

[00:00:00] **Nilanka:** All right, we have in the background, I am going to now start the webinar, and then approximately like two minutes after everybody enters, Maria, if you can kick us off.

[00:00:16] **Maria Stephan:** Okay, just let me know when I should start.

[00:00:18] **Nilanka:** Will do.

[00:00:32] **Wendy:** Hey, a quick thing. I'll have to do this again. My name is incorrect on here, but I'll change, I can change it, I think.

[00:00:41] **Nilanka:** Yeah, let me know if you're having issues with that and I can also fix it myself.

[00:00:52] **Wendy:** Could you make, oh, wait, nevermind.

[00:01:20] **Nilanka:** We're up to like 95 participants.

[00:01:29] Hi, everybody. We're just going to give it another minute as we let the rest of the folks join.

[00:01:34] **Zelda:** Hi, Nilanka. Can we just check with, the panelists can see the questions. I'll be just going to the Q& A. And it doesn't have that option. So are we going to be a list of questions? How is that going to be moderated?

[00:01:51] **Tabatha:** I'll be, I'll be moderating. So don't worry about looking at the Q& A. I'll, I'll field those for you. Thanks. Also, Nalanka, I think you already did this, but just flagging that Sochal asked to start the slideshow. I guess it wasn't showing

[00:02:04] **Nilanka:** up. I think it just did, if that's, working now. Sorry, I think I hit an escape button at the wrong moment.

[00:02:22] All right, we are at 10. 03, so I think we can go ahead and officially start. We're at 107 participants. Maria, would you like to kick us off, please?

[00:02:31] **Maria Stephan:** Sure. Thanks very much, Nilanka. Well good morning, good afternoon, good evening to folks who are tuning in from across the United States and from around the world.

[00:02:41] Welcome to today's global webinar on the role of mediation in managing intra movement conflict which the Horizons Project is pleased to be co hosting with the Global Grassroots Support Network. My name is Maria Stephan. I'm the Chief Organizer at the Horizons Project. For those who are less familiar with us the horizons project is a small team of analysts and organizers who are focused on strengthening relationships and collaboration between diverse sectors and communities in the U.

[00:03:15] S. and globally with the aim of stubbornly and collectively saying no to racism and authoritarianism. And yes to inclusive multiracial democracy in the United States and at the same time while building global democratic solidarity. So I am now going to turn things over to my terrific colleague, Tabitha Thompson who is our director of strategic partnership, partnerships and initiatives.

[00:03:44] And Tabitha will introduce our terrific lineup of speakers and facilitate today's conversation. So over to you, Tabitha.

[00:03:52] **Tabatha:** Great. Thank you so much, Maria. Thank you to everyone here for joining us, especially our panelists and our co collaborator, the Global Grassroots Support Network with Kinsey. Also, a special thanks to Sochil Hernandez, the organizing fellow on our team who worked with the rest of Team Horizons to We're really excited to bring it to you all.

[00:04:12] So without further ado, I'll go ahead and introduce our esteemed panel. The first up is Zelda Holtzman, formerly of the Shishimani Center for Activist Education. Zelda was a student and youth activist beginning in the late 70s. Participating in worker solidarity campaigns and student youth organizations in South Africa as a young woman in the early eighties.

[00:04:33] She served on the steering committee formed to herald the first nonracial women's organization in South Africa, the United Women's Organization, and was elected onto its first executive. She was an active cadre in the underground structures of the ANC and the SACP from 1980 until the unbanning of political organizations.

[00:04:54] After her release from detention in 1983, she was restricted from teaching and worked as a trade union volunteer with the Media Workers Association of South Africa. As an active member of civic, youth, and women's organizations in Mitchell's Plain, she helped to form and build the UDF, or United Democratic Front, a broad front against apartheid.

[00:05:15] Thanks for being here, Zelda. Next up, we have Ruhi Kumar from the Heat Wave Action Coalition. Ruhi is a climate change campaigner and a mentor to youth groups working on the intersection of climate justice, gender, and equity in India. She has worked in the realm of communications, Policy and engagement.

[00:05:33] Her recent work includes looking inwards within movement spaces, specifically linked to emotional well being for young campaigners in the climate justice space, and how to develop a relationship with the justice, the planet, and oneself, which sits within the value systems of the world we want to create.

[00:05:50] In this context, she has mediated conflicts and encouraged young voters to open dialogue about tough younger folks to open dialogue about tough conversations, which are often overlooked within youth movements. Next up is Wendy Wood from the Karuna Center. Wendy is a conflict engagement practitioner, social scientist, consultant, trainer, and author.

[00:06:12] Wendy specializes in resolving complex multi party disputes through deliberative and transformative dialogue. Mediation, facilitation, and strategic systems design. She's a pioneer in bringing trauma informed conflict engagement to the field of mediation. Since 2016, she has been working primarily in her inter and intra pro democracy and environmental impact spaces.

[00:06:34] And in 2017, she co founded the Democracy, Politics, and Conflict Engagement Initiative, which helps mobilize conflict practitioners to bring their skills and dedication to To place based pro democracy efforts. She is the co author of Do No Harm, Mindful Engagement for a World in Crisis. You can find more about Wendy and her work at carunacenter.org.

[00:06:54] org. And finally Dr. Lisa Schurk with the Kroc Institute at the University of Notre Dame. Dr. Shirk is the Richard G. Starman Senior Endowed Chair and Professor of Practice of Peacebuilding at the University of Notre Dame's Coe School of Global Affairs, where she directs the Peace Tech and Polarization Lab.

[00:07:13] As a former Fulbright Scholar in East and West Africa, Shirk is the author of 10 books including the ecology of violent extremism, synergizing nonviolent action and peace building, and social media impacts on conflict and democracy. Thank you all for taking the time to be here. So without further ado, I'll get us kicked off with our first question.

[00:07:34] Each of you brings different perspectives when it comes to working with and within movements. Some of you are activists and organizers. Some of you train activists and organizers, and some of you are community mediation practitioners and scholars. Can you please share your experience with mediation in a movement building context and one example of when it has worked well, or one of, one example of when it has not worked well?

[00:07:59] So I'll turn it over to you, Lisa.

[00:08:01] **Lisa:** All right. Thank you all so much for hosting this and for everyone for to join us today. So I think, you know, when we talk about conflicts within mediation within social movements, I think there are several varieties of those types of conflicts. So in my experience in a Central American country where there was a mediation between All of this, everybody was a democracy activist, but there were indigenous people and there were university students with more of a, a Hispanic background, Spanish background.

[00:08:39] And so there was sort of a racial dynamic within the democracy movement. And what we sort of realized, we were spending a week together. Talking about social movements and, and how to be strategic in, in nonviolent action. You know, the, the idea of, looking at the conflicts within that particular movement it took several days for us to get to the point where it was safe enough.

[00:09:08] To really talk about the unspoken intention in the room between the groups that had different goals and different backgrounds, different experiences with the indigenous group, having experienced a lot of racism from the Hispanic group in the past that mediation, which was led by other people. So we, we trained mediators in, in the region and those mediators, did a did a role play, which ended up being a real mediation between the actual leaders in in these movements. And I think it was a success story, of actually bringing conflict to the surface and being able to address the tensions and hopefully, you know, build more trust that the issues of racism and colonization and some of this historical power dynamics were going to be recognized in the democracy movement.

[00:10:03] So that's a success story. I have so many failure stories, I don't know where to start. I'll start with the Iraq war failure story. And this is another type of conflict, which I think ends up being more personality focused. So in the run up to the Iraq war, many of you may remember, there were a number of different organizations and organizations that were Organizing protest movements and a day of action in Washington, D.

[00:10:31] C., and really these, they had leaders who were very much sort of personality driven movements, and those leaders didn't get along with each other. So the leaders couldn't agree on the same date to have a larger Movement, and, you know, there was some attempt to do mediation just between the leaders.

[00:10:52] So it wasn't really involving the wider movement, but just trying to get leaders to be able to form a coalition and organize events together so that there would be more synergy and that was really difficult. And I think that, you know, in the Women's March in Washington, D. C. Some of it was about, the Jewish women not feeling welcomed or the Palestinian women feeling like, feminist Zionists were not going to, shouldn't be included.

[00:11:25] There was, there was a lot of tension that it was sort of personality based, but then it was also, having to do with it. other issues outside of the issue at hand of the Women's March against President Trump. I would say mediation again was not very helpful in that situation, but I think it was a little bit too late that somehow we need to be able to have processes within our social movements to make a space for the internal conflicts early on.

[00:11:54] And be able to really just name that all social movements are going to have conflicts, and we should be prepared that building these broad coalitions that are necessary for successful social movements require us to tend to the relationships and the tensions that, will always be there within different groups who are coming together.

[00:12:16] Thanks.

[00:12:18] **Tabatha:** Thanks very much, Lisa. So what I was hearing there is timing and really making sure that you have that kind of support built in from from the beginning Zelda over to you.

[00:12:31] **Zelda:** Thanks. And thanks for this opportunity. And maybe just to add, it's sort of fortuitous in a way, and maybe not surprising that I'll be echoing a lot of what was said before by Lisa, although the context might be very different, but maybe just to give a backdrop to what really informs my thinking.

[00:12:51] And certainly as in former practice as indicated, I've been an activist since my early youth. I'm now reaching a point where the stretch ahead of you is much shorter than the one behind you. So I won't take much time in speaking to what, that long stretch behind me, but, but to highlight a few things.

[00:13:13] So I engage from a premise that to, to struggle against racial oppression, to struggle against racial capitalism, to struggle against colonialism, against inequality, in itself is a process of conflict, is engaging conflict. In these struggles that emerge because of inequality, injustices and oppression, impose upon us conditions where we have to confront power, power of capital, power of the state, and be in that constant situation of conflict with power.

[00:13:48] Whilst we struggle to attain power for the people, presumably. So it is a constant engagement with conflict. So from that premise, it is therefore important that we as activists develop the tools to deal with conflict inherent in our struggles, how we engage with the state, and what we see the outcomes of conflict engagement is like.

[00:14:12] So we don't steer away from conflict. It's how we engage conflict. And to what outcomes. But turning to the specific question that in engaging the state and in engaging capital in alliance with the state, as was the case during apartheid South Africa, and in fighting such a formidable, consolidated enemy, requires social movements and activists to be united, because power is intent on fragmenting.

[00:14:41] Power creates disunity. Colonialism is built on a strategy of divide and rule. So we presuppose in that we have to deal with the conflict in and among us as we struggle for power. During apartheid, it was so much easier to develop that unity as a prerequisite for that solidarity, and for the processes to attain power.

[00:15:10] That unity is a prerequisite, but unity doesn't come automatically because you struggle against years of oppression and colonialism, the effects and the legacy thereof. So unity in itself is a process of engaging and embracing conflicts within and to work in ways to, through which the solution is one that is collectively owned.

[00:15:34] Now, we cannot own that collectively if we don't have unity. So it's not the solution of the professionals or the practitioners. They basically assist and aid us in understanding the conditions on also analyzing the terrain, but engaging the tools to resolve interim movement conflict must come from within, to engage the solutions that we need to hold for sustainable outcomes.

[00:16:01] Now that seems very easy as a formula, but in that lies the difficulty. Because during periods of heightened repression, it's easier to forge unity because the enemy is understood. The enemy is clear. Apartheid was the enemy.

Apartheid divides, we claim, and the UDF unites. So what we're fighting against, we could link to apartheid.

[00:16:22] Whether we were fighting for access to sewage facilities or access to clean water or just basic human conditions that black people were denied during apartheid. Even in fighting for that, the enemy constantly would be present to divide us. And our task in forging that unity was also not just forging the unity of the oppressed to stand up against the formidable enemy, but also fighting for a collective future.

[00:16:53] So linking what we're fighting against to establish the unity of a common purpose of what, of what we're fighting for. For me, it was the golden thread. of what kept us united. I could probably speak at length if it's so we're sure if a question does arise as to how do we hold that unity that we had during the united democratic front and during the anti apartheid struggle to hold it during the process of building when we attained power.

[00:17:25] And that for that, that for us in South Africa is the million dollar question, how do we revert or hold on to those tactics, those processes, those tools that served us so well in fighting against a system? And how do we activate the tools in building the new system? Whilst power intervenes constantly to derail the process.

[00:17:50] And that is a question that I think we'd we're all grappling with at the moment, how to hold the unity and be able to deal with the emergent conflicts that this moment present in using those tools that we've learned or augmenting that. those tools for the current conditions in the situation to build the unity that we so much need whilst building the capacity to deal with ongoing conflict as an ongoing process to attain the society we all presumably are working towards.

[00:18:23] That I would just say in brief, maybe just very shortly and I alluded to that during the process of fighting a struggle where the enemy is clear. Also, in my experience, when we were fighting a struggle against an apartheid state. We were also trying to build an alternative state, pretty figuratively, building the tomorrow, then that we sought at the time during apartheid.

[00:18:47] And the People's Power Project was very much endemic, I would say, in all our struggles. We could only build a united front because our base organizations were strong, whether it was the There were small women's groups, church groups, faith communities or people struggling for basic washing lines, having access to washing lines.

[00:19:10] We could link that to the right to vote, the right to central representation in a government for the people and fighting for democracy. What we're fighting for now is unclear. Who we're fighting against is unclear. That we want equality and that we want justice, that we know. But to have a common purpose is the ongoing struggle around which may be new tools.

[00:19:35] for the mediated engagement in these new conditions, I think is something that we're grappling with on a global scale. So yes, the, I would think, our experience of the people, our project where communities were engendered, entooled to take charge of their own situations, their own problems, having street committees, people's courts, having solutions outside of the state that were better than that, than those which the state could have offered if it so chose during apartheid.

[00:20:10] And our solutions were centered on democratic outcomes. And unfortunately, that ground was lost in the transition period and its grounds that we are having to fight to regain and retain through a process again of ongoing contradictions, conflict, and mediated engagements with social movements in the emergent phase of this dispensation.

[00:20:35] Thank you for now.

[00:20:38] **Tabatha:** Thanks so much, Zelda. And please do hold on to to that question that you are. You're mentioning before. I imagine that a lot of panelists will have some perspectives, and that's something that people will be really eager to hear about. How do you maintain that? That unity and what tools and approaches do you have to maintain that unity once you've achieved some of the goals you've been working towards?

[00:20:58] Can I turn it over to Wendy?

[00:21:02] **Wendy:** Good morning from the West Coast of the left coast of California. I want to thank everybody for inviting me here today and have a few comments and absolutely appreciate the two panelists before what what they've had to say because it does intersect and continues to support some of the things I'm going to be sharing here today.

[00:21:24] I've been working with local organizers. grassroots movements, states, nations and national coalitions doing mediation, dialogue, facilitation, conflict coaching, sort of capacity building, training, the, all the intricate parts of what we sort of call as mediation. With this idea of building conflict resilience and capacity within these organizations.

[00:21:51] I think I'd like to begin in a way like my, the two other speakers by talking and giving you us the opportunity, which I'm very grateful for, of kind of lifting up how invaluable it is to build conflict literacy skills and in turn build conflict capacity and resilience and movements. I'd encourage you to think of conflict prevention and early intervention.

[00:22:15] Lisa mentioned earlier, kind of that medical model, which is where I came from originally. So it's sort of rest deeply in me that thinking of building conflict competence and resilience of these movements, rather than that Pandora's box metaphor that I often refer to where conflict seems ordinary, it seems so Part of the norm within movements that it's left to grow.

[00:22:41] And when that conflict grows over time, it can produce, can produce some very unpredictable and harmful results. So the thinking to think about conflict and how, how important it is to not just address it, but Understand that it's generative and transformational as well, is very important. Conflict in these movements are often interpersonal, but they're also organizational and ideological in nature.

[00:23:07] I've found that as the polarization has continued, especially in the last, I'm tired of counting, the last seven years, That, that this, these feelings of isolation, anger, frustration, fear, and so much more are starting to spill over into these organizations themselves. And for the people that work so diligently within these organizations.

[00:23:35] I'm finding that with rare exceptions, however, when movements actors have a few solid skills to understand and engage in conflict, that they are much less apt to react to the more like and rather the respond to the things that are causing them harm within their organizations and between organizations.

[00:23:56] You asked me to share an example and I have many, but I thought In the in the spirit of positive nature, I would like to share some work that I've been doing for the last several years with the California Climate Leadership Dialogue. This involved environmental, this has been involving environmental justice organizations, both the big greens and the not so big greens as we call them, the governor's office in California, legislative representatives, as well as state agency leaders.

[00:24:25] We've been coming together every four to six months, bringing conflict, not just dialogue, but actually building some conflict capacity within them. What we learned early on is that, and from the, from the outset, that

having conflict competent conveners and facilitators like myself as part of the process was critical.

[00:24:47] This was not simply a dialogue to figure out what legislation we would do they would do at the end of the, at the Of their time together, but really trying to build rebuild their relationships and the trust and the systems that we're going to allow them to do what they found was really important. A few things that came out of this.

[00:25:08] We were able to design and implement the dialogues in such a way that the participants could address the myriad of conflicts that they were faced everything from wildflower wild. Fires wildfires, which, as you may know, we have a lot of in California and they were burning incessantly at one of our meetings.

[00:25:28] So it was just so present everything from wildfires and electrification to, to, to sort of rural, urban and suburban conflicts that were arising between what rural constituents were in need of and versus what was happening at the suburban level. Participants were afforded the opportunity to learn and practice how to recognize and respond to the issues like power differentials, which as you can imagine in California are enormous.

[00:26:00] And others have spoken to that, and I'm sure there will be more of that, but it was, it was, it's often very present when social movements themselves are trying to intersect with these larger decision making organizations and powers of government. They learned to develop skills related to what to do when differences arise.

[00:26:20] That was very, not just critically important, but fun. We, we actually enjoyed having that opportunity to do that, and it came back over and over and over again about, about how we can engage with each other as that happened. they redesigned communication processes, which, as you can imagine, have been, have taken very many different forms over time.

[00:26:47] They worked on ways to address challenges, assess needs and interests, some of the basic aspects of mediation, for example, together rather than in their silos. As we all know, COVID did not help in terms of siloing all of us in one form or another. And so to break out of those silos was really critical.

[00:27:06] And by the way, all of this was done in person. For days at a time, they were able to align their interest where they exist and recognize and honor where they diverge. That was a very big part of what was happening. And

another very important part, which oftentimes we as mediators fail to address. But I think it was very helpful is how to how to respond.

[00:27:28] What's going to happen when people don't get what they want. Especially in terms of legislative is interest. So what has emerged here is this commitment to working together on climate change issues in California in a very new way in person in community with this renewed sense of trust and belonging, which was such a foundational part of what was what was there in 2022 and 2023.

[00:27:53] This resulted in these dialogues bringing forth. And creating groundbreaking climate legislation that has affected not just California, but has been some national, has had national impact as well. So these, these dialogues continue today in a smaller way, but the foundations and the grounds from which they operate has been established where having conflict competent practitioners in that space to support them was very critical.

[00:28:22] So I look forward to that, to answering any questions you all might have and hope I didn't go over my time.

[00:28:28] **Tabatha:** Thanks. Thanks so much, Wendy. Just yeah, really keynote around the importance of having those those supported spaces. Ruhi, can you bring us home with this first round?

[00:28:40] **Ruhie:** Yeah. Hi. Can you hear me?

[00:28:43] Yes. Great. Thank you so much for the for this invitation. And I'm speaking from India right now. I live close to Pondicherry in Tamil Nadu. And thank you so much, Zelda, Wendy and Lisa for your inputs. And I'm going to actually take off a little bit of points from there. For my background, I'm a climate campaigner and currently I'm working as a freelancer and I'm sort of Like looking at different groups of young people and mentoring them and also working in terms of how do we look at the issue of climate justice in a more holistic manner?

[00:29:19] From my experience what I would say is happening in India, it's a very interesting emergence of a youth climate movement. And I know there's a question that I would you know, I would you know, sort of like deep dive into this later, but as pretty much reflected by all the other panelists here, that how power yields and power holds in different groups, right?

[00:29:44] And in India specifically, the polarization has been pretty much increasing in the last 15 to 20 years, but now we are seeing an escalation with the various populist movements actually sort of like Identifying their brand in a specific manner and, that sort of identification of brand with power and with persons is becoming individuals is becoming a clear cut sort of likely way for conflict.

[00:30:13] in many different groups, especially when we're talking about environmental and climate groups, because at one point of time, it was all very vanilla. And it was all only about like saving trees, planting trees, it was about conservation, it was about just the wildlife, right. And now we are heading to a time where.

[00:30:32] The young people especially have pretty much spearheaded the movement of intersectionality, right? That social justice is equal to climate justice and there is no two ways about that. Just talking about one is not really going to take us anywhere. And as mentioned earlier by one of the panelists that there are different types of conflicts, right?

[00:30:52] There is like interpersonal, there is ideological. In India, the conflict from my experience in the youth groups I've seen is that it's quite unique as well because people are coming from various different cultural, social, economic backgrounds, right? In India, we have you know, people coming who don't understand each other's languages.

[00:31:15] There is cultural communication that is very different from people belonging to different places. The grassroots movements are really, really highly organized, especially I'm sure all of you would have heard of the farmers movements which took place, about two years ago and really rattled in terms of like the entire world and on how they organized.

[00:31:37] So the labor movement, the farmers movement the indigenous Adivasi movement is really, really big when it comes to organizing and the ways of conflict management in those regions are very different. And they're very, very driven by the people on the grassroot in the urban spaces where I would.

[00:31:55] Consider myself. I'm in especially with younger people. The same sort of differences are coming up because a lot of young people are from these very spaces. They are coming from places of privilege. There are some people coming from places of economic privilege, caste privilege, because caste is a

very important angle that completely gets missed out because that's a social, you know inequality structure that has been going on for centuries in India now.

[00:32:23] Pretty much I wouldn't compare it but like there is race as a big issue in in the west caste is a big issue in India and pretty much the subcontinent and diaspora and and then there's gender and then there is language and there is you know, also like many different filters and like cross sections that we go through and the young people are coming from those very many cross sections and aligning on the issue of climate justice, but the conflict arises because everybody has a very different idea of what that climate justice looks like.

[00:33:02] from their regions, from their background, from their conditioning, and from what they think is also community. So as mentioned earlier by, one of the panelists in terms of how do we actually prevent conflicts by working on resilience and working on the culture of trust, The culture of trust is that completely missing.

[00:33:24] I've been part of organizations where, the, breakdown of trust is, very heavy. I used to work with the, Greenpeace and, also, many other smaller groups, nonprofit groups and consulting groups, and I feel that. The value system and the trust system has been broken down at all levels, whether it's an organization, but and now also in the movement space.

[00:33:50] And of course, if we deep, deep dive into trust and fear, it's coming all the way from institutional narratives, what's happening and how the governments and institutions are viewing people and viewing people only as a form of a resource and productivity. And in my introduction, it was mentioned that I'm working on emotional well being because that is one of the key factors that I'm identifying in terms of, how people are viewing trust and you know, sort of this well being, factor and.

[00:34:22] Because communities are formed when individuals come together, and these individuals form communities, but they have an idea of that community, what it could look like, what is trust for them, but very quickly that is broken down, and that is Pretty much, well, there is what we call this glass shattering effect, unfortunately, because when you see a conflict being built up and it's not going as per what you would have, you know, liked or planned, the conflict really tends to set in on an everyday basis, and especially when in, in, in my experience with conflict, specifically in the past three years, has been that, it's a day to day, thing that comes in with a lot of volunteers, because they're all mostly volunteers coming from different parts of the country.

[00:35:10] And there are expectations, from the volunteers. And there are, ways and methods that these systems have been designed for volunteers by the volunteers itself. But at the same time, the conflict is sort of because there's a lot of passion. There's a lot of, thirst and a lot of, you know, this, very innocent, raw, but yet very fierce.

[00:35:35] You know, a lot of young individuals need to sort of do something right on people have found community in the climate youth climate groups. I personally know of many young individuals who have, you know, taken this community support, especially when we're talking about the pandemic on you know how the mental health really sort of, you know, spiral for a lot of young people because they were going to college until one day and then suddenly they were locked in the zoom call meetings for like two years and they were not meeting people.

[00:36:03] And there is, a huge amount of social anxiety. So I, just to sort of sum it up, I would say that my experience has been that, the young people's mindset and how there there are specific challenges that young people are facing today. and by young, and a specific age group of late teen adolescents early twenties, mid twenties, till all the way to late twenties and early thirties.

[00:36:30] that sort of the, challenges that are being met by especially on the front of like employment, job, mental health, fear, security, and for the future, which is one of the main, narratives in, the climate crisis and climate justice, work. it all sums up and it forms like this really big things that just come together and accumulates and the conflicts start arising at different points of these other small things that are happening and because The community either has built at a certain point, but there is no maintenance of this community. You just assume that once you make it, it's done.

[00:37:14] So I feel that a lot of this will, come together as we go further in the discussion. But yeah, I just wanted to mention that's what my experience and what I'm viewing in conflict, especially with young people is right now, especially in this part of the world. Thank you.

[00:37:31] **Tabatha:** Thank you so much for here.

[00:37:33] That's really, really helpful insights. I'm going to combine some of the questions that we're already getting from participants with some of the questions from our second round. So starting with you, Zelda based on your experience working as an activist and organizer and women and youth team.

[00:37:53] Helping form the United Democratic Front against apartheid and working as a trainer and facilitator at the Chishimani Center for Activist Education. Can you talk a little bit more about what you were kind of referencing in your opening remarks around you know, different tools and approaches that you think really help sustain unity as part of the anti apartheid struggle?

[00:38:16] And then one other question. And then the last question we had in the chat was just you know, the, the tendency that we have sometimes to label power holders as enemies and, and, you know, how does that impact our ability to unite a movement if the ultimate goal is to potentially convince power holders.

[00:38:35] **Zelda:** Thanks. Maybe I should start with the second question because it's linked to sort of tools and methodologies. Again, it's context specific. So we might be addressing that question. From a totally different base because our context might be different. My reference here to power holders during the apartheid period as a system of inequality, racial oppression, internal colonialism, etc.

[00:39:05] Is not, it is a descriptor of, a state. that has no room for reconciliation. You don't reconcile yourself with inequality. There's no kiss and make up. There's no kiss and make up with a colonial settler who deprived people of land and rights and culture and everything that goes with it. But you fight the system which the power holders represent to change a system that is inclusive for all.

[00:39:34] So where we place the emphasis is a point of priority in relation to your context. Suppose we've attained a, a step towards a more inclusive democracy, as we've had in South Africa from one horrible, system that was, there was no space for mending such a broken system. We had to replace it. We saw in the process of replacing it and in that lies the transformative, iteration of of allies and partners.

[00:40:10] So we don't see the South African government as the enemy, as we would have seen the apartheid state as the enemy of the people. But that the apartheid government has disconnected or dislocated itself from the people, in that lies the problem that we need to address in the ways that we engage our tools previously or developing new tools to mediate.

[00:40:36] Conflict in the new dispensation. So I'm separating people as powerholders and a system of inequality that needs to be not only redressed, but

dismantled and transformed. So in that lies a distinction for me, and it might be totally different for anyone else or different contexts. In the, in the first question that was related to how we managed to attain unity and what are the tools?

[00:41:06] For conflict mediation, inter conflict mediation, particularly when we are engaged or mobilizing under the banner of a broad front. Bearing in mind that the UDF was formed during a period when front politics was very much in vogue in liberation movements, post independence, somehow the language changed as conditions changed, when young people in particular started standing up against the practices of my generation and older, where the single focus, often male dominated, iconic figures leading liberation movements, the UDF.

[00:41:48] and post independence, leaving very little room for inclusivity, and also where old practices of patriarchy emerged around personalities, even taken on by women in power. So we've seen a pushback against that with a move towards horizontalism, with a questioning of power holders in the form of individuals as opposed to, you know, movements for the people is the new contestation around which new contradictions emerge and new tools for mediation needs to, is emerging.

[00:42:25] And I think part of that, the marrying of the two of old practices with the new in engaging the formation of unity and establishing common purpose for a common objective and a common future Will change over time as it would. But I do think that the one of the things that remain essential to that is the ownership of the outcome.

[00:42:45] If it's not people centered. If it's not people driven, then those gaps leave maybe spaces for for the industry, the mediation industry to mediate. Sorry, I'm not turning a finger to you, but but you know what I'm saying is that in those gaps and the bigger they grow, we then have to professionalize outcomes because the tools no longer resort within and among us.

[00:43:10] And that is what we need to strengthen to be able to respond to our conditions, On the basis of the resources that engender a people's response. For people's outcomes. What were they in the past and are they still relevant today? And I would dare say that maybe in different forms, maybe the platform, but not the idea, not the not the principle of inclusivity.

[00:43:32] If we go from the dictum if you look at the farmers and I think we may or we just draw attention to the role of farmers. And if there is a problem for example a cow landing in a ditch. The cow cannot walk out by itself, nor can

one person pull it, pull it by its head. Or another only by its tail. It needs a collective effort for the cow to move up and go in the right direction.

[00:43:58] On top of it, getting out of the ditch is only one step, but going in the direction for it to be milked or for whatever its purpose is. So that collective effort. Engagement is an essential element for collective ownership of the outcome, but that we cannot run away from collective participation.

[00:44:17] Facilitated may be where the schisms or the gap is so big, whether it's personality driven ideology or maybe strategies and tactics of how we interpret the moment, and that is where those who are best skilled in activating the tools, maybe reminding us of the tools we used in the past, where those facilitators or mediators And practitioners could step in where we often get too stuck, sometimes too arrogant, sometimes to up our own noses to see the problem or to see the solution in front of our eyes to then activate those responses.

[00:44:52] But then just coming back or circling back to one of the inescapables is their maximum participation for maximum sustainable outcomes. And that's what people's assemblies. your general assemblies, those tools of engagement, and maybe through covert or other conditions, we've seen how the digital economy brought upon us another layer of another divide, yet while supposedly facilitating communication, but the face to face, looking each other in the eye and saying, I'm sorry, I messed up.

[00:45:23] Or I didn't see it that way or by actions or our actions in this movement unintentionally inadvertently is causing upstream a problem for another movement, especially in the ecological justice environment. We all connected to the rivers and mountains. And sometimes we deal with the problem in one end that could cause a problem and another without communicating.

[00:45:45] So how do we bring that together? If again, and I would say for me, even those tools and the infrastructure, we can reignite it. But one of the clear and present age in our unity and also the sharpening of our tools is the overplay of the ideology with a big eye and downplaying people that should have the big P.

[00:46:06] And in that lies, I think the room for mediators and negotiators to bring us to order and to refocus our attention on on our purpose. Thanks.

[00:46:20] **Tabatha:** Thank you so much for that, Zelda. I think some of the key highlights I was taking away from what you just shared were one, just the importance of separating, you know, the people from the problem and looking at the larger, you know, system and structure at hand to be able to find ways to move.

[00:46:35] The importance of legitimacy and credibility and, and actually who is doing the mediation and how much of that you know, can be lost sometimes in, in movements. And so not just having, you know, mediators who might be like coming in to provide support you know, in, in the, the mediation approach, but also being able to train you know, folks within the movements who, who are interested in kind of filling that, that role again.

[00:46:59] And then the other piece around just like the, the kind of like. Ecosystem awareness of how tradeoffs in one place might impact you know, in, in another. So just thanks for those rich comments. The next questions are for Wendy. There are a few in here that I'm pulling from, from participants.

[00:47:20] So based on your experience. in the field of conflict transformation and a focus on mindful engagement. Can you talk a little bit more about the specific skills and tools that you'd recommend for folks in spaces? Specifically people are looking for, you know, what are specific examples and things that you, you've done when dialogue has failed?

[00:47:40] Failed. And what does that, that look like? And then the next one is you mentioned the key issue around like, what happens when people don't get what they want, whether it's within movements or when those movements are negotiating with, with greater bodies of, of power. Can you talk a bit more about how you, how you tackle that issue, what tools you found have been useful for, for people trying to tackle those issues?

[00:48:04] **Wendy:** Okay. These, those are great questions. And, and so I'm not sure exactly where to start, but I, when dialogue fails, I think, what, sometimes what, what I find is really very helpful is for us to sort of go back to some basic, basic understanding of what our collective interests might be. And how we can sort of redefine those what's getting in the way of that.

[00:48:40] So taking that dialogue and moving it kind of into another, another way of engaging with each other and, trying to think of some good examples around that. And

[00:49:03] one of the things I want to do is move a little bit over here to this, this idea of how do we engage with each other in ways that don't harm this idea of kind of mindful engagement, sort of bringing us bringing us back to sort of our core humanity, and where that and sort of revitalizing what that what's important around that.

[00:49:24] I. I was asked to talk a little bit about this concept of mindful engagement and how we bring it into movements. And mindful engagement is this concept that, that evolved from some research that a friend and I did. We were asking ourselves why it is that certain people come into these high conflict spaces with very similar, with very similar sort of qualifications and background, yet getting very different outcomes.

[00:49:55] And what evolved from that was us asking us asking this question, what's required for us to, to do our work and what qualities do we need to cultivate within ourselves? So I think this gets Back to sort of reconstructing what dialogue can look like by refocusing on what it is that we're bringing to the table that is possible for, generating.

[00:50:22] goodness, rather than causing harm. And after researching over 75 exemplars in the field in conflict spaces like in health care, education, peace and reconciliation, the mediation world and, and alike, we We asked them this very question. What's what qualities are required and certain things emerged that I'll share with you here.

[00:50:49] But these are things that that we found over time when things fall apart that it's important to sort of bring ourselves back to so that we can sort of reenergize and and. And bring as Zelda was saying sort of this collective engagement and participation and bringing our core selves back to the back to the foundation of why we're doing this work, some of the things that the seven things that showed up.

[00:51:17] Were things like authenticity that it's really important when we start moving into these very high conflict spaces that we know ourselves, who am I, as I'm entering into this, what, what do I bring to this setting? How do I engage with conflict? Where am I adverse to it? Do I sort of walk away from it?

[00:51:39] Do I go head on? So this first part of authenticity, knowing yourself is really critical. The other part, which has been really huge, is sort of finding new ways to engage with each other and the way that we can communicate the way that we use our words. So going back to that, you know what Were your words helpful?

[00:51:59] Are you being open and receptive and without bias and judgment? Or, or is it something quite the opposite? Sort of regrounding ourselves in the way that we communicate? Are we listening in certain ways that are harmful? Or are we listening in ways that we can change our mind? That's a core part of oftentimes what, What happens in dialogue when it fails is that we're not listening deeply and listening enough that we can think about changing our own minds.

[00:52:27] Mindfulness and I don't want to, you know, somebody gave me a jar of mindful mayonnaise at one time, but that was, that wasn't what we're talking about. We were talking really about balanced awareness and thoughts, thoughts, your emotions, things like compassion. All these people love their work.

[00:52:44] Are you loving your work? It's part of what's happening in this, in your in your world such that. You're, you're so unhappy with this, you disrupting dialogue in some way or mediation. And so I think those are, are certain things, sort of core qualities that we often try to, when we're in the height of things that aren't working, sort of bring ourselves back to that core, those core foundations of who we are and how we want to proceed and how we want to engage, and how we want to be with each other as in community.

[00:53:16] So I'm not sure that's. I could go on for a long time, but let's just go ahead and stop there. And hopefully there's more opportunity to talk about it later. Thanks

[00:53:25] **Tabatha:** so much, Wendy. That's a, those are great, helpful, practical tools. So then Ruhi you bring a wealth of knowledge working as an organizer on intersectional issues around climate and India.

[00:53:39] Can you talk a bit more about the tensions that you were, you were referencing, within the, within the movement space that you work in, especially around intergenerational conflict as well as what, what do you do when you encounter a situation where people don't want to be in a mediation, don't want to dialogue or don't acknowledge that there is an internal conflict problem?

[00:54:03] **Ruhie:** Yeah. Thank you so much for that question. So, the climate youth movement is fairly new. And from 2018, if you like, track from school strikes and how it started emerging So I would say that initially there was a lot of excitement and then, you know, now we are at version 2. 0 when the movement starts evolving in a recent conflict mediation one of the learnings and one of the experiences that I had was that, clearly, The idea of what volunteering work is, is now imitating a lot of organizational structures, but

there are no real structures in place right now for volunteer groups because they are in sort of, as we say, they're in, in making, right.

[00:54:55] As we as more time is passing by, as more years are going by in the youth climate movement. And one of the things that. Was very visible that as Zelda referred earlier, that the patriarchal structures, right? How the same sort of tone same sort of like communication, those, the same kind of conditioning and the value system comes in, even in the volunteers, because of course they're part of the same society and they're looking at a lot of older senior activists, or, you know, there's been a lot of mentoring, which is obviously great to have in terms of knowledge.

[00:55:30] Thank you. But a lot of those existing structures also get passed on to a lot of young people as they are and it's very interesting because in my experience of the mediation that I did recently it was, it was all about being heard and acknowledged. One of the things that I observed was that the groups and the individuals in these two groups, and they were very specific, there was a group of like queer, and women, and you know, people who are identifying not as men, and another group of like Identifying assessment.

[00:56:08] And these two groups really wanted to be acknowledged and heard about what they were really feeling, but in a group, they were not able to express that communication because it was constantly in that conflict zone, who said what said all of that. And in the two separate calls that happened it was really quite interesting how the responses were.

[00:56:29] And when the final group calls happened, yeah. The tone was very different because people were able to express themselves in a safe space. Safety is really essential to this sort of communication. This sort of mediation. And I'm I'm also a campaigner, but I was called on specifically because I'm an older, you know, well, older, in the sense of like more experience than the youth climate campaigners.

[00:56:57] And I felt like that was the right sort of approach. I mean, I was also trying, but it worked out because there was a lot of positive response on what the resolution can be. And there were a lot of. Action points. The group came up itself themselves on what they want to do to resolve this conflict over time.

[00:57:15] So there was no actual resolution. And for me, that was a big learning that a resolution could look like some ideas and next steps on how to take this forward. So yeah, I think it was more about the venting, you know,

creating that safe space and then sort of like consolidating those groups together by acknowledging and then paving a way forward.

[00:57:39] **Tabatha:** Thanks so much for he very, very helpful to denote. So I know we're running a bit short on time. We're going to give the last question to Lisa, and then we'll turn it over to Kenzie to bring us home. Lisa, you talked a little bit about some of the, the fracturing that that has occurred you know, due to the Israeli Palestinian conflict can you speak a little bit more about how you see that happening and, and if there are opportunities to, to support from a mediation perspective, the fracturing and, and movements in the U.

[00:58:10] S. and beyond and if you have any thoughts about just, you know, ideological conflicts in general and how mediation can, can help play a role and in finding some, you know, some way forward.

[00:58:23] **Lisa:** Okay, great question. I want to ask the question or I want to answer the question that you asked me before this whole workshop started to, and one of the participants asked about it, too.

[00:58:34] There are new technologies called deliberative technologies, and one of them was actually created by people who were a part of the Occupy movement to enable large groups of people to make decisions together about tactics, about goals. Thank you. The, the platform is called POLIS, P O L DOT I S. And it's really great for when you are really committed to consensus and civic engagement in a social movement, which many of my co panelists you've talked about.

[00:59:05] We often talk about civic engagement as something that we need to do in democracy for our governments, but really being able to involve people in a movement in the decision making about the movement's goals and, and tactics. Now it's much, much easier with these new technologies like Polis and I segue now to the Israel Palestine conflict, particularly on campuses, because when you have a community that is, fractured and even experiencing Extreme cancel culture by both sides.

[00:59:43] So the ability even for people to sit and talk to each other is gone on many campuses, but deliberative technologies enable just a little bit of safety and ability for people to be able to talk on what are their shared commitments. What are their shared values or principles principles again, using a platform like polis.

[01:00:06] We've seen that that is possible. Even today in Israel, Palestine, these deliberative technologies are being used, first of all, among Israeli peace building activist groups and next week by Palestinian activist groups. So I think the potential for a democratic decision making by large groups of people and really helping people to listen at scale new technologies are helping movements do this.

[01:00:35] In the midst of cancel culture, extreme polarization that's happening even within social movements. Thanks.

[01:00:46] **Tabatha:** Thanks very much for that, Lisa. I know we're a little over, so I'm just going to turn it directly over to Kinsey to bring us home.

[01:00:53] **Kenzie:** Sure, I'll be really quick so everyone can get on with their days. To close today's event, I just want to do some thank yous. So first of all, thank you to everyone who has taken the time to join our event.

[01:01:04] A huge thank you to our panelists, to Zelda, Ruhi, Wendy, and Lisa for the work that you do and the lessons and times that you've shared with us today. everybody. Thank you to everyone at Horizons Project for heading the organization and facilitation of this event, and for all the work you've done compiling the resource page on this topic on the Democracy Resource Hub.

[01:01:23] Thank you to the 22nd Century Initiative and Grows Guild for your support with today's event, and also thank you on behalf of the Global Grassroots Support Network's community. So thank you everyone so much for your time today.

[01:01:38] **Nilanka:** Thank you. Thanks

[01:01:39] **Wendy:** to all of you. Thank you for the invite and thanks for everybody that's here. Thanks, everyone. Bye.

[01:01:48] **Tabatha:** See you on the next Zoom.