

Unedited, Verbatim **Interview with Arny and Amy Mindell by Michael and Justine Toms.**  
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## **DEMOCRACY AND WAR**

Including a general introduction to process work ideas.

*Most people shy away from conflict and are unwilling to address it directly. In a world where conflict is ever present it behooves us to pay attention to anything that can help us to resolve conflict in new and creative ways in our own lives, our communities, our nation and our world.*

**MICHAEL TOMS:** Working with conflict provides the focus for this edition of Spirit of the Times with our guests **Amy** and **Arny** Mindell. Dr's **Amy** and **Arny** Mindell teach process work worldwide and have extensive experience in world issues and international organizational problems. They are in private practice in Portland, Oregon and they have written numerous books including Deep Democracy of Open Forums, Dreaming While Awake, The Dream makers Apprentice and The Shamans Body.

Welcome to Spirit of the Times, exploring contemporary culture.

Let's talk first about what is process work, as some of our listeners may not be aware of process work per se.

**Amy:** Process Work is a multi faceted, multi leveled approach to working with individuals and working with couples and groups as you were mentioning. We work all the way from working with dreams and bodywork to relationships. We work with people in coma and near death states and with large group conflict work.

It sounds like a lot of different areas, but really all of the areas are tied together by ideas from Taoism, the idea of following nature or what is presenting itself that we are aware of, and what is happening that we are not aware of.

Trying to follow all of those experiences with the belief in the background that they contain an incredible amount of wisdom and solutions to our problems, right in those experiences that we are having.

**MICHAEL TOMS:** One of the things I have always noticed about Process Work is the connection between what I would call the 'leading edge of psychology' and the world of activism, both social, political, that world and making that connection. Can you talk a little bit about that?

**Arny:** Well, we got so excited when we discovered some years back that dreams and body symptoms are intimately connected. That if you have a symptom, that symptom is essentially – if you learn how to work with it, which I will not go into in the moment – it manifests the same information that you get out of working with your dreams, there is a certain meaning and experiences trying to become conscious.

I had a lot of good luck with those early ideas of the Dreambody, and then **Amy** and I started to travel around the world. You know, you write a book and people think that you know what you are talking about! So then people invited us to different countries. I still remember being in South Africa before the revolution, we were talking about dreams and bodywork and people were very excited, but the problems were so severe that I realised "my God I am practicing

individual psychology and I am working with the individual and at most their relationships and family. But the connection with the world – what good is it to work on your symptoms and your dreams if when you go out into your organization or your group or the world and you have all these problems and you get shot?”

It makes it almost meaningless to work on a body symptom if you are getting hurt because of the city situation or the world situation.

It was really some of those deep experiences, also reminding me of my childhood that made me want to connect psychology more and bring its insights into world issues, conflict and organizations.

**JUSTINE TOMS:** I would like your help with getting a picture of it, kind of grappling with it a little more, getting a vision of what you are talking about. Maybe we can go back to the personal. Can you give an example of the connection between dreams and body symptoms and then take it out to a larger example within an organization or community?

**Arny:** OK. I can think of a man who came to see me some years ago in Switzerland when we were working in Switzerland. He was a minister, and he had developed a cancer, a tumor on his heart wall, which was very unusual. They had decided not to operate – he was inoperable. To make the story short, he came to see me and he said, “**Arny** I have this terrible pain just about with every heart beat. It hurts. And if I take more drugs I won't be able to go on with my ministry, I won't be able to go on with anything.”

So I said “Well, what does it feel like?” and he said, “It feels like every time my heart beats there is a sharp knife stabbing me in the chest or in the heart area”.

I said “That is your personal experience of that tumor?” and he said, “Yes, it is like a sharp knife”.

Then I said to him “Oh my God that must be very painful” he said “yes, every time you move the knife is in your chest.” He said then, quite spontaneously “Oh my God that reminds me of a dream that I had a couple of nights ago. I don't normally follow dreams but this one I could not forget because every step that I was taking in the dream there was somebody behind me with a knife pointed to my back going right through my chest! What is that all about?”

I said “Well to know more about the dream, about the man with the knife and to know more about your body experience of having a sharp knife poked into you, you will have to become the knife or talk about the knife!”

Immediately he said, “Wow, if I was a knife I would be sharper and more pointed! Wow, that is just exactly the opposite of what I am normally like. I am normally just sweet and nice and never sharp and pointed. I never get to the point”

“Well” I said, “Get to the point about things!”

And he said “Well that would mean that I would have to be much more direct in my sermons.”

So I said “Well I don't go to church, so I will just take your word for it that your sermons will change”

He went back to his ministry and he was more pointed and more direct and he had to do it because it was a matter of life and death for him.

I tell you this story because it is one of the stories that I would tell to show the point about dreams and body connection and also the point of connecting with his community. Because with his sharpness and more pointed behavior he was able to get to the point and solve problems and be more directive and authoritarian that was something he hadn't been doing. His community loved it and was happy that he was no longer such a mush-ball.

The great thing about it and why it is worth telling, it gives hope, is that he could not be operated on and for some reason that pain went away, and when he went to get an X-ray again his heart problem had been apparently either resolved or had been a mistake. The X-rays turned up normal.

**JUSTINE TOMS:** Of course these sorts of things cannot happen “spontaneously”, but they do, and you are saying that they really are connected.

**Arny:** Yes, and the sharpness that he was experiencing in his dreams and in his body was needed also in his community. No one was being direct about anything, they were all being nice to one another and not ‘shooting straight’ so to speak.

**Amy:** So you are saying that the kinds of symptoms that we have are meant for us personally and we can get a tremendous amount out of them, and at the same time they are related to our entire community and our world, they are intimately connected.

**Arny:** Right, you cannot speak about a symptom as being only yours, it is intimately connected with the needs of the community and the worlds you are involved in.

**MICHAEL TOMS:** That certainly seems very relevant for the times that we are living in. I go back to the tragic events of 9/11 and how that impacted the world-scape that we are all engaged with now, and how there is a feeling among many of the people that I encounter that they are feeling what they are feeling, and others are feeling what they are feeling but somehow it has gone deeper because of the events of the world. What do you see? Would you agree with that observation?

**Arny:** Well, exactly what it is that people are feeling, there are so many different things that people are feeling. Before we even mention that, let me just say that the particular attitude that I have towards world events comes from the worldwork section of process work, one of the sections **Amy** mentioned at the beginning, the large group section.

That is that the worldwork approach that we have, we call that “Deep Democracy” and before I answer any questions I have to really say just a bit about that, may I do that now?

**MICHAEL TOMS:** Of course you can, go ahead.

**Arny:** Worldwork in our opinion is large group work for communities and organizations and open forums and what have you, that is based really upon the idea that working with the social events is terribly important and everyday events is very important, and the issues at hand and the social action and mainstream viewpoints. But it is not enough and we need a more multi-faceted, multi-leveled approach, we need the approach of dreams and the deepest feelings that we have because outer events cannot be resolved alone just by trying to battle the issues out and even finding great ideas and solutions and what have you.

So, when you talk about 9/11 I think at many levels at once, so maybe I should really ask, “Which level would you like to think about first? The outer level of the attack of the United States, or the deep feelings that people are having?”

**MICHAEL TOMS:** I think what I was trying to get at and I probably did not do it clearly enough is that that event has impacted everyone, not only in the US but also around the world. And we are dealing with events that have unfolded because of those events. And at the same time in my personal life this last year 2002, it has been a wild ride, and I connect my wild ride with the wild ride that is going on around me, and the community and the nation and the government and the world. It is that connection of the personal and the planetary.

**\*\* BREAK \*\***

**MICHAEL TOMS:** **Arny’s** book The Deep Democracy of the Open Forums is subtitled Practical Steps to Conflict Prevention and Resolution for the Family, the Workplace and the World, which leads me to having you respond to the point I was making before our **BREAK**.

**Arny:** You were asking about the connections between the planetary situation and the personal one, and there are so many different connections if I start with just the outer reality connection, something big happens in your community or the world and through networking effects and causal connections you are impacted. Everybody is more nervous, people are doing this and that, the military is being excited to get going and people are for and against the war and there is more hectic stuff happening to many of us. So, we are impacted by that.

But at the same time the very concept of the terrorist attacking us, as US citizens I am speaking, itself is another level of experience which we gladly don't think about but rather prefer to project onto the television media, especially, which shows terrorists as if the terrorist is only outside.

We don't realise that every time we look at television and get upset about something it is a 'real' outside event but "I" too am George Bush and "I" too am the terrorist that is being looked for and there is a tension inside of me between the two things. Maybe it is self-criticisms, there are many different aspects to terrorism but it is outer and inner.

**Amy:** I think I often experience that, I think that is what you were referring to Michael in the beginning, that when outer things like this are happening and around I frequently experience maybe a rise in more inner criticism, and another part of me feels put down or 'bombed' in a sense. I can go out into the streets or into my relationships and those two different polarities seem to be heightened sometimes during those strong collective experiences that I am simultaneously experiencing on the personal level.

**Arny:** So even if you wanted to, for example, do something to stop the war, you would have to be careful that your own inner 'bomber' does not take over and you don't just 'bomb' the so-called mainstream media or what have you, that you don't yourself propagate the very thing that you are trying to stop.

**MICHAEL TOMS:** I call it 'getting beyond blame and judgment', does that come close?

**Arny:** well, getting beyond it, and in our way of working we get 'beyond' it by getting into it and admitting it, saying "It is me who is wanting to bomb, blame and get back at, and I have vengeance from different things that I have experienced before and I know that in myself. I try to keep my eye on that and when it happens I say: there it is, the terrorist in me".

This is one of my main points, that you cannot stop war simply by being nicer people, it has just never worked.

I mean, the second world war should have been enough to have awakened most human beings on earth to the problems of murder and dictatorial and tyrannical behavior and what have you, but it does not work because just making rules and laws and stuff like that doesn't change our behavior.

**MICHAEL TOMS:** I think that some of the great teachers said that "Love is a verb", something that has to be lived all the time, it is an act of process; I think that is what you are getting at?

**Arny:** Awareness, we are after awareness, noticing what we do. Love is a very practical thing. Love means loving myself and loving others and loving even the things that most of the time I do not like. Loving them would then shed awareness, shine my flashlight on them, and get deeper into them to understand them.

**JUSTINE TOMS:** So, this is like a no nonsense, "OK Let's get real" sort of activity. It is not an "I wish it were, I wish I could". It's a "Let's look at it, let's really see what is in our nature, not necessarily our 'true' nature, but what is the apparent nature of our reactive ness?"

**MICHAEL TOMS:** I wanted to follow up your awareness comment that you are making **Arny**, that it is important to have awareness, and you quoted Professor Hendricks from CSU that "Democracy without awareness is a form of tyranny", and I think that we can see examples of that all over the world. Where "democracy" is present but it is a tyranny, perhaps with the absence of awareness.

**Arny:** Yes! Democracy is a fabulous, unbelievably wonderful concept of having everyone represented and equal rights and that is definitely an important direction.

But it does not work without awareness because you are just making rules and making it illegal to be this way or that way, it does not stop people from being this way or that way.

**Amy:** It does not raise our awareness of the moment-to-moment way that we interact with one another or put each other down. Are we open and democratic with all the different sides in ourselves, even the one that wants revenge or the one that wants love, it takes it to another level.

**Arny:** That reminds me – I don't think I have ever met a Democrat actually ever. That means somebody who is open to the various sides of themselves. Most people only like one or two sides and the rest they try to put in the garbage can, which does not work.

**MICHAEL TOMS:** I think, I have met the Dalai Lama and I think he might come close.

**Arny:** That's lovely.

**MICHAEL TOMS:** I have encountered many Tibetans who have suffered their country, the loss of over a million of their fellow Tibetans, the destruction of 6000 monasteries or more, yet I have never heard them say a bad word about the Chinese. The closest they come is "Oh the poor Chinese they create bad karma for themselves", that awareness that there is a connection with the 'other' and the other is indeed a reflection of me.

**JUSTINE TOMS:** And their attitude is very real in the world. WE can think "Oh I can think these thoughts, but as long as I don't say them then they are not real", and what you are saying **Amy** and **Arny** is that these have energy and a kind of realness about them. Can you speak about that?

**Arny:** Well the thing that interests me is that the deep democracy idea, the concept that I am angry for example with somebody, it is important but it is only part of the job of awareness. One part of awareness is to notice the literal rank differences between us, where power is shared and where it is not shared, that is the reality level of worldwork. Then there is another level, which is noticing that 'I' am the other, and that all the different roles in the field, the oppressor and the victim and what have you, that they are in me too. Now you are mentioning implicitly the third level of awareness, which we call The Essence Level, which is very characteristic of Tibetan philosophy, religion and thinking, Buddhism, and that is this essence level, a non-dualistic level. This is where in a way you are trying to or are experiencing yourself as being detached in a sense from the events of the world. You have a lot of feeling and love for things but you are not part of the polarization stuff. So, awareness that goes deeply enough gets to the point, the sense that I am not part of the polarities but both of the polarities are in me, you step out of the polar realm.

**MICHAEL TOMS:** Also the detachment from outcomes is clearly a part of that. The idea of entering a context, let's say an open forum, without the idea that we are going to accomplish 'this'. Without that objective it may indeed broaden the possibilities right?

**Amy:** Oh I definitely think so, you can go in with all kinds of agendas which can be fine, but we try at least to be open to the process and the wisdom in the group itself and that is going to guide us in the direction it wants to go.

**MICHAEL TOMS:** What is so amazing about this, and this is why I have such deep appreciation for the work that you two are doing in the world. That it is so simple, and yet it always continues to amaze me that the people that you think should know this simple principle, it simply is not practiced or addressed or considered.

**JUSTINE TOMS:** When Michael says "It" is so simple, let's state the 'it' that is so simple.

**MICHAEL TOMS:** The "it" is that connection, the letting go of an agenda, letting go of a plan and allowing the wisdom of the group dialogue to speak, allowing that to exist. Just that context alone will allow things to come up, what wants to come up will come up, that is the 'it' as I define it.

**Arny:** The 'it' that is so simple I formulate in terms of the concept of just noticing and of awareness. That is such a simple thought unto itself, that if you don't use your awareness you

just take one side of an issue. That is also fine, awareness can jump in as one side, but then notice what is happening on the other side, notice that you are the other side, and go deeper so that you are none of the sides.

It is easy and simple to say, but it is, it is ... we have religions and spiritual traditions based upon awareness, but actually using awareness is the only thing that we think the human race needs to awaken to. It is not changing the parts of ourselves, it is becoming aware and learning to use them better.

I think of an example of using awareness in an open forum, a practical example.

We were working with a group of Native Americans in Canada who were fighting the Canadian government around their rights around logging, and there was a government official who was using his best methods that he knew to help that open forum to happen.

"Who wants to say something now?" "Who is next?", "This person is out of order" etc.

He was not using his noticing or awareness.

We were in that meeting and at a certain moment just as he was about to finish some woman stood up and said, " I have something to say". He said "You are out of order" and there is no debating that she was out of order, but we said "Maybe she has something new to say."

She said, " I don't have anything to say, instead I want to do something" And she went into a partial trance and this Native American woman started to move around, and she started to sing a Native American song and after a few minutes she simply stopped and said "That's all". Everyone was so astounded by what was not on the agenda that people really felt like working together and doing things together, it changed the whole mood.

That is just an example of how the simple act of noticing and allowing something to happen can actually change the whole mood by going down to the dreaming level.

**MICHAEL TOMS:** That reminds me that an act untoward like that points out that often in the practice of democracy it can become undemocratic because it excludes people's feelings and ideas, and they may not have the right to speak, so it closes out certain possibilities right?

**Arny:** Yes, Robert's Rules of Order and democratic procedures are a fabulous program, the intent in the background is important, but it becomes a program which becomes rigid and it becomes another rule – and I love rules especially the ones that are helpful to everybody – but the rule itself marginalizes the deeper experiences that are happening. So real resolution and deep-seated community feelings rarely happen where Robert's Rules or order are at hand.

**Amy:** Seems like the rules can come along and they had a good purpose at first but they can blind us to our original beliefs and ideas that were moving us to create those to begin with, and to get back to those original beliefs and the things that are driving us like Liberty and Freedom and whatever it is, and start from there again would be quite a change I think.

**JUSTINE TOMS:** Michael and I have participated many times in local community government where there will be a hearing and you can speak to the city council and boards of supervisors and what I have noticed happens with Western culture and is different from Indigenous people. In Western culture we are often limited by time. We say that everyone can speak but they can only speak for 2 minutes and they can only speak on this one night, and we will stay three hours.

Or even if they wont stay 3 hours, I have been to meetings that have lasted till midnight so that everyone has their 2 minutes, but there is something to me that skews it when everybody is heard but there is no interplay, there is no building on each other or acknowledging of deep listening to one another. Is there any comment you can make on that?

**Amy:** Justine you remind me of a recent open forum that we did in Portland around the ideas of Democracy. We invited people from the whole city and whoever wanted to come to come and speak about Democracy. Issues about the possible war came up also. Things went along and there was not a lot of dialogue for a while and then this incredible dialogue happened that was very touching.

At one moment a woman who identified herself as a social activist stood up and said that she was furious because she had just been at a protest in downtown Portland against the possibility of war against Iraq. There were I don't know, 500 or a thousand people in that protest and she was furious and she spoke about that.

Then there was a policeman in the room from the city of Portland who very shyly stood up and said, "Well I am a policeman and I was actually there, and I was trying to make some kind of order out of what was happening".

She said "Well you are the person I am really furious with because you guys just stood there and had no relationship with us and you terrify us. You stand there all neutral with your armor and clubs and you are really terrifying." The man started to talk about how this was his job and he had to do that, and we noticed that he had long pauses between his sentences and he was looking down and his voice was very soft.

So we asked him and the group permission to go deeper into that, to go to another level and into his body signals. After a while he said he would like to do that, and he was very quiet and took his time, and he was very slow and he said, "You know, something I have never said before is that I was absolutely terrified. Do you know what it is like to have 500 or 1000 people coming at you and you are supposed to do your job? I was incredibly afraid."

The woman on the other side said, "You are afraid too?"

And he said "Yes, I am afraid and I am also trying to protect the street vendor who is a little person who cannot do his job that day. I am trying to balance all these things and I am just terrified:"

somehow they were able to go deeper and into a deep conversation about that fear and about what they actually shared.

**Arny:** The reason that conversation worked so well on the whole community was that by going into feelings that he had not talked about before, the policeman was saying that he was afraid of the potential violence of the crowd. And they were saying that they were afraid and they were projecting the thing onto the cops, that the cops were violent and terrible.

So Fear was the common ground and the deeper feeling that was almost a non-dual experience, and they suddenly realised that they were not just the police or the protestors but they actually were the same kinds of human beings.

That is what we hope for, the world change that we would like to see happen.

**MICHAEL TOMS:** Arny with your background and graduate degree in Physics, if anything Quantum Physics told us in the 20<sup>th</sup> century is that it is all interconnected. Our institutions are a little bit behind the 8 ball in grasping that reality, and that is part of the problem isn't it?

**Arny:** Yes, Quantum physics came up with the incredible idea about the importance of the invisible world and the mathematics of the invisible world that stands behind what we notice in everyday reality.

Physics itself needed to believe even more deeply, and has its own conflicts about how to interpret this more invisible world in the background.

But it is from physics in part that a lot of my ideas come, that there is this interconnectedness in the background that we need to get to. That it is not just at the surface where the issues are, it is there located in the double signals and the signals that we send out and the deeper feelings that are inside of us.

Just like physics is shy in working through the consciousness that is implicit in its equations, so most of the human race is shy about getting deeper and noticing the deeper dream like feelings that are behind all the different things that we are saying.

**JUSTINE TOMS:** In the introduction to Arny's newest book, The deep Democracy of Open Forums, you mention that what is contained in this book is how to recognize and explore conflict instead of conflicting with conflict and repressing it. That idea of conflicting with conflict, can you speak about what you mean by that?

**Amy:** I think that many of us hope to not have war and not have conflict and I think that just about everybody would like to have peace on earth and in their lives.

But if we are going strongly for peace and going strongly to have no conflict then we are in conflict with those that want conflict, the other side that wants to be involved with conflict. We are not just neutral and peaceful we are actually conflicting with another side.

**Arny:** Yes, instead of helping the sides go deeper and understand them we simply turn against conflicts themselves. That is how everyone participates for example with the threatened war in the middle East, it is how everyone participates with what is going on between India and Pakistan, we simply think that those people are crazy over there. At that moment we don't realise how we conflict with conflict and how we help war to perpetuate itself.

**JUSTINE TOMS:** So, what is the antidote to that?

**Arny:** There is not an antidote, there is a welcoming. I say that we see conflict happening, and we say "Aha! Another thing for my awareness to notice, there is dissention and disagreement".

Let's look at it at its very, very earliest stages, before it has time to even be called a 'conflict' by people, let's examine the differences of opinions between certain things.

With the use of awareness out and out conflict and violence would become less of a situation. That is why we think that the antidote to violence is awareness; it is not just peacefulness because peacefulness can become another attack against war, against conflicting parties.

**JUSTINE TOMS:** Let's say that this can be brought closer to home. Most of us work in organizations; so we are working with other people, so let us bring it into that situation. We are in a meeting and something is happening and someone raises an issue, and I sit there hating that they have brought in that issue and I am being nice but inside I am seething and feeling afraid – you know the scene, you are just being quiet.

So, how can we do it in organization? How can we change the rules so to speak in organizations that we can speak these unspoken things?

**Arny:** First of all it is awareness training that we need to think about as well as learning how to deal with organizations, we need awareness training.

I think of a specific example that came up so well it is easy and fun to talk about, and it is a popular problem today.

There was an organization where the boss stole a whole lot of money. The vice president stole the money and was fired.

So, within this organization people started talking about how bad that vice president was, that is a 'terrible, terrible person'.

So far so good, but then with time this organization started to go down hill and was on the verge of collapsing. They hired us to go over and work with them. We sat together and they started to gossip about the vice president, but for us the vice president is not just a role he is a ghost role – that means that he is something which is present but not represented, he had been fired and was not there.

We asked if it was OK with everyone if we played the vice president to begin with.

They asked us "what would you want to do that for, he was no good?"

I said, "Yeah well he is somehow in the room and we want to show you how he is here but we don't know yet"

So first **Amy** said "I am the thief" and then I got up and helped **Amy** and we both started to speak about being thieves and we wanted something that we were not getting and therefore we were going to take it!

Well, woof! That was the moment and the women in the organization started to say, "Yes! That is exactly what we feeling like all the time, we feel we are not getting something and we are angry and would almost steal it"



One after the other the people came up to where we were standing playing the role of the vice president..

**Amy:** ..They were no longer playing the role, they were speaking from themselves saying, "I really need more, not only money and work, I need more feeling from other people in the organization. No one says hello to me in the morning I would like to steal that from people!"

**Arny:** So to make the story short they then decided that the vice president was a ghost role in their organization, the person who needs more and is not getting it and is on the verge of stealing it. They decided to be nicer to one another at least temporarily till whatever next was going to happen.

That picked their whole organization up and that is an example of how ghost roles and awareness, or just playing it and making it fun – awareness can also be fun, it does not have to be terrible!

**MICHAEL TOMS:** A few years ago we did a series called Deep Ecology for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. One of the things that we learned about Deep Ecology, the basis of deep ecology is that we recognize our connection to the natural world. So if we take that over to Deep Democracy it is like recognizing our connection to the other person, recognizing that we are connected. It is that simple isn't it?

**Amy:** Oh yes, it is incredibly simple.

Every time I talk about a role, George Bush or whoever, knowing that because I am talking about them so much they are actually a part of me that I am not aware of. In some aspect of myself that part of me is there and wanting to be known and wanting to be realised. If I can feel that then I can feel much more connected to the other person and not just polarized.

**MICHAEL TOMS:** This takes me to the next question and point and that is that in order for that recognition to happen we have to engage in dialogue. IS that right?

**Arny:** We have to dialogue and we need awareness when we dialogue. For example, real dialogue is the first step just having folks talking to one another. Then the next step is to go even deeper into the dialogue down to these ghost roles and dreams and things like that. So dialogue is definitely the first step, and deep democracy and deep ecology are intimately connected, I like that you were connecting them before.

**MICHAEL TOMS:** I want to go back to that idea, that what we need are Deep Democracy SWAT teams! Sorry for the metaphor! The idea of bringing a group in that has experience in this area. Like you both are doing now, going into situations where there is conflict and wrestling with it and being courageous and willing enough to step into the middle of the fire.

**JUSTINE TOMS:** Part of it is not being afraid to step into the fire, to not be afraid of how things get stirred up and emotions get up and that sort of thing.

**Amy:** I think that is such a huge topic and I must admit that I get afraid a lot. I am not as brave as I might sound, I get afraid a lot. I try to work on that fear and I think a lot of us feel an incredible amount of fear going into situations that are very hot and tense.

I think for example that if I am very afraid going into a situation – what am I afraid of? Who is it that I am afraid of? Do I know that person in myself?

And getting to the depth of who that person is can help me as a facilitator to go back into that meeting.

**Arny:** It is scary sometimes. **Amy** points out I think that the development of the facilitator is important too. That the facilitator is not just someone who has learned how to do something, but is someone who works on herself or thinks about herself and in a way is modeling the kind of diversity internal and external that she would like to see in the world.

Imagine a facilitator coming into a group and saying "I am nervous I am afraid and I am scared, and there is another part of me that wants to hurt me" that kind of awareness we are looking for.

**JUSTINE TOMS: Amy** I believe you are saying that when you keep thinking about someone, say George Bush, that he keeps coming to mind and I find myself talking about him a lot, that I need to feel in myself that part of myself that is George Bush. Can we go a practical demonstration of someone going inside and feel themselves as someone like George Bush. Let's suppose we are worried about war and decisions being made at the highest level and therefore we project some unease toward that person, how do we bring that into ourselves?

**Amy:** There are a lot of ways of doing that. One way that we sometimes talk about is to first talk about that person, let's say it is George Bush in the moment, talk about him. What exactly is it that is upsetting you?

One person might say "That he is going ahead and doing things without talking to everybody else". We might say, go ahead and think about that.

Can you start to feel like George Bush in yourself?

Can you take a posture and sit how he might sit?

Can you make a movement with your hand that he might make?

Can you feel what it might be like to climb into his shoes in your imagination?

Then we might ask you to do those motions more strongly and ask yourself, in what way you are like this as well.

Finally, you can make the motions again and then do them a little less and a little less and then just do them very slightly till you can feel the very essence that is behind that experience.

For example I might make strong motions that I might go ahead and do something and not listen to anyone else. I can make those strong movement with my arms. Then I make that motion less and less and less until I feel just one little point, my hand jutting out just a little bit, and I feel into that energy and then feel what is that expressing.

I am imagining doing it right now, and I make this little motion of intensity, and I feel like something very centered and very firm that does not waver. Maybe my deepest beliefs that do not waver. And I stay very still and experience myself as something like a rock that holds very firm to what I believe in.

And that for me would be the essence of the so-called "George Bush" on the outside and I can use the essence of that experience, that rock and that centeredness, to really go forward with what is important to me.

**Arny: Amy** while you were talking it made me think of another aspect of myself also as George Bush. I keep forgetting every time I say that the president of the US is the problem or the gift, whatever it is that we believe about the president, and that may be true but it is dis-empowering to everybody else giving so much power to the government. And dis-empowering ourselves from using our awareness on how we are these different powers.

**MICHAEL TOMS:** I think of something Laurens Van Der Post said, that the times of leaders are over and we each have to own our own leader capacity. We need to detach ourselves from the projection and take it back inside.

**JUSTINE TOMS:** What I get from what we are all saying right now, the example that you gave **Amy** about the inner George Bush, this centered firmness, not wavering. It gives me a whole other way of looking at it, and it takes me to that place where I know I project a whole lot on that one person. I project what I think he is thinking, but I really have no clue what he is thinking.

In that way it comes back to me to look at what I know is true. I like that idea of being firm

and not wavering, being centered, and it brings it back to me to do whatever I need to do to act according to my centeredness and my firmness about what I believe.

**MICHAEL TOMS:** Let's work with a waking dream so to speak. A few days ago I was reading an account of the Christmas that the Bush family were spending at Camp David in Maryland. Both grandparents were there, the former President Bush and Barbara Bush, and the family including the president and his wife Laura, and one of the comments was that there was no report of the gifts exchanged.

I am juxtaposing that report, and I am thinking about a very good friend of mine who has just returned from Iraq, his second visit in 3 months. Listening to him telling me the stories of what he has seen in Iraq, particularly with children and mothers and the damage that has been done to the infrastructure over there. I am thinking and what is coming up for me is somehow making that connection to the children. In this culture we all have mythic trails around Christmas and it brings up in my case I have lots of good memories of this time of year with family. That connection. And I am thinking that there is a connection there, and I am wrestling with the idea "Where am I unconscious about that connection?" because if I was president of the United States I would be with my grandchildren thinking about the future of those grandchildren and other children. We are talking about going to war with Iraq and we are talking about collateral damage, the killing of innocent civilians.. help me with this!

**Arny:** Well, you are saying a lot of things at the same time. You are speaking about the fact that we are split. On one hand we would like to give love, at Christmas time for Christians especially it is a time of peace in principle though everyone has their own associations to that. And at the same time we are split, we are all split. We would like to be good at giving and being helpful to people, and at the same time we loose our temper and think the other person just is not very good. All of us are split, and the thing that none of us want to look at is how we really are the warmonger in the sense of when we see something that we don't like we take a stand and only take a stand. We don't use our awareness. And that is important to begin with, we take a stand and we want to root out the people in our own organization and our own families that we think are not 'good' people, and at the same time we turn our back and then smile at the very next person.

I am not saying that you are like that, but I think that every human being until now that I have met is like that more or less.

**MICHAEL TOMS:** I am thinking of something that Krishnamurti said that peace was the absence of conflict inside. I don't know if that is the accurate definition of peace, but somehow we have got to address the inner conflict that each of us has, whatever it may be, we have to confront it and address it and work with it in order to address any conflict that we have outside of us. Because if we see it outside, it is inside, if we can recognize it outside it means that I have got it, it is mirroring something inside me. Is that right?

**Arny:** Yes, that is exactly right.

And that kind of awareness that you talked about is the kind of thing that I would like to model, and I would recommend it also for people who are in leadership positions in their organization or groups or families or the president of the United States.

Can you imagine, and I think we all need to imagine the kind of leaders that would take a stand in the sense of saying "Well there are a lot of parts of this country that want to go to war, and there are many parts also who don't want to go to war, and the one thing I have never considered" imagine a leader saying this that "the one thing I have never considered is that I myself am a little bit like Saddam Hussein, I also have qualities like that and I would like to model a world where we all start talking about things like that as well as taking outer actions".

Imagine a president who would stand up and say " I have sexual hang ups and this or that, and this will maybe make all us men aware of rank problems relative to women". Imagine! That would be a new world.

**Amy:** And to speak about these different sides, the side that wants to go to war and the side that does not want to go to war and let me tell you about the dialogue that goes on inside of myself about that.

**MICHAEL TOMS:** Dwight Eisenhower's farewell address as he was leaving the White House, he gave a speech, and in that speech he addressed the idea of what you are talking about, he took responsibility. He said that he had regrets that he had not brought peace to the world as he had intended to do.

**JUSTINE TOMS:** Having someone in leadership have the courage to say their own inner conflicts and show that fullness of who they are, not just that they are doing or thinking the right thing, then as a model how that would deepen the conversation.

**MICHAEL TOMS:** We have a recent relevant example of Rep. Trent Lott who was the projected incoming minority leader of the house, and because of some comments that he made at the birthday celebration of Sen. Strom Thurman. What is interesting is that he made these remarks that were over the edge relative to supporting Thurman's 1948 running for the segregation party. Sen. Lott said that was a good thing and we should have elected him and done that and we would not have had all the problems we have since had.

What was interesting is that it took several days for things to unfold. The next day there was another party for Thurman in the White house, and it took a week for the president to come out and say this was totally uncalled for.

It was interesting how that unfolded and I think of how the media played a part in that, and then the whole idea of someone having to say that they are sorry. How Sen. Lott had to make a number of apologies all at different levels and different dimensions, how difficult it is for people particularly in politics to be authentic and real.

**Arny:** Yeah, that is a very hard thing to do. People think that if they are too real people will not elect them. There are always people who will disagree, but if Lott for example, or someone who makes an implicitly racist statement or something like that, anyone who says any kind of statement that is hurtful to other people and is made aware of it, that kind of leader could still be a fabulous leader if the person could say "Let me explore what kind of problems or feelings I have that led to this", and just be very brief about it. "Well I was this way and that way and there is a part of myself that I am constantly putting down as well that is inadvertently putting other people down"

To make several levels conscious at the same time, then saying "I am really sorry, that is a problem of mine and it may be a problem for many, many people" and in that way that person might loose his place in office but he could raise the consciousness and resolve problems in this country through using his awareness that cant be done just through laws and rules alone.

**Amy:** He could possibly then encourage all of us, saying "This is me and this is what I have done and what I am learning and maybe that is a learning that all of us can engage in and the dialogue can maybe be brought to the surface and maybe we can all go deeper together"

**Arny:** And if I can do it, you can do it, he could say, and then we would all be there.

**MICHAEL TOMS:** I remember meeting Sen. Barbara McCulsky (?) and I was interviewing her asking her about her work as a Senator. She is a very interesting person because she was a professional social worker before she entered Congress. And her response was "Well, I am just doing social work on the hill now".

The whole implication about how she was really practicing her profession in Congress, it was refreshing because she was bringing the tools of her profession into play – I think those kinds of tools generally have not been used in Congress.

**Amy:** I think that is right, that generally political leaders are not generally trained in psychological work and conflict work at least as far as I know.

**MICHAEL TOMS:** When McGovern was running for president and he chose Thomas Eagleton as his running mate and it came out in investigative reporting that Eagleton had been under care in the Psychological system that forced McGovern to basically get rid of him. It was unacceptable that he had been in psychotherapy.

**Arny:** Right on! It is a huge thing, that instead of saying “Yes I am in psychotherapy and yes I am interested in this kind of problem that I have been working on, or I am interested in knowing myself more”.

Actually psychotherapy is practically a mainstream activity in the United States now. I want to say that when you are a public leader, and all of us are public leaders in some small and large ways, to be attacked in public is a very, very difficult thing. It may be one of the most difficult things in a human beings life to be publicly attacked in front of other people, and I want to say something about that.

First of all if you are a political leader, or a family leader or a small group leader and someone says “I don’t agree, I don’t like what you did, you did this or that and it is not good in my opinion” that is an attack.

The first thing is that your blood pressure goes up and some people get heart attacks over things like that, or they get severely ill in dealing with conflict situations. So, the first thing to say is I appreciate even the most stubborn rigid person who under attack simply says “ I did not mean it, I did not do it, I am a good person” in other words just puts up defense as a first line of taking care of his or herself.

But then, I want more from us. The person could say “This is scary, this is difficult and though I want to put on the appearance of being powerful and strong let me also say that I am a little nervous about all of this and I would like to make my personal problem useful for everybody” I am saying this having done things myself like this in public. Sometimes we deal with groups up to 3000 people.

The next step is to say “ I cannot facilitate I cannot be a leader, can someone else come in and help me to facilitate because I would like to talk with my opponent publicly now and dialogue with them”.

Can you imagine a situation where someone representing the other side comes forward and you as a public leader actually sits and listens to that person, and then say “Well maybe the two of us are having this argument or disagreement publicly because we are both roles in every body, in the field of the United States and the world.” That everybody is having this conflict between terrorism and anger and revenge and the revenge and the anger against terrorism for example.

Anyway, that once you are attacked you bring your opponent forwards, or someone representing your opponent comes forwards and you say, “let’s talk about this”. And then you admit your fear and the tension that you are in. Say how difficult this is to do, and then explore the truth of what the other person is saying, and explore even how in some tiny way you really are on their side. Not only, but also that you are on the opponent’s side. You could say that a conflict, a real conflict, a bad conflict, can only come about if you have ignored a part of yourself for a long time, so it appears as some body that you don’t like. You have ignored it in yourself and so you are re-discovering it, it is an opportunity to

rediscover, and conflict is an opportunity to rediscover your own inner turmoil now with other people on the outside. Not only, but also your own inner turmoil.  
I have a big passion about that. I want our leaders to model inner dialogue publicly.

**MICHAEL TOMS:** Also to go back to something that you said earlier, about fear in the common ground. I think of the common ground when you are being attacked in public. All of us don't want to be misunderstood, I think we all want to be liked, we don't want to be disliked, and there is some common ground there appreciating where the other person is, understanding that that is true for me and it is true for the other as well.

**Arny:** You bet, all of us human beings have this deep need for safety and love and appreciation. And when we don't get it we go nuts about it. Just admitting that we need it and are afraid that we might not get it, that is pretty wide spread.

**JUSTINE TOMS:** I can see when you are in that position of leadership and you are getting attacked. And if you are able to go ahead and say "Alright, let me step down from leadership, let me have this public talk" then the energy for healing and for deepening ones awareness is so enormous because you are not doing it hitting out with just two of you talking, you are doing it in a public forum, that is so powerful if it can be worked through.

**Arny:** All of us have the chance to model how to do this so that attacks can actually be an opportunity.

**JUSTINE TOMS:** Do you have any examples of where someone was able to go into the dialogue rather than just to defend themselves?

**Arny:** Well it happens frequently to us, so maybe I can give a personal example of being publicly attacked and the good experience that I actually had from that together with **Amy's** help.

We were working in a city in a large open forum situation, and in the midst of the issues that were being discussed by the city a woman got up and said quietly at first "You say that you are interested in everybody, but there was a consensus that we focus on this topic but I don't want to focus on that topic, I am upset about it, you are not listening to me!"

"Well" I said "we are trying to follow the overall group situation"

She came back about 5 minutes later and said "I again feel like you are not listening to me as a person and you are not doing the kinds of things that you say you want to do"

So, I was hurt and I said to myself, "Maybe that person is really just disturbed" or something like that. I said something to myself to rationalize the fact that I was right and she was wrong and the group as a whole could not spend time to listen to her.

But she was so upsetting to me that I became nervous about it, and I asked **Amy** "Would you now take the facilitator role solo, I am too much a part of what is happening to do anything?"

So, **Amy** stood there, and I asked the woman if she would mind coming forwards "I will listen to you and I want to hear everything that you have to say, and I want to express everything in me too, but I won't be the neutral facilitator I will be myself instead"

The woman said, "OK" and she came out and said, "You are just terrible, you don't really listen to anybody, you don't listen to me!"

Just about everybody in the group was in the opposite opinion including me, I said "Well I am not of the same opinion, but there is something that you are doing that is making me very nervous and I don't want to be so nervous and upset. And in my nervousness is terror, and in my terror of all the surprising things that happen to me, in my terror I feel sad. I am about to cry but I don't want to cry in public," I said, but then why shouldn't I cry in public? So I started to cry, and I said, "Do you know how hard it is to stand up in public and do anything? I have never had a chance to explain this to anybody and I am so thankful that you attacked me because I never say how hard it really is and how terrifying it is sometimes to take a stand

in public and try and work on these difficult community problems. It is just dreadful”  
And she understood me immediately, she said, “ I am scared all the time!”  
I said, “ I need help in this, please help me, I am weak and cant do it”  
And **Amy** said to the woman “ Do you know how to help him?”  
And she said, “Yes, give him a hug!” and in front of hundreds of people that woman gave me a quick hug. It was so moving, I was so touched, it changed the atmosphere. We were dealing with contentious issues around race and diversity issues in that city and people were at each other’s throats, but no one had in a way pride. Anyway, she helped the roles come out between the attacker and the feelings that were around in the background.  
It was personal, it was real for me and at the same time it belonged to that city to have those two kinds of feelings.

**JUSTINE TOMS:** I can hear that, yes. Like you mentioned earlier in the program, the Native American woman who just sang her song and it just took everything to another level. It is not rational, it is just as you follow the energy, you cannot follow it in a linear way can you?

**Arny:** No that was just the opposite of my own linear program of going on and focusing on the outer issues, and those outer issues needed some deeper feeling statement and that wonderful woman who was courageous enough to attack me in public and stay in that position enabled me to express more of myself than I would ever have been able to do probably.

**Amy:** That was a very touching example and it made a huge change in the group as a whole. And I think something that was so important was at the beginning when **Arny** realised that he was not able to continue in his role as the identified facilitator, that he could step out of that. That he asked me to step into that position, he could have asked anybody else also. I think that is so crucial because all of us, we are in different roles in our lives, and in leadership roles or being a parent, it can be such an incredible weight, and so difficult. And the relief to be able to get out of those roles and share them, because in this particular situation all of us share that leadership position, you needn’t stay in it all of the time. It can be an incredible relief to get out and go to these deeper levels and let someone else take that position for the moment.

**MICHAEL TOMS:** I think that is really true in many organizations. I know for myself in my own very small organization with Justine as my partner, we now have a chief operating officer who has given me personally a degree of freedom that I did not have before. It is kind of like being able to have someone else step into certain aspects of leadership. You don’t have to basically address it directly anymore, you can be there for support but it is like, again, colleagues and working together in harmony and unity, which I think, is the objective of every organization.

You want to do that in a community way where everyone is respected, and doing it with – as you put it –awareness and I would add with loving kindness, and really functioning in our organizational world like that.

**JUSTINE TOMS:** And we have had to go through a lot of fire with it too. And when the fire comes up, when someone is upset or their role is changing in New Dimensions, that they are able to say “This is really scary for me, I have had this one title and these responsibilities and this is very hard for me”. To sit there and really hear that deeply from another person and not just say, “You’ll be fine” you have to sit there and listen to that person and know that it is really real for them. If that forum is open for them to say that, I think that is a healthier organization all around.

**Arny:** That goes along with the general principle we think about often and that is that the concept of the facilitator is actually a role that is there to be shared by everybody. Not just one person can have that, but everybody. We think of the highest awareness that you can have is being a ‘ participant-facilitator’ that you are one side or one ‘part’ of the situation

and simultaneously you need to be responsible for all the roles and all the people and all the different roles and feelings that are coming up.

I think Justine and Michael you model that, for example in your new book Time for Choices. You are facilitators yourselves but you make everybody else look like a facilitator. You create the book but it looks like the people created the book. That is just good stuff! I like it.

**MICHAEL TOMS:** Something I learned 20 something years ago when I was chairing a board of a graduate school, I learned something about Taoist leadership. That the Taoist leader is where something happens and everyone says, "We did it!" I segway to Harry Truman who said, "If you don't want the credit you can get anything done". So being willing to let go of the credit or the acknowledgement allows you to get a lot done.

I mean that it was the Marshall Plan not the Truman Plan because Truman knew that the military would have to implement the Marshall Plan – probably the single greatest act of the US government in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, an act of great generosity and kindness of the American people. Truman realised that he could get more done without taking the credit.

**JUSTINE TOMS:** So you are saying that the role of the facilitator can switch from hand to hand, voice to voice, and when we feel that something is going on any one of us can say, " I feel that something is not being said here". That moment when we can speak that deep intuition that we feel that is in the room, and that we are not getting anywhere because something is not being acknowledged.

**MICHAEL TOMS:** I think of our weekly staff meetings when we pull cards to see who is going to be the facilitator that day for that meeting, and then they become the leader of that meeting and they decide what is going to happen. Everyone gets the experience of leading the group in a process of uncovering how we can do what we do more effectively.

**Arny:** Right, and even in an organization that does not have that permission a participant in that organization or a member of it can do the same thing by simply saying to herself "Aha, I have a very strong opinion, I must be a part. I am a role, let me play that as a role." And then she says in the organizational or town meeting whatever it might be " I must be in the role of this or this because I want to play it now" and having said that if she uses her awareness she will then say "Aha now I am in the role of seeing various sides as being important, wanting everybody to come forward and speak, I must be the facilitator in the moment"

**JUSTINE TOMS:** So **Arny** and **Amy** where are your journeys taking you, what experiences have you been having that you would like to share with us at this time, that you feel are important and are moving you?

**Amy:** Oh we have had so many different experiences, and so many things come to mind. But the one that comes to my mind just now that was very moving for us and very important. About a year ago we visited a former concentration camp in Austria called Mathausen. We went there with one or two hundred people from all over the world. We went into that concentration camp and we went into one of the rooms there and we meditated on our feelings and our experiences and particularly on the sense of the history and the dead who died in that camp.

**Arny:** Yes, that was quite a strong experience. We went there in part because of the right wing party strength that were happening in Austria at the time, to process that right wing attitude and the problems around anti-Semitism. Knowing that the problems that we were working with were not just Austrian or European, but that so-called right wing attitude is everywhere. It is a role in the US with its attitude towards so-called minority groups and what have you.

We wanted to find out more about what was really behind that right wing attitude and we learned an incredible amount about life from that.



At first I thought maybe we will just go there and process the difficulties and the existing Nazi or right wing attitudes that are still present today.

But then I learned something when I was down there looking into the gas chamber, and I saw a room where  $\frac{3}{4}$ 's of my family, my uncles and aunts died in that particular concentration camp. I looked in there and I had a strange and powerful experience. I heard the voices of people dying and one of the voices said to me "**Arny**, get a larger view of all of this.

Remember that what is behind all these conflicts and these hatred and difficulties is not just personal. Some of it is coming about because it is nature." This was my personal experience; it is not a fact that I am talking about now.

But to me one of the voices in the concentration camp said, " It is nature, and it is nature's powers that are present in all of us human beings. The same infinite powers in the universe and in matter are there in human beings, but it is up to you human beings to learn how to process it, how to work with it. Otherwise it is just another atomic explosion" so to speak. That gave me a lot more distance and understanding. That was a big experience for me.

**Amy:** I had a similar experience of some of the dead speaking to me, reminding me that there are some very beautiful and simple experiences in life like friendship and sharing a meal with somebody, and love. And that in order to keep doing this work and finding some resolution to the most difficult and painful areas of life I had to remember that as well. That there is love and good feeling and that we should all take care of ourselves at the same time as we are trying to approach these very difficult conflicts.

**MICHAEL TOMS:** It is like I think someone said it, walking the middle path, staying in balance, not going into the extremes. I think you are touching **Amy** on the idea that we have to take care of ourselves. **Arny** you mentioned it earlier about loving ourselves in order to love others, that it really starts with us. The attitude in the Christian tradition "Love thy neighbor as thyself" the "Love thyself" part is forgotten and is externalized to "thy neighbor". But bringing it back home and being able to carry that into our interactions with one another. After all what is life about? In my view life is about relationship and if there is no relationship there is no life.

**Arny:** Right. And I feel myself very deeply that conflict, scary as it is, and nerve wracking as it is, is also an incredible opportunity to discover who you are and to see yourself as a role in what is happening.

That is love, to discover yourself, who you are, the other side of yourself that you have not admitted. Someone who is out there as an opponent, a part of yourself that you still don't know too well.

And the biggest opportunity and the most exciting one is that you then have the fluidity in knowing that you can be the other person, it gives you a little detachment. You can go in there and say, "Let's work on this" and you can be an elder and give people a sense that it is a good thing to work on conflict. It is an important thing; you can show love in action.

**JUSTINE TOMS:** It is such an engagement, it is being fully alive, it is engaging in a whole new way without just crashing into one another but to use it as a creative force to go deeper into our own awareness.

**Amy:** Oh yes, I think that is really right. In conflict everything is so scary, but there is such an amazing amount of creativity and beauty and depth inside of us that sometimes does not have much chance to come out. There is so much to discover and that is what makes the work so exciting and amazing.

**JUSTINE TOMS:** And you work with large groups and small groups?

**Arny:** This recent year we worked with the Pakistani and India situation in Bombay. We

worked in transforming a whole hospital that did worldwork, in which the doctors and the nurses switched roles. Believe it or not the doctors became nurses and the nurses became doctors for the day!

**Amy:** I just want to say that going through these things I feel very, very lucky and fortunate that **Arny** and I can go through these things together. I don't know if it is unusual actually to have a partner that you can go into these things with and work with, and go through these stresses and work on all our inner parts and really try to make a difference together, it is very beautiful.

**MICHAEL TOMS:** I have gratitude every day for my partner Justine, everyday is a new day and every day is an adventure. One of the beautiful parts of being in partnership like we are, which is another dimension of relationship I think, the constant every changing landscape. It is always changing, because this person sitting across from me here in the studio is not the same person that I got together with 30 years ago. She is very different and yet she is the same. I fell for the 'real' Justine, just like you fell in love with the 'real' **Arny** and the 'real' **Amy**; it is like who do you fall in love with? I fell in love with the 'real' Justine and that is what is there all of the time.

**Arny:** I say something very similar, I fell in love with God and it looks like **Amy!**

**JUSTINE TOMS:** That's great!

Where will your travels be taking you next?

**Arny:** Well, there are all sorts of things that we are planning to do. Some of them are working on religious problems with the Mormons and other groups in Salt Lake City. We are planning worldwork events on the Oregon Coast. We work together there with a staff of about 50 people.

**Amy:** We will be going to Japan where we will work on facilitation training there.

**Arny:** One of the most exciting things, and something that sustains me, is working on Quantum Physics and the Quantum nature of light and how light beams are teaching me a lot about people and the infinite nature of us.

**JUSTINE TOMS:** Oh that is interesting, may that be a future conversation!

**MICHAEL TOMS:** We want to thank you for taking the time to be with us, it has been a great pleasure talking with you as always **Arny** and **Amy**. Hopefully we will have you back again.