



Margot Fleischman,
Director of Strategic Initiatives and Communication
City of Melrose
Melrose City Hall, 1st Floor
562 Main Street
Melrose, MA 02176

October 21, 2022

Dear Director Fleischman,

It is with great enthusiasm that I submit this proposal for your consideration. We have been supporting conversations in Melrose in an informal way through training and coaching certain community members to design and facilitate dialogues. It was a pleasure to speak with you and the Mayor in the spring and discuss ways in which Essential Partners may be able to help you.

We believe that our 33 years of experience in supporting communities like Melrose overcome the challenges and polarizing conversations that threaten the community will be invaluable to your city and its parts.

You'll notice we rearranged the listed tasks in the technical proposal to reflect our preferred flow of work. Specifically, task 3 is listed before task 2 in order to give the newly trained facilitators a chance to put their knowledge into practice by leading a circle of their peers in a Reflective Structured Dialogue.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to reach out and ask and I would be happy to continue our conversation.

All the best,

John Sarrouf
Co-Executive Director
Essential Partners



essential
PARTNERS

Bold Explorations in Community

PROPOSAL

Melrose Together Dialogue Project

The City of Melrose and Community Partners

October 21, 2022



PROPOSAL

The Mayor's office in the City of Melrose along with the support of community groups and leaders is eager to build capacity in Melrose to dialogue on a number of important issues facing the city. In the recent past, the City of Melrose has experienced a level of divisiveness in public discourse about important issues that has threatened the unity of the community. Not unique to Melrose, these public disputes and the way they are engaged run counter to the hopes and aspirations of city leadership, Melrose Together, and its community partners. To that end, the mayor's office and Melrose Together seek to train a mix of city officials and community volunteers to design and facilitate dialogues across differences to build a stronger Melrose that is thriving and resilient. These dialogue facilitators would be an ongoing resource for the community to support conversations at all levels. The following scope of work from Essential Partners outlines a pathway to a community conversations project that will achieve these objectives.

Scope of Work

Phase 1: Implementation of Community Conversations Initiative

Task 1: Planning and Collaboration

Essential Partners' work is always tailored to the culture and specific needs of each community with which we work. To that end, EP would work with a planning team from the Mayor's Office and Melrose Together and its community partners to learn more about the needs and opportunities for dialogue in the life of the community. EP will support Melrose in mapping the community to build the planning team and trainees of diverse stakeholders.

It is also the case that the training will be more successful when participants have a place to apply the training immediately following, so during this planning phase, EP will work with the planning team to envision the first few community dialogues that will take place after the training. This phase will also include support in recruiting trainees, trainee surveys and preparation, and logistical planning.

Task 3: Facilitator Training (Part 1)

Specifically, Essential Partners will design and deliver a two-day dialogue facilitator training for up to 20 community city officials, community leaders, and other volunteers. While specific objectives for the training may shift as trainers customize the content to meet the needs of

participants and the project, participants of this workshop will likely experience and learn about:

- Participant introductions and discussion of how to create spaces for open dialogue and the importance of connecting before moving to content.
- The neurobiology of threat and the dynamics of a stuck conversation and polarization in community and gain a basic understanding of what makes dialogue across deep differences difficult.
- Skills and structures to support more constructive conversations across differences.
- Roles and responsibilities of community dialogue facilitators.
- Participating in a facilitated Reflective-Structured Dialogue (RSD) and debriefing for lessons learned.
- A basic framework for designing conversations that include many voices, cultures, and perspectives.
- Build competence and confidence to begin a dialogue, facilitate, and intervene in groups to support authentic and respectful communication or mutual understanding.

The training will also help participants coalesce as a team and build a clear sense of purpose for the initiative as a whole and their own individual purpose for participating in the project.

Task 2: Community Education:

Orientation to city officials and community leaders:

It is important for the larger community of city workers and community leaders to deeply understand the purpose, power, and process of dialogue in order to support and reinforce the work of the trained facilitators. The trained facilitators will then support the EP trainers in leading a 3-hour presentation for the larger community of leaders.

The larger group of approximately 60 leaders will learn about dynamics of stuck conversations and some simple strategies for breaking those patterns. The trained facilitators will also help facilitate a dialogue for their peers – thereby giving the facilitators a chance to lead a circle and their peers to experience a Reflective Structured Dialogue.

Task 4: Community Dialogue Design, Planning, and Reporting

Following the dialogue training, Essential Partners will work with the planning team to collaboratively design and plan the initial dialogues that will be led by the trained facilitators. This will include a series of meetings that will help the group frame, map, and invite the community for a community conversation focused on a topic of importance (and some urgency) to the community. The planning team will work to ensure that the community conversation(s) are designed to enhance understanding and deepen relationships by providing opportunities for talking and listening in a safe and structured environment. Additionally, Essential Partners might support this conversation by being present to co-facilitate. EP will also offer its suite of assessment tools to help Melrose Together learn about the impact of the project.

Phase 2: Ongoing Support, Coaching and Consultation

At Essential Partners, we know that a community dialogue project takes time and requires navigation of challenges and difficult moments; to support partners as they embed this work

into their own cultures, we offer ongoing support to planners and trainees. Included in this 5 hours of consultation and support may be, but is not limited to:

- Further dialogue design including facilitator scripts, timed agenda, virtual dialogue guidance, and host instructions.
- Participation in regularly scheduled planning meetings or office hours.
- Reflection and support through moments of discernment or challenge.
- Assessment, reflection, learning, and or adjustments in between and/or after meetings or dialogue sessions.

Optional Expansion of Capacity Through Training of Trainers: Facilitator Training (Part 2)

In order to build enough capacity and sustainability of the project, EP would recommend that after the first round of dialogues in the community that a second set of facilitators should be trained and that certain trainees from the first round be used to support the training and learn some basic skills of training. Specifically, Essential Partners will design and deliver a two-day dialogue facilitator training for up to 20 community leaders with 3-4 previously trained facilitators as coaches and small circle facilitators. Participants of this workshop will likely experience and learn about:

- Participant introductions and discussion of how to create spaces for open dialogue and the importance of connecting before moving to content.
- The neurobiology of threat and the dynamics of a stuck conversation and polarization in community and gain a basic understanding of what makes dialogue across deep differences difficult as well as skills to support more constructive conversations across differences.
- Skills and structures to support more constructive conversations across differences.
- Roles and responsibilities of community dialogue facilitators.
- Participating in a facilitated Reflective-Structured Dialogue (RSD) and debriefing for lessons learned.
- A basic framework for designing conversations that include many voices, cultures, and perspectives.
- Build competence and confidence to begin a dialogue, facilitate, and intervene in groups to support authentic and respectful communication or mutual understanding.

The training will also help participants coalesce as a team so trainees from the previous training will be invited to be part of the final hour to meet and discuss next steps for the project.

This Scope of work includes: access to EP guides or handouts for difficult conversations, membership in the EP global community of practice, free online webinars, and monthly office hours.

STAFFING

EP employs a team of about [twenty facilitators and trainers](https://whatisessential.org/people/practitioner), <https://whatisessential.org/people/practitioner> in addition to partnering with consultants who offer specific expertise or skills for each project. The team for this proposal will be selected based on expertise and availability during the timeline of the project. Two of the following four staff members are most likely to be staffed on this project:



Kathy Eckles is an Associate at Essential Partners and Project Manager. A skilled facilitator, trainer, business person, and therapist, Kathy has built an effective ongoing community dialogue program that uses Essential Partners' approach and knows what it takes to build and sustain community dialogue projects.

Kathy brings a deep background in business, psychology, group facilitation and training to her work with private individuals, organizational leaders and community groups. Formally trained as an executive coach, psychotherapist and mediator she focuses on helping people develop and/or integrate relationship, organizational and facilitation skills.

She was formerly a Division Vice President in the retail industry and adjunct professor at Lasell College where she taught Organizational Behavior and Ethics in Business. She has a Masters in Counseling Psychology and extensive experience in design and facilitation of private and board retreats, custom-designed workshops, and delivery of year-long training programs where she taught trauma resolution skills and the Enneagram to psychologists, doctors, coaches and therapists in the U.S., UK, Ireland, and Sweden. Kathy has been an associate at Essential Partners since 2016.

She focuses on listening for people's central message, their existing gifts and what's needed to help them move forward. Contact via kathy@whatisessential.org.



Phoebe Sinclair has been an Associate with Essential Partners since 2016 and a student of EP's approach since 2011. She has designed and facilitated dialogues and trainings with civic groups, faith communities, private institutions, local government, educators, parents, and students.

Her primary areas of interest include reflective practices, movement, consensus-building, and meeting design. Ms. Sinclair holds a BFA in Writing, Literature, and Publishing from Emerson College and, since 2005, has served as the first point of contact for civic inquiry and action at a Cambridge nonprofit. Contact via phoebe@whatisessential.org.



Bob Stains is a Senior Associate at Essential Partners, having previously served as Senior Director of Training.

For the past 23, years Bob has created constructive conversations on sexual orientation, religion, race, abortion, social class, gender, firearms, and other divisive issues within and between local, national and international organizations. He trains other senior practitioners in Essential Partners' Reflective Structured Dialogue approach, is a frequent conference and university speaker and provides consultation to academic, civic and religious leaders in the US and abroad.

Bob is a Visiting Researcher at the Boston University School of Theology, Adjunct Professor at Mitchell-Hamline School of Law and is a frequent trainer at Baylor U School of Law and Hebrew College. In addition, Bob is a Book Review Editor for the journal Socio-Historical Examination of Religion and Ministry, serves on the Executive Board of The Democracy Imperative and is an active member of Mediators Beyond Borders International. He was a co-founder of The Family Dinner Project and consulted to the Interpersonal Skills Component of the Harvard Negotiation Project for 14 years. Bob has also been Adjunct Faculty at Pepperdine University School of Law as well as Harvard Divinity School and was one of the original mediator trainers for the USPS REDRESS mediation program.

In addition to his work with Essential Partners over the past 27 years, Bob maintains a private conflict transformation practice in Danvers, MA. Contact via bob@whatisessential.org.



John Sarrouf, Co-Executive Director and Director of Program Development of Essential Partners. He teaches people how to facilitate dialogue across differences, mediate conflict, and manage interpersonal as well as intergroup challenges in their lives, communities, and workplaces.

Over more than two decades working with Essential Partners, John has facilitated dialogues on issues such as the role of guns in American life, police and the Black community, Israel and Palestine, interfaith relations between Muslims and Jewish people, human sexuality in the Christian church, as well as race and ethnic diversity. With Essential Partners, he has helped found sustaining, independent dialogue programs at universities, museums, and civic

organizations across the country and has also supported civic participation projects in Massachusetts, North Carolina, Florida, and Utah, among other locations.

John studied in the masters program in dispute resolution at the University of Massachusetts, Boston and served as the Assistant Director of Difficult Dialogues at Clark University, where he taught dialogue to faculty and students. He also co-founded the Peace and Conflict Studies program at Gordon College, where he taught for fifteen years. John teaches reconciliation at the European Center for the Study of War and Peace in Zagreb and sits on the advisory board of the Center for Science of Moral Understanding at the University of North Carolina.

John has authored curriculum and dialogue guides for schools, documentary films, and journalists as well as public dialogue guides on the opioid crisis, guns in America, the red-blue divide, and returning to post-pandemic life, among others. John has also served as the primary investigator on research and innovation grants from the Templeton Foundation and the University of Connecticut, the Fetzer Institute, and the American Arbitration Association Foundation.

To all of his work, John brings fifteen years in the theater as a professional actor and director. He is a member of the stage actors' union, Actors Equity. Contact via john@whatisessential.org.

About Essential Partners

Since 1989, Essential Partners has equipped people to live and work better together in community by building trust and understanding across differences. Our time-tested approach builds a foundation that makes public deliberation, thriving civic institutions, and collective decision-making possible. We achieve this by:

- Generating a new depth of mutual understanding across differences
- Rehumanizing the “Other” while diminishing stereotypes, blame, and infighting
- Shifting relationships toward productive engagement, even without common ground
- Building community capacity for civil conversations about complex and divisive issues
- Strengthening individual and community resilience to hold difficult conversations
- Investing stakeholders with the skills and tools to advance community-wide change

With the ability to disrupt and transform dysfunctional communication patterns, communities and organizations become less vulnerable to polarization, factionalism, and deadlock. A reinforced foundation of trust and understanding allows them to harness the strength derived from diverse perspectives.

Essential Partners' approach, Reflective Structured Dialogue, has helped individuals, groups, organizations, and communities address such divisive issues as immigration and the global refugee crisis, racial and ethnic diversity, intra- and interfaith dynamics, gender identity and sexual orientation, and the role of guns in society, among others.

No two communities are exactly alike; no two EP projects are the same either. Through careful preparation and planning, customized program design, and the adaptation of our core approach, EP meets every set of stakeholders where they are. We leverage the strengths, networks, and shared understandings that make each community unique.

Essential Partners works collaboratively to generate tailored dialogue models that are scalable and broadly adaptable, so that each community or organization builds the capacity to address not only their current challenge, but the next one, and the next.

Six months after participating in a training with us, each facilitator we train impacts an average of 25 people through their facilitation and conversations. When people participate in two days of EP training in their communities, 80% of trainees report observing changes in other stakeholders' attitudes towards engaging across differences moving forward.

Additionally, 90% of those who participate in dialogues facilitated by EP trainees report that experiencing dialogue allows them to see beyond their pre-judgment or stereotypes – and 90% feel their opinions were taken seriously after participating in a dialogue.

Essential Partners has extensive experience in developing and supporting dialogue programs in cities, towns, and communities including, but not limited to the following:

2018 Groton Civil Discourse Project, MA
2016 Gloucester Conversations, MA
2021 San Diego County Office of
Education, CA
2021 City of Newburyport DEI Alliance, MA
2019 Utah Civic Engagement Incubator, UT
2018 Ohio Civic Engagement Incubator, OH
2016 Watertown Community

Conversations, MA
2021 Town of Wellesley Civil Discourse
Initiative, MA
2021 Center for a Vital Community,
Sheridan, WY
2020 Howard County, MD
2022 YMCA Kitsap Pierce County, WA
2022 US DOT





WORKING WITH ESSENTIAL PARTNERS

Essential Partners offers materials and resources to support groups as they work towards bringing dialogue into their community:

- [Publicity Packet](#)
This folder includes Essential Partners logos and images you may use in your own materials or invitations as well as sample flyers and introduction letters to help guide your thinking as you reach out to your community.
(https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1lc9pcei5NNfowclFI-1-u_p7JKwbyJGH?usp=sharing)
- [Partner Handbook](#)
This handbook provides information based on the most frequently asked questions we receive from our partners. It includes information about what we offer to our partners and what we ask of our partners, as well as providing contact information for point people on staff, recommendations regarding venues, and recommendations regarding the planning of projects based on our experience.
(https://drive.google.com/file/d/12EC3-v_iWVrASRyKzmmh_ANa6NIBJ6Ymd/view?usp=sharing)

A note on our materials: In this scope of work, we'll be customizing materials we've developed over years (sometimes decades) to support communities and institutions as they support dialogue in their context. These materials are controlled and owned by EP, and may be used by The City of Melrose and Melrose Together as part of our work together as outlined in this scope of work. We ask that the copyright credit on those materials remains in place. If you would like to discuss using these materials in any other way beyond the scope of this work, please reach out to us anytime at training@whatisessential.org.

John Sarrouf
Name Printed

Signature

Phoebe Sinclair

100 Jamaica Street, Apt. 1, Jamaica Plain, MA 02130
(617) 755-6926 | psinclair@agassiz.org, hellopho@hotmail.com LinkedIn:
<https://www.linkedin.com/in/phoebe-sinclair-80a9a485>

Experience

Community Liaison, Agassiz Baldwin Community

Cambridge, MA 2005-present

Community organizer and writer providing quality-of-life services and facilitating a forum for neighborhood-based civic action

Communication

- Advance internal and external communications by serving as liaison between the agency, residents, city departments, and institutions
- Facilitate monthly meetings to inform residents about local issues and opportunities
- Coordinate, write, edit, and publish eight-page newsletter *The Whisler*, distribution 600
- Webmaster overseeing two websites powered by Wordpress

New Initiatives & Special Projects:

- Co-created and implemented exploratory programs: lectures, focus groups, agency-wide anti-racist framework, and engaged in strategic planning and strengths-based analysis

Technology:

- Expertise in Macintosh OS and Microsoft Office
- Proficient in Adobe InDesign & Photoshop, WordPress, Constant Contact, blogging, social media, and video conferencing
- Working knowledge of graphic design principles and HTML
Associate, Essential Partners
Cambridge, MA 2016-present
Practitioner, consultant, and facilitator for Essential Partners' open enrollment workshops and project-based work around the country
- Contract to facilitate and train individuals and groups in Reflective Structured Dialogue
- Support groups to engage across differences, deepen understanding, and build relationships to enable collaborative action

Education

BFA in Writing, Literature, and Publishing, Emerson College, Boston, MA, 2000

Publications & Awards

Middle Grade novel contract, Candlewick Press, 2019-present

Ivan Gold Fellow, Writers Room of Boston, 2018

PEN New England Susan P. Bloom Discovery Night Award for children's fiction, 2006

Robert R. Stains Jr.

SUMMARY: Seasoned trainer, conflict transformation practitioner, manager, consultant working on the most difficult issues: race, religion, sexual orientation, values. I have trained, coached and facilitated many thousands of people of multiple identities, skill sets and professions, at all levels of power in the US and abroad on how to prevent or transform identity-based conflict.

CONTACT: bob@whatisessential.org | (978) 317-7949

EXPERIENCE:

Principal, Bob Stains and Associates, Conflict Transformation

Providing dialogue facilitation, mediation, training, consultation and coaching to groups and organization leaders grappling with thorny issues of identity, values, political and religious differences. <http://bobstainsconflicttransformation.com/>

Senior Associate, Essential Partners (fka Public Conversations Project, PCP), Cambridge, MA (<http://www.whatisessential.org>) Help organizations work through identity-based conflicts using the Reflective Structured Dialogue approach; train practitioners, educators, clergy and students.

- Equips secondary school teachers and administrators with skills to use dialogue in their classrooms and campus community through teaching:
 - Rituals, routines and proactive responses that create and maintain a safe physical and intellectual environment where students can take academic risks and that prevent behaviors that interfere with learning
 - Instructional practices that motivate and engage all students in the content of the lesson
 - How to develop students' relationship and communication skills through providing opportunities for students to learn in groups with diverse peers and facilitating meaningful academic discourse
 - How to regularly support students in identifying their interests, needs and convictions

Visiting Researcher, Boston University School of Theology Tom Porter Program for Conflict Transformation.

Book Review Editor, Socio-Historical Examination of Religion and Ministry: A Journal of the FaithX Project.

Past:

Senior Vice President/Director for Training, Essential Partners/Public Conversations Project

Created and oversaw domestic and international training, consultation, and dialogue initiatives. Refined PCP's internationally-renowned Reflective Structured Dialogue approach, created training programs and grew the organization from a small group with a domestic focus to a pioneer in the field of dialogue, working around the world.

Consultant, Harvard Negotiation Project, Cambridge, MA. Provided coaching and consultation to the Interpersonal Skills Component.

https://www.pon.harvard.edu/category/research_projects/harvard-negotiation-project/

Co-founder, The Family Dinner Project Cambridge, MA. <https://thefamilydinnerproject.org/>

National Director of Training and Technical Assistance, Better Homes Foundation, Newton Center, MA. Created and oversaw national training programs for homeless shelter staff, school personnel and medical professionals.

Director of Training and Staff Development, Danvers State Hospital, Hathorne, MA. Created and oversaw first comprehensive training program for all staff, all shifts. Transformed hospital culture leading to re-accreditation lost 20 years prior.

Adjunct Faculty: Harvard Divinity School, Pepperdine University School of Law, Hamline University School of Law, North Shore Community College, Nyack College. Courses on dialogue, communication and conflict, psychology and skills for professional helpers.

EDUCATION:

M.Ed., Community Mental Health Counseling, Northeastern University, Boston

Graduate Faculty, New School for Social Research, New York

B.A., Psychology, Nyack College, Nyack, N.Y. (Magnum Cum Laude)

CREDENTIALS (selected; for greater detail www.bobstains.com):

- Guest Scholar Practitioner, Kansas State University
- Executive Board Member, The Democracy Imperative
- Advanced Practitioner, Association for Conflict Resolution

AWARDS/HONORS (selected; for greater detail www.bobstains.com):

- American Fellow, Young Southeast Asian Leaders program, US State Department
- Advisory Board, Akordi, Helsinki, Finland
- Honored for PCP work by the American Family Therapy Academy and several other organizations

PUBLICATIONS and RESOURCES (selected; for greater detail www.bobstains.com):

- Stains, R. Jr. Cultivating courageous communities through the practice and power of dialogue. Mitchell Hamline Law Review 42:5, 2016, 1519-1545.
- Stains, R. Repairing the breach: The power of dialogue to heal relationships and communities. Journal of Public Deliberation 10:1, July 2014, article 7.

WORKSHOPS AND TRAININGS

I have trained over 30,000 people in the US, Canada, England, Switzerland, France, Germany, Taiwan, Finland and The Philippines in a variety of settings. Colleges and universities in which I've lectured, facilitated, offered workshops or co-created workshops/classes with faculty (partial list) include: The Kennedy School of Government, Clinton School for Public Service, Schools of Law at

Harvard, Hamline, Pepperdine and University of Washington; Wellesley, Middlebury, Gordon and Columbia Teachers Colleges.

Robert R. Stains Jr

Publications

Kangasoja, J. and Stains, R: The role of dialogue in rebuilding polarized communities and broken ties between people - The Public Conversations Project as an experimental practice (in Finnish). In Attias, M. and Kangasoja, J., Eds., Them and us: Tools for a polarized time. Helsinki, Into Publishing, expected January 2020.

Stains, Jr., R. and Joseph, D. The invisible threads of public discourse: Lessons from other countries. ACRolution Magazine, September, 2017, 32-34.

Stains, Jr., R. Cultivating courageous communities through the practice and power of dialogue. Mitchell Hamline Law Review, 42:5, 2016, 1519-1545.

Stains, R. Jr. Facilitation tips from the Public Conversations Project. Webinar for Independent Lens/Independent Television Service affiliates, March 29, 2016.

Stains, R. Beyond “them” and “us” in the church: The power of dialogue. Article and webinar, Pastoral Excellence Network. October 20, 2015.

Stains, Jr., R. Repairing the breach: The power of dialogue to heal relationships and communities. Journal of Public Deliberation 10:1, July 1, 2014, article 7, 1-5.

Stains, R. Jr. Fathering after the kids leave. Cambridge, MA: The Family Dinner Project, 2014. <https://thefamilydinnerproject.org/blog/family-blog/now-fathering-kids-leave/>

Stains, R. Reflection for Connection: Deepening Dialogue Through Reflective Processes. Conflict Resolution Quarterly 30:1, Fall, 2012, 33-51.

Stains, R. and Streit Baron, A. Dialogue: A virtual workshop. Watertown, MA: Public Conversations Project, 2011.

Stains, R. A tale of two grandmothers. In Herzig, M. and Chasin, L., Fostering dialogue across divides: A nuts and bolts guide from the Public Conversations Project. Watertown, MA: The Public Conversations Project, 2006, 151.

Stains, R. Training on purpose. Conflict Resolution Quarterly 20:4, Summer, 2003, 473-475.

Stains, R. Reflective training: Matching educational practice with transformative intention. In Folger, J. and Bush, R., Eds., Designing mediation: Approaches to training and practice within a transformative framework. NY: Institute for the Study of Conflict Transformation, 2001, 153-167.

Roth, S., Stains, R. and Chasin, R. Reflections and questions: A response from the Public Conversations Project. In Spano, S., Public dialogue and participatory democracy: The Cupertino Community Project. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, 2001, 219-230.

Chasin, R., Herzig, M., Roth, S. Chasin, L., Becker, C., and Stains, R. Jr. From Diatribe to Dialogue on Divisive Public Issues: Approaches Drawn from Family Therapy. Mediation Quarterly, Summer Issue 1996 13:4.

Stains, R. The helper: Self-awareness and self-care. In Bassuk, E. Birk, A. and Liftik, J., Eds., Community care for homeless clients with mental illness, substance abuse or dual diagnosis. Newton Center, MA: The Better Homes Foundation and the US Dept. of Housing and Urban Development, 1994, 3-3 to 3-7.

Stains, R. and Doepel, D. Community care for homeless clients with mental illness, substance abuse or dual diagnosis: A video-based training program. Newton Center, MA: The Better Homes Foundation and the National Institute of Mental Health, 1994.

Presentations, Workshops, Interviews, etc. (selected, 2018-2020)

Guest expert, "Caring Voice" radio show, 104.9FM North Shore, Massachusetts, six episodes, 11/19-3/20.

Curiosity, conversation and community: Managing differences over Israel/Palestine. Rabbinical program students, Hebrew College, Newton, MA, January 30, 2020.

Understanding and Engaging Challenges in Facilitation. Secondary school educators, Edward M. Kennedy Institute, Boston, MA, January 22, 2020.

Salvaging conversation in a polarized world. Boston Inter-faith Leadership Initiative, Boston, MA, December 10, 2019.

Facilitator training: Reflective Structured Dialogue. Community leaders, Staten Island Advance Disparity Project, Staten Island, NY, November 16, 2019.

Curiosity, Conversation and Community: Dialogue Skills for Bridging Differences. Boston Bridges Fellowship, Miller Center at Hebrew College, Newton, MA. November 14, 2019.

Facilitator training: Reflective Structured Dialogue. Belmont/Watertown United Methodist Church, Belmont, MA, November 9, 2019.

Pilgrimage, story and connection. Paper, Boston University School of Theology panel: "Ministry as pilgrimage: When the journey is our home." October 29, 2019.

Conversational Resilience: Listening and Speaking Across Divides. Boston University School of Theology, Conflict Transformation class. October 17, 2019.

Transforming Conversations: Invitation and Inquiry in Personal and Group Life. Addir Inter-faith Leadership Fellows, MIT, Cambridge, MA, October 13, 2019.

Bridging Chasms: The power and practice of Reflective Structured Dialogue. Training for entering graduate students, Clinton School for Public Service, University of Arkansas, Little Rock. October 8, 10, 2019.

Curiosity, Conversation and Community: Dialogue Skills for Bridging Differences. Leadership training, Winthrop Rockefeller Institute, Morollton, AR, October 9, 2019.

Conversational Resilience for Conflict Transformation. Leadership training, United Presbyterian Church of Whitinsville, MA. September 30, October 1, 2019.

Dialogue Skills for Bridging Differences. Interfaith Student Council, Tufts University, Medford, MA, November 22, 2019.

Boundaries by Design: Supporting Curiosity and Expression in the Midst of Threat. Plenary workshop for federal mediators' conference, "Borders, Barriers and Bridges." Federal Judicial Center, San Diego, CA September 11, 2019.

Shifts Happen: Creating Spaces for Listening and Being Heard. Plenary workshops, leadership retreat, Northwest Association of Independent Schools, Leavenworth, WA, June 25, 26, 2019.

Wise Facilitation: How to Respond When Your Personal Identity is Challenged and Salvage Tough Moments: How to Respond When Someone Says Something Repugnant to You. Workshops at Northwest Dispute Resolution Conference, University of Washington School of Law, Seattle, WA, March 26, 27, 2019.

Welcome, Conversation and Community. Workshop for leaders of The American Church in Paris, Paris, France, February 19, 2019.

Engaging Conflict: Reflective Structured Dialogue and the Inner Resources of the Facilitator. Workshop, Harvard Divinity School, Religions and the Practice of Peace Program, Cambridge, MA, January 7-10, 2019; Jan. 3-5 and 8-10, 2018.

The Power and Practice of Reflective Structured Dialogue. Workshop for program staff at The Berghof Foundation, Berlin, Germany, November 10, 11, 2018.

Depolarizing: The Power and Practice of Reflective Structured Dialogue. Keynote address, Depolarize! national conference, Community Mediation Center of Finland, Helsinki, May 8, 2018.

The courage to ask: Conflict consultant Robert Stains says productive conversation begins and ends with thoughtful questions. Interview by David Schimke in Citizens League Voice magazine, Winter, 2018, 4 and 5.

JOHN R. SARROUF

Conflict resolution, facilitation and collaboration professional with 14 years of experience developing programs to support communities to deliberate, discern and transform conflict.

EXPERIENCE

2011 – PRESENT

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND HEAD OF PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT,
ESSENTIAL PARTNERS

Common Visions for the Common Good: (2021-2023) Primary Investigator, three-year, \$330,000 grant from the Fetzer Institute. A collaboration between Essential Partners' Reflective Structured Dialogue and PhotoVoice to build a community of practice for Essential PhotoVoice across 12 communities across the United States.

Civil Conversations Project (in partnership with the Edward M. Kennedy Institute)

Equips secondary school teachers and administrators with skills to use dialogue in their classrooms and campus community through teaching:

- Rituals, routines and proactive responses that create and maintain a safe physical and intellectual environment where students can take academic risks and that prevent behaviors that interfere with learning
- Instructional practices that motivate and engage all students in the content of the lesson • How to develop students' relationship and communication skills through providing opportunities for students to learn in groups with diverse peers and facilitating meaningful academic discourse
- How to regularly support students in identifying their interests, needs and convictions

Intellectual Humility and Conviction in Public Discourse: Primary Investigator, three-year, \$214,000 grant from the Templeton Foundation through University of Connecticut, to develop and train university faculty in dialogue methods for the classroom to encourage humility and community engagement in students.

- Lead team from Southern Methodist University, Tufts University, Bridgewater College, Gordon College to study intellectual humility in the classroom and design a training for best practices.
- Train cohorts of faculty from each school and track and assess learning.
- Develop online resources for faculty who want to use dialogic methods in the classroom.

Pastors & Science Project: Co-PI, with Gordon College and Gordon Conwell Seminary a three year, \$200,000 grant from the Biologos Foundation (funding from the Templeton Foundation) to train evangelical ministers in science literacy and the scientific method to bridge the faith and science divide.

- Lead focus groups of pastors to understand the scientific, theological, and pastoral questions of pastors.
- Plan classes and facilitate afternoon dialogues relating to pastoral implications of morning classes.
- Develop materials for pastors to lead dialogues about the intersection of faith and science.

Gloucester Conversations: Lead mapping, development, and management of deliberative democracy initiative with local leaders in the City of Gloucester, MA.

- Network with like initiatives: New Hampshire Listens, Hands Across North Quabban, Lawrence Community Works, Everyday Democracy to support community education about new models of local governance, deliberation and networking.
- Design and lead trainings for local facilitators and non-profit leaders to facilitate public meetings.
- Facilitate community meetings on issues such as ocean planning, public art policy, education forums.

Dialogue in Higher Education: Developed two-day dialogue facilitator training for college students, administrators, and faculty to be able to design and facilitate dialogues across difference on issues such as inclusion, pluralism, Israeli/Palestinian conflict, gender, race, symbols of the confederacy, political affiliation.

- Developed and delivered Trainings for Wellesley College's Initiative for Diversity, Northeastern University's Global Citizenship Initiative, University of San Diego's School of Leadership & Education, Bridgewater College's Academic Citizenship, Tufts University's Inclusion Project, Tufts Fletcher School of International Diplomacy, Gordon College's Dialogue Club, Scripps College, Laguardia Community College.
- Convene annual gathering of a thirteen school network of dialogue in higher education day of dialogue with follow up conference calls, semester round-ups, and ongoing design support for programs.

Family Dinner Project: Direct and manage a three-year, \$600,000 grant from the Poses Family Foundation, to build a grassroots movement to support families and communities to build rituals of gathering for family meals. • Develop partnerships with Mayo Clinic's Center for Innovation, Associated Early Child Care and Education, Lynn Public Schools, Mothers of Preschoolers International etc. • Create parent and family workshops with training manuals to train trainers. • Oversee website development reaching 12,000 unique hits per month.

Wrote online behavior change program to support families in their own homes including monthly newsletters.

- Oversight of qualitative and quantitative assessments of all programming.

2009 – 2011

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR & LECTURER, DIFFICULT DIALOGUES, CLARK UNIVERSITY

- Support the Director of the Higgins School for the Humanities in all public events and dialogue related activities including semester long symposium and executive committees.
- Teach semester-long dialogue seminars in topics such as *Gender, Israel/Palestine, Technology in our Lives, Sustainability, and Religious Pluralism*.
- Coordinate and facilitate *Inviting Dialogue* a two-day conference for 16 colleges and universities working with dialogue on campus and in the classroom.
- Recruit, train, and oversee the *Difficult Dialogue Fellowship Program*

2004-2018

LECTURER & FELLOW, PEACE AND CONFLICT STUDIES, GORDON COLLEGE •

Co-wrote the design and requirements for the minor in Peace and Conflict Studies with professors from the Sociology Department

- Designed and taught Mediation Skills, Reconciliation and Conflict Transformation, Interpersonal Communications, Special Skills in Negotiation, and independent studies in the Arts and Conflict Resolution.
- Taught Dialogue Across Difference for the Gordon Dialogue Club, Residential Life, and Dialogic Classroom.

EDUCATION

2010

Kroc Institute for International Peace, Notre Dame University, Teaching Peace in the 21st Century

2008

Public Conversations Project, Watertown, MA Power of Dialogue

2008

Weatherhead Institute, Harvard University, Dignity in Reconciliation,

2004

M.A. DISPUTE RESOLUTION, UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS

1993

B.A. EUROPEAN HISTORY, BOWDOIN COLLEGE

PUBLICATIONS

Hard to Say, Hard to Hear, Heart to Heart: Inviting and Harnessing Strong Emotions in Dialogue for Deliberation. Stains, Jr., R. R., & Sarrouf, J. (2022). *Journal of Deliberative Democracy*, 18(2), pp. 1–5. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.16997/jdd.979>

Disruption, dialogue, and swerve: Reflective structured dialogue in religious studies classrooms DeTemple J, Sarrouf J. *Teach Theol Relig.* 2017;20:283–292. <https://doi.org/10.1111/teth.12398>

Creating Space for Democracy, 2019:
Chapter 5: Creating Cultures of Dialogue in Higher Education with Katie Hyten.
Stylus Publishing, LLC, Oct 2019

Armor of Light Discussion Guide, 2015:
20-page dialogue facilitation guide to support conversations on guns in American society following the documentary film *The Armor of Light*, directed

by Abigail Disney.

Four Weeks to a Better Family Dinner, 2013:
Online videos and downloadable curriculum for behavior change in communities and families to develop habits of healthy communication during mealtimes.

Connect, Act and Thrive: A conversation Guide to address opiate abuse in communities, 2016:
12-page conversation guide to support communities dialogue toward action on the issue of opiate abuse and overdose. For the USA Today Network, published by the Nashville Tennessean.

Inviting Dialogue, 2010:
Five years of the Difficult Dialogues Initiative at Clark University. Pieces include descriptions of variety of dialogue models

PRESENTATIONS

Welcoming Week 2021 - Welcoming America - “Interpersonal Othering & Belonging (Fostering Belonging Individually and Structurally series)”

Lead For America – Cultivating Convergent Leadership Summit – 2020 Presented “Weaving the Resilient Community”

University of Connecticut – Renewing Public Discourse Conference - 2019

Humility and Conviction in Public Life

University of California, Irvine – Building Bridges Across Divides 2017
“Difficult Conversations Made Easier”

Dialogue Across Divides – Facilitation Workshop 2013-2021

Designed and facilitated a two-day workshop for professors and students at the following institutions

Southern Methodist, University Brown University, University of the South - Sewanee, Rutgers University, University of San Diego, LaGuardia Community College, Bridgewater College, Northern Essex Community College, Tufts University, University of Connecticut, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, University of Iowa

European Center for the Study of War and Peace, Dubrovnik 2015:

Presented “The Deliberately Unsatisfying Nature of Both Dialogue and Reconciliation for Advocates of Justice.”

Wellesley College Diversity Initiative 2011:

Keynote and facilitation of community dialogue.

Clark University Inviting Dialogue 2010:

Designed and facilitated dialogue in higher education conference.

Bethel University Moberg Conference on Reconciliation 2009:

Presented paper “A New Model for Interpersonal Reconciliation Applied to Villages in Post Conflict Lebanon”.

Contact info:

john@whatisessential.org | (617) 923-1216



Psychology / Coaching / Training / Group Facilitation

Overview: Kathy Eckles, based in Boston, MA. has over 30 years of professional experience in retail merchandising, psychotherapy, training, group facilitation and coaching. She holds a Masters of Counseling Psychology from Pacifica Graduate Institute and was a faculty member at Lasell College. She had a long-held position as a top-quartile performing division vice president in the retail industry and is now an associate with [Essential Partners](#) where she helps civic, religious, and higher ed organizations develop civil discourse programs and apply dialogue design and facilitation skills to help their communities live and work better together. Kathy also facilitates

senior executives in half year mindfulness-based leadership coaching programs for the [Asian Leadership Consultancy](#). Formally trained in psychotherapy, mediation, and executive coaching, she is the principal of [Kathy Eckles & Co., LLC](#), a psychotherapy, coaching and group facilitation business where she supports adults in personal/professional development.

Kathy has extensive experience in design and facilitation of private and board retreats, workshops, and delivery of year-long training programs where she taught trauma resolution skills and the Enneagram to psychologists, doctors, coaches, and therapists in the US, UK, Ireland, and Sweden. Kathy fuses decades of study in wisdom traditions, archetypal and spiritual psychology, mediation and dialogue design with her clinical pastoral counseling experience and psychological studies. She utilizes her deep presence, sensitivity, and intuition to create transformative change in her clients. She is also logical, analytical, and results-focused while simultaneously bringing great levity and fun to her practice.

Professional Experience

Retail Management

MAY DEPARTMENT STORES

(1987 – 1999)

FILENE'S – Boston, MA

(1993 – 1999)

Divisional Vice President – Merchandising

Responsible for the end-to-end operations of the Petite and Women's Sportswear Division encompassing 43 stores throughout New England. Full P/L responsibility for this \$85M revenue unit. Directly responsible for managing a professional staff of 11 Buyers and Assistant Buyers and an annual operating budget of \$120M.

- Exceeded sales forecasts by \$11M over two years, consecutively achieving #1 and #2 growth rank and sales penetration to total store/inventory management. Consistent top quartile performance in sales and profits.
- Increased profits in Better Price merchandise line by 10% in one year. Developed targeted mix of key promotions, and focused assortments resulting in #1 sales growth and #2 inventory turn status.
- Developed individual assortment, presentation, and marketing packages for 8 new stores all of which achieved or exceeded sales forecasts during the first year of operation.
- Mentored Buyers to assume leadership roles on corporate merchandise product teams, ultimately promoting 18 people over a 6 year period.

May Co. – Cleveland, OH

(1987 – 1993)

Divisional Vice President – Merchandising

Responsible for the end-to-end operation of the Better Sportswear Division encompassing 23 stores in Ohio. Full P/L responsibility for this \$35M revenue unit. Directly responsible for managing a professional staff of nine and an annual operating budget of \$48M.

- Increased Better Sportswear annual sales from \$3M to \$18M and year-over-year profit margins by 33%.
- Conceived of and introduced new product assortments in targeted stores. Negotiated marketing packages.
- Developed and delivered sales training programs to improve customer service and increase sales.

- Doubled Petite Sportswear sales in three years maximizing moderate price lines.
- Achieved #1 sales growth rank and top quartile status in both the Swimwear and Suit lines.

The Higbee Company – **Cleveland, OH**

(1975 – 1987)

Divisional Merchandise Manager

Responsible for the end-to-end operation of multiple soft and hard line businesses including merchandise and stores divisions. Promoted 9 times in 12 years.

- Improved profitability of European/American couture and bridge sportswear businesses by 12% in two years.
- Achieved Children's Division top quartile sales and profit status from a field of 14 line level peers
- Attained top ranking sales results in multiple clothing and accessories divisions resulting in #1 store sales status.
- Grew sales in each division of responsibility by 12 – 34% through customer-focused assortments and fiscally responsible liquidity management which supported emerging market trends and key promotional purchases.

Individual & Organizational Development

Kathy Eckles & Co., LLC – **Boston, MA** www.KathyEckles.com

(1999 – Present)

Consultant – Psychology, Coaching, Training, Group Facilitation

Responsible for the design and delivery of individual and organizational development services and programs.

- Provides energy psychology, psychotherapy, and coaching to individual clients
- Facilitates non-profit board retreats, strategic planning sessions and visioning projects
- Designs and facilitates training programs integrating business, psychology, energy, communication and coaching
- Facilitates mindfulness-based leadership coaching programs for senior executives through the [Asian Leadership Consultancy](#).
- Taught Ethics in Business and Organizational Behavior at [Lasell College](#) in Newton, MA.
- Provided career management consulting services for Keystone Associates, a division of Keystone Partners

Life Centered Therapy, Inc. – **Waltham, MA** Founder, [Andrew Hahn, Psy.D.](#)

(1999 – 2006)

Consultant, Certified Trainer, Psychotherapist, Business Development Manager

Responsible for business development, marketing, and training curriculum development and delivery.

- Designed the organizational structure and developed appropriate governance and operating principles.
- Developed educational materials and associated fee structures.
- Co-author of a training manual for advanced study of psycho-spiritual healing framework and group facilitation
- Delivered skills-based personal development training internationally and domestically to a culturally diverse mix of psychologists, therapists, teachers, doctors, executive coaches in sessions ranging from one to twelve days.
- Led personal growth retreats incorporating psychology, spirituality, and energy therapies
- Counseled individuals and groups to resolve physical, emotional, relational, and spiritual difficulties

Masterful Coaching – **Brookline, MA** www.MasterfulCoaching.com

(2002 – 2003)

Executive Coach

Responsible for refining skills as an executive coach under the tutelage of founder Robert Hargrove.

- Acquired the knowledge and skills necessary to help leaders create powerful breakthrough results.
- Co-facilitated corporate coaching workshops and marketed executive coaching curriculum to universities.

Education

Trained Mediator – 40 hours alternative dispute resolution training

[MWI](#) – Mediation Works, Inc., October 2010

MA, Counseling Psychology, with concentration in Depth Psychology – magna cum laude

[PACIFICA GRADUATE INSTITUTE](#), Carpinteria, CA, 1999

BA, Clothing & Textiles – cum laude [BOWLING GREEN UNIVERSITY](#), Bowling Green, OH 1975