



Vol 2, #7



Kristine Paronica, JD,
a conflict transformer

The mature mediator creates space for the parties to have difficult conversations, to make choices for themselves, to make mistakes, to learn, to grow, and to have a chance to say what they need to say and hear what they need to hear.

© 2007 Gini Nelson, M.A., J.D.
Trainer
Consultant
Coach

877.992.1900

gn@gnconflictmanagement.com

GINI NELSON'S ENGAGING CONFLICTS TODAY

A CONFLICT TRANSFORMER: KRISTINE PARONICA

Kristine Paronica, J.D., is the Director of the University of North Dakota Conflict Resolution Center (CRC), where she also serves as Adjunct Professor of Law in Alternative Dispute Resolution. She is a Fellow and Administrative Director of the Institute for the Study of Conflict Transformation (ISCT), and a trainer and facilitator of transformative mediation, and conflict management.

Personal Career Path

Gini: Good morning, Kristine. Thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts and experiences with us. What attracted you to the field of conflict management in the first place?

Kristine: I had been practicing as a criminal prosecutor for a few years and was introduced to restorative justice practices in the juvenile justice system. It seemed to make sense at the time. A few years later, I was working as a judicial referee and we were given a pilot project to test mediation in family cases and I took on the role of the mediator and coordinator and I was soon hooked. In a world where no one was ever satisfied with the outcome, never felt heard or understood, and rarely believed that they had voice or choice, this was a great opportunity to really help people. I really feel that this field chose me.

G: If you knew earlier what you know now, would you still have pursued the same career path?

K: That's a tough question. I think I might have – and I always loved my work as a practicing lawyer. If I could go back to school, I'd probably study a combination of psychology, sociology, or religion, and yes, I'd still be in the field of conflict transformation.

G: What is the best advice you have been

given? And what advice would you give a budding conflict specialist?

K: "It's not about you [me]". In other words, trust that people do have the answer within them and, if given the chance, they often can solve their own problems, heal from their inner and interpersonal conflicts, and demonstrate compassion and creativity. When we first start in this field, we often think it's our job to "fix it" or "solve it" or somehow save the day. I believe that the mature mediator creates space for the parties to have difficult conversations, to make choices for themselves, to make mistakes, to learn, to grow, and to have a chance to say what they need to say and hear what they need to hear. They can reconnect to their own sense of self or agency, and find their voice, and feel strong again. They can also move and leap from self-absorption to compassion and understanding. With our ability to hold space, support them where they are, help them without impatience and judgment, transformation happens. What is transformed is often the conflict, and sometimes the parties themselves. And as Lau Tzu has said:

The wise leader does not intervene unnecessarily. The leader's presence is felt, but often the group runs itself. Remember that you are facilitating another person's process. It is not your process. Do not intrude. Do not control. Do not force your own needs and insights into the foreground. A good leader talks little and when his work is done, his aim fulfilled, the people will remark, 'We have done it ourselves!'

Conflict Resolution Heroes

G: Do you have a "conflict resolution hero," and if so, who and why?

K: I'm not sure I do. If I had to choose I'd choose Gandhi and his way of compassionate listening and nonviolent

Helping People Handle Conflict

The pathways the West has taken to resolve global conflict have not been entirely effective. Some deeper thinking about values, differences, meaning, ways of living, worldviews, etc. need to be considered.



communication as the path to peace. He was completely engaged yet never angry or personalizing the conflict.

Thrills and Spills

G: What has been your biggest thrill in being a conflict specialist?

K: Flying in a private jet to mediate a conflict with a construction crew outside in 90+ degree weather. Wow! Seriously, watching a fairly scary guy in a particular mediation shift from "I will make sure these kids hate you for leaving me [to his wife]... to a better place after the 3rd mediation session and about 2 weeks time... "I talked with my mom last weekend and forgave her for divorcing my dad.... I promise that, no matter what, I won't do that to my kids or to you." It was absolutely miraculous and taught me a great lesson. You just CAN'T make that kind of thing happen!

G: What was your biggest mistake?

K: Thinking I knew all the answers

The Biggest Questions

G: What do you think are the big questions to be answered next in the conflict management field?

K: I believe it has to do with global responses to conflict and war – ethno-political conflict. It seems to me that the pathways the West has taken to resolve global conflict have not been entirely effective. Some deeper thinking about values, differences, meaning, ways of living, worldviews, etc. need to be considered. Our normal responses have been based on western values, linear processes, and other methods that may not fit other cultures. However, we may need to listen more closely and deeply to find those answers rather than presenting ourselves as the experts.

G: What is the major ethical issue facing the conflict management field?

K: Understanding and honoring differing perspectives, worldviews, processes, and experiences and co-creating processes that are respectful of all.

G: Any regrets?

K: Not figuring out [my biggest mistake] sooner. Not understanding earlier in my life that it's the journey and not the destination that matters most.

G: Thank you, Kristine.

ENGAGING CONFLICTS ANNOUNCEMENT: *The Negotiator's Fieldbook Series*



I'm starting a new feature in *Engaging Conflicts Today*... a promised series on *The Negotiator's Fieldbook: The Desk Reference for the Experienced Negotiator*, Christopher Honeyman & Andrea Kupfer Schneider, Editors (ABA 2006). It is a highly acclaimed and innovative resource for all conflict specialists, and received the International Institute for Conflict Resolution and Prevention's (CPR) Book Prize Honorable Mention for 2006. Here are the Editors' bios from the book:

Christopher Honeyman is a consultant, mediator and arbitrator based in Madison, Wisconsin and Washington, DC. He has advised firms, nonprofits, government agencies, universities and foundation throughout the U.S. and in other countries on dispute resolution infrastructure issues, quality control and ethics. His specialty is managing interdisciplinary teams of experts to address complex conflict management problems, and he has led a fifteen-year series of large-scale conflict management research and development projects funded by the Hewlett Foundation. He has served as mediator, arbitrator or in other neutral roles in more than 2,000 cases since the 1970's. Honeyman is also author or co-

Helping People Handle Conflict

Part of what makes the book innovative is its limited chapter size, and annotations by the editors to help guide readers to what they are interested in at the time they dip into the book.

author of more than 50 articles and book chapters; many have been republished electronically at www.convenor.com.

Andrea Kupfer Schneider is a Professor of Law at Marquette University Law School. She has published numerous articles on negotiation and international law, and is a co-author of the recently published *Negotiation: Processes for Problem-Solving, Mediation: Practice, Policy & Ethics*, and *Dispute Resolution: Beyond the Adversarial Model* with Carrie Menkel-Meadow, Lela Love & Jean Sternlight. Her previous books include *Coping with International Conflict* and *Beyond Machiavelli: Tools for Coping with Conflict*, both with Roger Fisher. Andrea is also the author of *Creating the Musee d'Orsay: The Politics of Culture in France*. She received her A.B. from Princeton and her J.D. from Harvard Law School. She also received a Diploma from the Academy of European Law in Florence, Italy.

Part of what makes the book innovative is its limited chapter size, and annotations by the editors to help guide readers to what they are interested in at the time they dip into the book. In the series, I'll include the annotations to the chapters together with additional review and comments. I'll publish here, and in the blog (www.EngagingConflicts.com), with more substantive material here in the newsletter.

ECT Correction: John W. Cooley

Through inadvertence, 2 lines were dropped from Jack's interview in Vol 2, #5. The last sentence beginning in the 1st column in the 2nd page should have read:

"It was amazing to recall that Dick was the mediator in some of the most publicized conflicts of the last century — including Wounded Knee, the Kent State Incident, and the Nazi Skokie clash. Of course, Dick didn't sit on his laurels after that. He went numerous times to all parts of Africa teaching mediation to trainers who would then carry the "gospel" of mediation back to their towns and villages."

NEXT IN ENGAGING CONFLICTS TODAY

An interview with Geoff Sharp, a barrister and commercial mediator in Wellington, New Zealand, who publishes *mediator blah...blah...* (<http://mediatorblahblah.blogspot.com/>) His blog, as he says, has "a mix of posts here; a wee bit of reflective practice which is my focus, although I haven't let the facts get in the way of a good story in an effort to protect confidentiality. There's also a little learning and a touch of mediation news." Geoff is the 2007 chair of the NZ Law Society ADR Committee and often speaks on mediation both in NZ and more recently in the United States at the invitation of the American Bar Association.

TIP OR TOOL FOR TODAY

If you don't already know of this site, it's a very quick and easy way to make concrete contributions to several important causes on a regular basis (even daily)...click on the yellow button at The Hunger Site and give a cup of food to the hungry at no cost to you (http://www.thehungersite.com/tpc/ERH_080607_THS). From there, you can quickly click through to the associated Breast Cancer, Child Health, Literacy, Rain-forest, and Animal Rescue sites, and click and give, again, at no cost to you.

QUOTE FOR TODAY

The hottest places in Hell are reserved for those who in time of great moral crises maintain their neutrality.

— Dante Aleghieri



Gini Nelson, M.A., J.D.

Blog: EngagingConflicts.com

©2007 Gini Nelson

gn@gnconflictmanagement.com

877.992.1900

I encourage you to share this newsletter with anyone who is interested in timely and interesting negotiation, mediation and conflict management-related issues. The information in this newsletter may be copied and distributed without charge and without permission, but with appropriate citation to me and the *Engaging Conflicts* blog. A free subscription to the newsletter is available at www.EngagingConflicts.com.