, exactly what he needed to be doing the diversity work that he wants to do, without it escalating to shame and therefore distance, because out of shame comes distance.

It was a thrill for me to watch the material that I have been working with become pieces that helped him put together some things that weren't quite fitting for him. He wasn't really satisfied with the way a lot of the diversity work was happening and that he had found the missing piece! And I watched all of that click. Interestingly enough, we had somebody in the training who was saying, "I could see why it's really good for people to share their feelings and to talk about these things, but it wouldn't be a good way to make decisions right?" "Yes," I said, because decisions have to be made in this logical, linear way. It's just that we have this idea that it is the only way the decisions could be made is linear. But that in fact is not the reality. When you sit in this space, it increases the capacity to make decisions. So I am watching people take ideas that are surfacing in the space and begin to fit them into their own work and lives and break out of something that felt like a straight jacket to them. That's really what I saw with this guy, it gave him a way to break out of his straight jacket, in terms of certain

aspects of his work that didn't feel good.

Molly: What you just described reminds me of a process with indigenous people and wisdom, and that's the process of holding the story and the nonlinear decision making. That sets into part of our theme: creating safe spaces and what it means and of course learning and growing into not knowing. Would you share your own understanding and meaning of not knowing and how this might support a safe space and what it means?

Kay: The importance of not knowing has really intensified in the last couple of years. In order for collective wisdom to emerge you need to enter not knowing the answer. Because, as soon as anyone of us thinks we know the answer, we will try to drive the process in the direction of the answer even with the best of intentions, absolutely the best of the intentions. If we have the answer we think this is what needs to happen, this will be good. We exist in a culture where our status and our sense of worth, our deep sense of worthiness to be are tied to knowing. We have been told since we were young that to know is good. And that to know more is better. To know is to be valued, to be worthy, to be paid well, and to have power. We have so much identity in this culture; it is tied to knowing, having answers. Yet these processes, especially circles, ask us to not know. That's so, so deeply counter-cultural.

The wonderful thing is that, if we can get there, it's a huge relief—it is like freedom. We have to release so much social conditioning to begin to open up. The words that help me think about not knowing are curiosity and wonder. I often use a quote, and I am not certain who wrote it but that person describes wonder as not knowing, experienced as pleasure. I think these ideas of curiosity and wonder are what we are aiming for.

But I think it is important to understand, because those are positive frames and to understand that we are asking for that at a level that's way beyond what has been culturally acceptable in the past. That opens the space for that which cannot be predicted to emerge out of the collective.

I have no idea how this happens. I do not understand at all how this happens, but I have seen it happen so much that I have a lot of confidence in human collective wisdom, where the space is safe enough for people to be readily speaking their deeper truth. So that depends upon this, that to be able to access collective wisdom depends very heavily on being able to create safe space. Safe enough for people to not know and not feel stupid, right? That's the problem, to not know has been equated to being stupid and we have to undo that hook. There are very specific things that are part of the circle process that contribute to creating that kind of safe space. As it gets safer, and as a facilitator you are safer too, and you can release control and let the group take responsibility for itself and allow it to work through some really uncomfortable things. And that is very deliberate. Beginning with an opening ceremony is a very important part of safe space.

The geometry of circles is for human beings, what the "V" is to geese for flying. That particular alignment helps them to fly farther and faster and circle is the equivalent geometry for human beings. I think for a number of reasons. One is the sense of connection and common focus. Another is the equality as there is just no head to a circle. Equality is really implicit in the process. The other thing that is very powerful that I became aware of is the accountability in a circle that you don't have in other ways of people arranging themselves. There is also a tremendous sense of support because circle geometrically is the strongest form in terms of forces on the perimeter. So that helps to create the safety as well.

Before we talk about any difficult issue we spend time talking about what are the values we want bring to circle? Basically it's a way of helping people remember who they want to be in their best self before they want do any work together. That's enormous in helping to begin to increase the safety in a group of people. And again before getting into any difficult issues that we may want to discuss, we spend time in sharing stories from our lives that help us to see ourselves in one another. That also helps with empathy. Even though we might think that the person we are in conflict with has nothing in common with us, if we share stories about being an adolescent and feeling like we didn't fit in, that will completely change my sense of that other person. The number of elements in the process that are continually trying to deepen the sense of safety, so that people can just be who they are, and the circle has a lot of faith in people at their authentic self-level. If we can be authentic with one another, we can always figure out how to move forward constructively. We cannot necessarily undo harm that happened, but we can move toward healing and toward being more constructive with one another. We can be authentic in a space that's grounded in these values of whom we want to be when we are at our best.

Molly: Would you describe your meaning of deep listening?

Kay: Deep listening is one of the major characteristics that circle process supports. The talking pieces are a really big part of that. It is being able to regulate the dialogue. The piece goes in order around the circle and only the person holding the talking piece speaks. That is the basic characteristic of this process that I use. I feel that it engenders a deeper listening without people thinking or talking about it. This pretty much happens organically. Once the group gets accustomed to the idea that they won't be interrupted and they realize that they are not going to be speaking right away and so they don't need to be thinking about what they are going to say is big. The things that distract us from deep listening are our concern about what are we going to say as soon as that person stops speaking, right? That could be something we urgently want to put out there or it could be just something as small as thinking, "Oh dear, I am expected to respond. What am I going say when that person stops talking?" When people get a sense that they don't have to respond immediately they can let go of these things that are popping through their head. Then they are much more able to put their energy into the listening.

I also find that the physicality of the talking piece is important. People tend to look at the person who is holding the talking piece, sometimes looking at it in their hands, and that creates, I think, sort of energetic alignment that impacts the way we listen. It's like the lines of energy go from each person in the circle to the one who is holding the talking piece. Because you can't speak without it, that energy is listening energy. And because you know that when you get it, you get to say whatever you want to say, you can take the time to put your words together. When the talking piece comes to you then you are less distracted by your own thoughts. The talking piece quiets people down internally which allows them to listen more deeply to one another.

One of the techniques of the circle is helping people to release the other stuff and helping people to focus just on whatever it is that the circle is about. All of these things contribute to deep listening—particularly that the sense of respect that is created in the circle. When people feel they are deeply heard, they are more willing to deeply listen. So deep listening is really listening with your heart and mind open—it's listening from this place of not knowing where it goes next. Wonder and curiosity, and open mind and open heart, and there is a lot in the structure of circle that helps us to do that. I listen better in a circle than I do outside of circle. But then, the amount of time I spend in circle has

helped me listen better outside of circle. Sometimes I am conscious of reminding myself to just wait till it's my turn.

Molly: Your book "Circle Forward" is focused on the circle process in schools; circle for staff, circle with parents and obviously circle with students. Both you and Carolyn Boyes-Watson are working with concerned youth in our schools. How might it be telling us something about the collective desire to change our system and what are you seeing?

Kay: In the last eighteen months, we have seen an amazing shift in schools. Everybody claimed that they adopted zero tolerance and now zero tolerance has become embarrassing, whereas, for two decades it had been waved like a flag of pride. It was the School-to-Prison Pipeline movement, Dignity in School campaign, a lot of organizing by young people in various places, along with the work of Michelle Alexander around racial disparities that crescendoed to a point that it became embarrassing to all the major cities. The data around disparities and discipline and the terminology like the School-to-Prison Pipeline was so visceral. That movement finally gained significant traction. But what was amazing to me was how quickly it shifted from the schools using suspension with no sense of responsibility or accountability to the major cities suddenly telling the schools in their system that they had to reduce suspensions and in some cases telling them they couldn't use suspension anymore at all. The problem now is a widely expressed desire to reduce suspensions yet there are very little skills in our school about what they do instead. You can't ignore behavior that's causing harm to other students or to the classroom as a whole, but kicking kids out is often not the solution. And so we sit in a place where there is a great deal of talk about restorative practices in school and a great deal of interest and a lot of places where people have no idea what that actually mean. So we are hoping that the book will help fill that gap for the people who really want to do the right thing but don't really know how. It's a long road back, rebuilding those skills, the work coming out of the Restorative Justice Movement is essential,

Molly: I read in "Heart of Hope" that you offer different applications of circles. I was really struck by the resiliency circle. Would you talk about that?

Kay: The resiliency circle helps us to shift from our constant deficit analysis into a more strength based approach. So it's a very, very critical part of us moving forward in our social sciences or social work. This culture is very problem focused and there is a constant analysis of problems and what a lot of people now believe is that this is actually energy draining and what you want to be doing is not constantly talking about the problem but actually talking about where you want to be and how do we get there from wherever we are. I'm not talking about putting on rose colored glasses. And deep honesty about where you are is important but then we don't spend a lot of time in analysis. And resilience, recognizing strength, recognizing good things that can come out of that experience is one of the most important aspects of shifting from deficit analysis into strength based work. Everybody who is alive has resilience. We don't need to be defined by our trauma, we can look for what is it that has allowed us to survive this long and be who we are. Even the person, who is messing up a lot, is not messing up all the time. You want to look at the places where you are not messing up. So in a circle like that you ask people to talk about times in their lives when they made lemonade out of lemons. Times, when something was really difficult, and it made them stronger in some ways. This is where you start accessing your own wisdom. People start looking at their own stories where they have been strong in the face of difficulty, where they have survived from a situation where you think, "How does anybody even get up every day?"

That's where the wisdom lies—it lies in our own lived experience, particularly around our strengths and what gets us through.

Molly: Before we open the lines for questions is there anything you would like to add to our conversation?

Kay: Let's go to the questions—I'm interested in hearing the other voices.

Molly: Okay! Great! It's just been wonderful and an honor to be with you and I'm going to hand it over to Preeta.

Preeta Bansal: Our first caller asks how do you get a community to come together to sit in practice? And what kind of preparatory work you do before the circle?

Kay: Well, it's very contextual. If it is not too familiar with people they may be a little leery and sometimes it's a little difficult to get started. It is sometimes easier to get started with the circle in a crisis. For example, a number of years ago, there was a neighborhood in Minneapolis that experienced armed robbery of local businesses that was unusual in that neighborhood. So around that crisis, it's was easy to get people to come to talk about safety in their neighborhood. We put them in circles so that they could experience that and know what it was and thought about how the process could be useful to us as a community. So sometimes it's around a crisis that you get opportunity.

This is happening right now around police. In one of the trainings that I did recently, one of the participants of the force was an African American woman. Within the training, she decided to design a circle for new recruits in the training of new police officers. She had them sit in a circle with community members so they would start building better relationships with community persons. I'm now running into this at different places, where police are willing to come into circles within their communities. They are desperate to rebuild relationships and trust. We often say to people, if you can, for instance in schools and in families, we say try to do positive circles first. Circles around birthdays or graduations so that people experience the process and get to understand what it means to sit in circle and how it works, without it being high tension and/or high conflict. Like I said, sometimes the opportunity is around crisis, but if you can, you want to introduce circle to people, around a positive celebratory kind of event and have them experience what it's like to sit in the space.

If you are using circle for difficult circumstance, typically you will have to do some preparation of people beforehand. If you have two sides that you want to bring together to have dialogue in circle, the best approach is to have separate circles first, so that those sides experience and get familiar with circle process in a safe space with the people they trust and also get some clarity about what their actual concerns are with the other group and then bring the two groups together. It is very important to think about what you have to do to help make it safe when they come together.

Aryae (a caller) from Half Moon Bay: As someone who has been involved in convening circles in some of my own communities, I really appreciate hearing from you and what you've been doing with some very difficult situations. Would you share your story—about how you were led to do this work?

Kay: My journey to this work is completely accidental in the sense of any conscious intention on my part. It's why I've learned to really trust not knowing, because

it has worked so well for me. I have a university education, but it has nothing to do with the work that I do. I was married young and I stayed home raising my 3 kids for sixteen years. My kids are very close together in age and as they were entering high school it dawned on me that they were going to leave 1, 2, 3 really quickly, one after another. I thought I have to build some other center in my life. While I was raising my children I was very involved in my community and served on local school boards. I did a lot of work on school reform in the 80's.

All the volunteer work that I had been doing didn't give me credit for anything so I had a really hard time finding a job. I was only looking for jobs that were meaningful to me. I finally got an opportunity to work for an agency in Minneapolis involved with criminal justice work. I knew absolutely nothing about the criminal justice system. But the man who was the head of the agency was the husband of the superintendent in the school district where I had been on the board. He knew I was intelligent and he trusted me to work with his board members, which this particular job required. I started there part-time and it quickly grew to a full-time position.

In 1989 I had seen a pamphlet on restorative justice by Howard Zehr and Dan Van Ness that resonated to my own sense of the world. There was also an article that I read by Kay Harris, "Peacemaking: my vision of feminist justice", and that also resonated with me. So I read everything I could get my hands on about restorative justice and began weaving those ideas into the work that I was doing, because my job was about advocating good public policy in the justice system. When the Department of Corrections in Minnesota created a full-time position in 1994 I went there. It was in that job that I learned about sentencing circles in Canada and of all the restorative practices taking place. It was the sentencing circle process that most deeply captured my spirit.

Aryae: Well, what a great example of the power and wisdom of showing up without knowing!

Kay: That's how it turns out. I don't understand myself how I ended up where I am. I don't understand often, the impact that the work I am doing seems to have. I don't think I work alone. I've become convinced that there is some kind of energy forces that find me as a useful channel. From the beginning, I was like, "It could be gone tomorrow."

This is not something that is in my control and I want to just keep showing up and hoping that I can continue to be useful to whatever those forces are that are operating through me.

Aryae: Do you have an inner spiritual practice other than the circle practice for tuning into those forces?

Kay: I've been inspired over the years by a lot of native practice, but I don't subscribe in a structured way. I've also been inspired by Buddhist writing particularly western Buddhist writers. The writings, about interconnectedness and sitting with the question rather than looking for the answer, resonates with me. My sense is that profound interconnectedness, that which is bigger than me I'm a part of and we bow to each other. I don't bow to something above.

I was raised Catholic and have rejected that as a very young adult. I decided that the purpose of life was to love and be loved and that was sufficient to motivate the right kind of behavior. Beyond that, I didn't know and I was okay with that. I thought I was an atheist or an agnostic. I didn't know which because I didn't know the

difference and I didn't bother to look it up. Then I was raising my children and I began to feel that spirituality was important. I couldn't tell you what it was. And then when I got into this work it was very clear to me that spirituality has meaning to me, but it doesn't fit into any particular structure or discipline.

Preeta: This question came from our live stream—from Sebastopol, California, who said she is a restorative practice educator, trainer and training designer. Do you have examples of working with some conservative religious communities that may be turned off by some of the Native ceremonial activities? And are there ways in which you communicate with different communities about the practice?

Kay: Yes! I was trained by First Nations People who always opened with smudging; burning of sage. But as soon as I began to practice, I knew that it was not something I could do in most places. I loved it myself—but it would not be appropriate in most of the places I would train. First of all I could be seen as copying another culture or secondly, I could be seen as imposing another faith system. So I thought about what was it that we were trying to achieve with the ceremony? What is the ceremony about? It's about cleansing, it's about the pause, it's about orienting toward the positive, taking deep breaths to let go and release the unrelated tensions and then I began to think about what other things I could do. I think it's absolutely essential that you perform an opening ceremony. It's absolutely essential that you not throw up barriers to people with what you do as an opening ceremony. I began to look for what would work for this group of people. Sometimes it's a little bit of breathing or it could be silence. In training I do an activity called group juggle; it is playful, but definitely achieves all those things I talked about in terms of beginning to connect people, and helping people bring themselves to be fully present and be centered in the space. It releases other distractions. A big part of circle is to slow down—so a few deep breaths, poetry and inspirational readings are very helpful.

If I am working with a conservative religious group, in fact, if I am working with a group that's all from the same religion, I can draw from their religion because that will be the most meaningful to them in terms of achieving those things that you are trying to do with an opening ceremony. The thing is that you really have to pay attention. It's a question of safety. If I am doing something that's uncomfortable for people I am actually making it less safe. That means that I have to do more work in the oracle to try to regain that sense of safety. It's really about designing opening and closing ceremonies. If it's an ongoing group you can involve the group in designing the opening and closing ceremonies.

We have a lot of information at the back of both books, “Heart of Hope” and “Circle Forward” in terms of reading and getting a few activity ideas.

Michelle (caller) from San Jose: I'm very grateful and fascinated by your work! I have been exploring what I call transformational global leadership for a number of years. I'm looking at how we can create alignment at the global level of humanity. I have no clue but just exploring. You said that you are focusing on the community social justice and not just the individual. Do you have any thoughts about taking it to communities of communities and maybe applying this to a global level?

Kay: Exactly. I talk about this as taking it to scale. Because I also talk about circle as much more fundamentally democratic. In the process I use, decisions are made by consensus, which means everybody has to be able to say I can live with it. I see it as much more fundamentally democratic than majority rule. And that it would be wonderful if we could

begin to expand our understanding of democracy and make more decisions like this because, no one can be run over in a consensus decision making process. It's not a question of numbers. So I think often about how to take it to scale. I can see how you do that in a group of 25 people making a decision together. It becomes more difficult when you are talking about a thousand people and some kind of city planning process. Although we are exploring and experimenting with that in some places, how to take this process into public decision making around municipal planning; I am pretty sure that if we keep practicing at the local level, we will figure it out.

One piece for me is that we start practicing this; making decisions in our families, making decisions in our organizations, making decision in our work places, etc. We begin practicing sitting in circle as a way of making sure all voices are included and all the stories are heard and understood at some level in order to understand where people are coming from. As we do this, we will figure out how to take it to scale in a more structured way. In the meantime, the other thing that we are doing is sit in circle, and you practice the social and emotional literacy skills. In the end, the point is not to get good at doing those in circle for the sake of circle; the point is to develop those skills so we can take them out into every other arena of our lives. So that we can listen to the nightly news and try to listen with a more open heart and more open mind. The more we have people sitting in circle, the more we can get people to think in those ways and begin to struggle with the larger global questions—because all of the global questions are also very personal.

The other side of all of this for me that is really challenging is to hold compassion for those who are coming from a different place I see is causing a lot of harm. To be willing to assume that they have the same best self as all these other people that I sit in circle with and that they have a story that would explain. Because I got introduced to this process in the justice system, we were sitting in circle with people who were seen to have caused harm, sometimes a great harm. There is always a story that helps you understand how it came to be. It does not justify doing it, but helps you understand how it came to be. And the same thing we need to begin to apply at the political level. For instance for the people who are very attached to the confederate flag. Can we understand the story of how they came to be attached to that flag? And it's not necessarily the same thing we impute it to waving that flag around. How do we take these seven core assumptions in our thinking and begin to project something different than we have. Generally, certainly for myself in the past, for people who politically disagree with me, and try to look for the story, even when I deeply disagree with the conclusion that people have come to, out of their story.

It's that kind of wrestling with our own demons that I think is going to be necessary. It's very personal and at the same time we need to be talking out loud about it because when we talk out loud, we can take it to another level. We can encourage others who maybe are thinking the same thing but didn't see a way to bring it forward. Then we start to bring those energies together.

Michelle: I can see that this would be really useful to apply at a community of communities' level. If you would be interested in furthering this conversation about how to take it global I would love to be in conversation with you about how to apply it at a global level, how do we contact you?

Kay: My contact information is in the back of "The Little Book of Circle Processes". I am always happy to be connected.

Preeta: Very true to ServiceSpace model; how to shift the world—first start with a small shift within yourself.

Kay: The kind of undertakings that came for me through restorative justice and circle process, I see those same ideas in lots of different movements and it is part of what really excites me. These ideas are not unique to circle. They are very ancient understandings and there are lots of different impulses, and some of them very organized impulses that are happening around the globe, it is, for me, one of the signs that shift is coming. These wonderful ideas are surfacing independently in lots of different places at the same time.

Preeta: How wonderful!

Janelle (a caller) from New York: This is a comment for Kay. I actually came to the same path of not knowing and then my path crossed with yours. We did a lot of foundational work in New York State; sixteen years ago it was looked at with a side eye. You know, like what's going on here. So I just want to say thanks to Kay for helping us to lay a really amazing foundation for the future of juvenile and criminal justice in New York State. A lot of work was done through your influence—so thank you Kay!

Kay: Thank you and so wonderful to hear your voice!

Preeta: As someone who has read several of Kay's books and participated in one of her trainings, I would really encourage all of you and take a look at her rich and varied body of work, not only with respect to restorative justice but also school communities. "The Little Book of Circle Practices", which Kay mentioned is a wonderful primer on how to hold circle. As we wrap up Kay, one question we typically ask our guests is: how can we, as the larger ServiceSpace community, support your work?

Kay: Hmm. You've caught me off guard. I feel so lucky about my work. As it happened so unplanned, I have no plans, and so that's a hard question to answer.

For me it is to do what you can do where you are with these core ideas. I think they emerge from our genes, the really core ideas we are talking about here, I think are in all of us. Part of my understanding is that we all have the wisdom; I have nothing new to teach anybody. But what we lack are the spaces where we can be in touch with our own wisdom and the collective wisdom. I guess the best thing would be to, wherever you can, to just cultivate spaces where you can be in touch with your own wisdom and support the collective wisdom.

Preeta: That's so fantastic. I love everything you said, especially starting with the notion that we have everything we need within us and it's just a matter of tapping into it. You said at the start, the true self in everyone is good, wise and powerful.

Kay: And once we know that, we can relax and we don't need to control others and lots of good things fall from that.

Join this Saturday's Awakin Call with generosity entrepreneur Joserra Gonzalez. RSVP and learn more here.