

McNally:

Hello, I'm Terrence McNally. Welcome to FREE FORUM: A WORLD THAT JUST MIGHT WORK. I'll be speaking today with SAM DALEY-HARRIS, founder of the anti-poverty lobby RESULTS as well as Civic Courage. His 2024 edition of his book RECLAIMING OUR DEMOCRACY: *Every Citizen's Guide to Transformational Advocacy* is coming out in paperback in mid-January and to learn more, you can go to [civiccourage.org](http://civiccourage.org) or [reclaimingourdemocracy.com](http://reclaimingourdemocracy.com).

On freeform, we explore the lives, the work, the ideas of individuals I suspect have pieces of the puzzle of a world that just might work. We look at politics, economics, environment, science, health. Culture - all based on the fact that I believe we can do better and I want to find out how.

The show streams weekly on the Progressive Voices Network on [tunein.com](http://tunein.com) and podcasts are available anytime, anywhere on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, most major podcast sites, and at my site, [terrencemcnally.net](http://terrencemcnally.net)

Sam Daley-Harris was my guest for the first time exactly a year ago this week. So why am I having him on again so soon? Because while what we're talking about here - transformative advocacy - was valuable during the election campaign... Millions wanted to get involved - and Sam and I talked about how the best organizations not only pursue impact - at that time, largely electoral, perhaps - but also train, nourish, and develop participants and their leadership abilities, their advocacy abilities, their citizenship abilities.

Now that we're faced with the results of that election, transformational participation is even more critical - for individuals, for organizations, communities, and, critically, to restore American society as a whole. For most Americans, this election has delivered exhaustion, divisiveness, and for many, pain and resignation. After the election, Tom Nichols wrote in *The Atlantic*, "Americans must stay engaged and make their voices heard at every turn..." Liz Cheney tweeted, "Citizens across this country must now be the guardrails of democracy." But I assume most Americans still wonder how - and even if - they can make a difference between elections.

What are the options? Protesting? It's important, but it's usually not the long game. Signing email form letters? Turns out only 3% of congressional staff say that's highly effective. Taking a two-year nap until the next election? Well, that is sadly the preferred option for many. Or a fourth option that we're talking about today: Transformational advocacy, which helps you change yourself in the process of changing an issue, changing your community, changing the country.

I was introduced - well, it turns out, reintroduced - to Sam and his work by Paul Loeb, who's been a guest a couple of times on the show. Paul wrote a wonderful book called *The Impossible Will Take A While*, and he founded and led for a number of years,

CEEP, the Campus Election Engagement Project, which worked on education and activation of students on campus to vote. He left that organization a couple of years ago to start a new nonprofit called Guides.Vote to produce and distribute nonpartisan election guides.

Decades ago, Sam Daley-Harris started an organization called Results, encouraging and empowering people to become advocates and letter writers. And in the late '70s-early '80s, at a point when I lived with five other folks in West Los Angeles, one of the couples in the house had folks meet in our living room on a regular basis to write letters advocating for the reduction and eventual end of hunger - and they were working with Results.

Almost everyone shies away from advocacy as a way to make a difference. I suspect listeners sign petitions, make donations, and many may even be active in organizations working on issues they care about, but it turns out few take the next step to meet with a member of Congress or actually to write a letter to the editor.

Why? Well, Sam believes it's because most of us see advocacy as too hard, too frustrating, too complicated, too partisan, too dirty, too time consuming, too ineffective. But Sam asks, what if that's all wrong? What if deep engagement dissolves discouragement and actually can bring joy? What if you can become an advocate and feel fulfilled instead of frustrated? What if engaging as an advocate is essential to protecting our democracy?

On the book's initial publication, the late Jimmy Carter wrote, "Many of the world's problems, including poverty, poor health, and ignorance, are correctable. In RECLAIMING OUR DEMOCRACY, Sam Harris shows how to take action to eliminate these problems, and he provides a roadmap for global involvement in planning a better future."

Daley-Harris's message: Stop being hopeless. Get with a group that offers a rich structure of support, something that coaches you, empowers you, emboldens you, educates you. Of the 2024 edition he wrote, "I want this book to be a beacon of hope and possibility for people who feel broken, brokenhearted, and overwhelmed by the headlines they read. I intend this book to be a roadmap for individuals and organizations that want to make a difference on the issues that are precious to them. And I want this book to be a wake-up call, a clear challenge to the very large, well-funded national nonprofit organizations that I believe are guilty of anemic advocacy that actually disempowers the average citizen."

After starting with a career in music, Sam Daley-Harris founded the anti-poverty lobby, RESULTS in 1980, co-founded the Microcredit Summit campaign in '95 with Nobel Peace Prize-winner, Muhammad Yunis; founded Civic Courage in 2012 and coached Citizen Climate Lobby during its first seven years. As I said, a completely revised and updated 2024 edition of his book, RECLAIMING OUR DEMOCRACY, will be released in paperback in January.

Welcome back, Sam Daley-Harris to FREE FORUM: A WORLD THAT JUST MIGHT WORK.

Daley-Harris:

It's great to be with you.

McNally:

Let me tell listeners we're recording this conversation Thursday, December 19th.

As you know - as a veteran - I like listeners to get a feel for the people behind the work and ideas we talk about. So, for those who missed our first conversation, can you tell us in your own words a bit about how you see your path to the life that you're leading?

Daley-Harris:

Well, great. A couple of things. I understand that you recently interviewed Marshall Ganz...

McNally:

Exactly. Thank you for bringing that up, but let me just say something, which is that... Re-interviewing you - and it was, in fact, re-interviewing him as well. He'd been a previous guest at this moment, is part of my effort to give people not just encouragement and empowerment, but give them a sense, there are things they can do, and there are probably better ways of doing it. So Marshal... that show ran two weeks ago and now I'm talking with you.

Daley-Harris:

Well, great. And I mention Marshall Ganz every time I speak, and it's been about 50 times this year, and I mention him in relation to the question you just asked because he developed "the story of self", which basically asks, "What happened in your life and what decisions did you make that got you to this commitment?" In the book I talk about knowing your "why" and sharing it.

I'm going to share my story of self, but I urge listeners to think about theirs, their why of what happened in their lives and what decisions did they make that got them to this commitment to this podcast, for example.

And so here's mine. I love to tell it because it's wacky. I have a bachelor's degree and a master's degree in music, and I played percussion instruments in the Miami Philharmonic Orchestra for 12 years and taught high school music. That's my start. And 44 years ago, I founded the anti-poverty lobby *Results*. And a lot of times I'm asked, "...music, poverty lobby, what's the connection?"

McNally:  
Right...

Daley-Harris:

And when I look back in my life, there's certain experiences that start pointing me in a different direction. The death of a friend around high school graduation in 1964 got me to asking the questions of purpose. And then the assassination of US Senator Robert Kennedy, four years later in 1968, intensified my asking the questions of purpose. "Why am I here? What am I here to do? What's my purpose?"

Nine years later, 1977, I'm invited to a presentation on ending world hunger, put on by The Hunger Project, and I go to this event thinking, "Well, hunger is inevitable. What do I know? I'm a musician." Well, it's inevitable in my mind because there are no solutions. Again, what do I know? Because I was thinking if there were solutions, somebody would've done something by now. But I go to this event and it's obvious right away: There's no mystery to growing food, clean water, basic health, literacy. I'm not hopeless about the perceived lack of solutions. I'm hopeless about human nature.

People will just never get around to doing the things that can be done. And I realize there's one human nature I have some control over, my own, and my questions, "Why am I here? What am I here to do?" So I get involved in a big way. This is the end of the story. In 1978 and 1979, I spoke to 7,000 high school students, classroom by classroom, on ending world hunger. And before I went into the first classroom, I read some statements from Jimmy Carter's Commission on World Hunger and others calling for the political will to end hunger.

I asked 7,000 high school students, "What's the name of your member of Congress? I don't want to know if you wrote him, I don't want to know if you met him, just the name." Out of 7,000 asked, 200, fewer than 3%, could answer correctly, 6,800, over 97%, could not tell me the name of their member of Congress. And results grew out of this gap between the calls for the political will to end hunger, on the one hand, and the lack of basic information on who represented us in Washington, on the other.

So that's my story of self. Marshall Ganz's story of self - "What happened in your life and what decisions did you make that got you to this commitment?" And I urge listeners to think about their own, and not only that, of course, share it a lot.

McNally:

Yeah, and Marshall's public narrative has three questions. The first one is that story of why, that story of self. The second is the story of us - which is, when you are advocating. "Why should what-matters-to-me matter to you? Why should this issue - whether it's a new park in the neighborhood, the election of a representative, climate change, whatever it is - why should it matter to you just because it matters to me?" ...and when we make that bridge...

And the third story he says is important if you're actually organizing people and getting them to do something, is "the story of now." "Why is it important and perhaps even urgent that we act now?" And I think with that story of me, of us, and that story of now, that will get fleshed out pretty naturally I think in the rest of our conversation.

Daley-Harris:

If I could jump in with a now now, I would urge people... You gave that website [reclaimingourdemocracy.com](http://reclaimingourdemocracy.com). There's a button on that homepage, "Sign up and learn more." And it's really an opportunity for people to say, "Well, I'm getting a little inspired - maybe not yet - but a little inspired by this conversation. I'd like to be connected to one of the organizations he's about to talk to, and I can help connect people now with groups that really work to deliver transformational advocacy. And that's one example of something people could do now with that button on the reclaiming our democracy site.

McNally:

Yeah, right, you're talking right now.

Daley-Harris:

Yeah.

McNally:

Yeah, exactly. In other words, that list that the button will take them to are organizations who might be focused on different issues, but who you've vetted as providing what we're going to talk quite a bit about, which is this form of advocacy, which you term "transformational".

And let me say, my next question was going to be - This book originally came out decades ago. You gave the new edition a new subtitle - *Every Citizen's Guide to Transformational Advocacy*. You make a distinction between "transactional advocacy" and "transformational advocacy".

And before I ask you to flesh that out for us, I want to tell you - because you may not even be aware of this - that Marshall makes a very similar distinction. When I saw him speak during the election campaign and when we spoke a couple of weeks ago, he points out that the way elections are dealt with now, they mostly function as marketing campaigns. And as a marketing campaign, their goal is a transaction. And he said, "What we need is organizing campaigns." And in organizing campaigns, the goal is transformation.

Daley-Harris:

Well, let me just say a couple of quick things because I acknowledge it in the book. My inspiration partially came from one of Marshall Ganz's students, Hahrie Han, who talks about "transactional mobilizing" and "transformational organizing". And I changed that a little bit. I thought that transactional mobilizing was a bit more what staff did.

McNally:

Hmmm...

Daley-Harris:

...so I use the phrase "transformational advocacy," which is what volunteers do. They advocate. And the other phrase was "transformational organizing", as Marshall said, as you mentioned a moment ago, and I changed that - because I think that's a bit what staff does, this transformational organizing, and I called it "transformational advocacy" because that's what volunteers do.

Let me make the distinction, transactional, people would know, sign the petition - transaction complete. Vote for my candidate - transaction complete. That's transactional.

But with transformational advocacy, you're trained, encouraged, and succeed at doing things as an advocate you never thought you could do, like meet with a member of Congress and bring them on board to your issue, or have a letter to the editor published on an issue you care about. And when you do those things that you thought you couldn't do, you see yourself differently. You see yourself in a new light. A transformation in how you see yourself has taken place. And that's really what my focus is.

McNally:

You just said that when you do transformational advocacy, it changes how you see yourself. Before you wrote your first letter to the editor, you were someone who was too timid to write a letter to the editor. After you've written it, that ain't you anymore. You're someone who does that. Same thing with meeting with a congressman. Any time you push yourself to the next level in what you're doing, it isn't just that your effort has changed, you have changed.

Daley-Harris:

Yes, yes. Could I tell a story...

McNally:

Please do.

Daley-Harris:

...about someone from the book who has that experience, and in some ways you could say someone like each of us and all of us. Her name is Maxine Thomas. Maxine told me, "I had a heart for service, but I was clueless about advocacy, especially political advocacy." Now, Maxine has a lived experience of poverty, and she joined a group called Circles, where people meet together for 14 sessions, and they learn and study together, and work to move out of poverty.

And her group realized that they had a story to tell, and so they googled around for an organization that could help them tell their story, and they found Results, and they joined Results. And eventually Maxine gets a scholarship to go to the Results Conference in Washington, DC. She borrows luggage, goes to DC, and the night before her first ever meeting with members of Congress - and she meets with both senators and her representative - she learns that the earned income tax credit was about to expire.

Now, the earned income tax credit in 2022 provided \$3,100 to a low-income working family. I'm going to read this excerpt. This is Maxine, from the book, describing her first ever meeting with members of Congress: "The first congressional meeting on Lobby Day was with Senator Dan Coates, Republican of Indiana, and brought a new 'Aha'. He was there for the entire meeting. I can still feel it. I was a ball of emotions. It felt like an out-of-body experience. I was processing being in DC, and now I'm in an exclusive meeting. We're all dressed up. It was high level. The volunteers were polished and sharp, but I was scared." Now I was scared is like most people at their first ever meeting with a US Senator, but - "I was scared and worried whether I would say the right thing. I think it was Lisa who asked me, 'Would you like to say anything?'"

I thanked the Senator and said, 'I learned last night why I'm here. I didn't know I could come here from Indianapolis to talk to you, someone who represents us and can help us. I can't imagine what will happen if the earned income tax credit is taken away from families like mine. I'm able to take a deep breath and catch up on my bills because of the earned income tax credit. I look forward to tax time because that's the only time I can handle my financial burden. I like to take my kids to the mall to buy shoes without worrying if it will take away from other bills.

Senator Coates straightened himself up and said, 'Wow, this has been emotional. Results, you do a good job of training people. Where did you find her? And then he thanked me. That was the year he retired. He was very connected, even though it wasn't on his radar, the earned income tax credit, he acknowledged my voice and thanked me for being there.'

After a full day of first ever meetings, Maxine said, "I was euphoric. I was on this high and felt I was part of something revolutionary." Don't forget, she initially told me I was clueless about advocacy, especially political advocacy. Now after her meeting, she's saying, I was euphoric. So from clueless to euphoric, that is transformational.



McNally:

Right. And I was going to say from clueless - through scared - to euphoric.

Daley-Harris:

Absolutely. Absolutely.

McNally:

I'm really glad you did that, and actually I'm glad you did it at that length. When I was thinking about this - and we talked about this off-air - there are people who heard us talk together a year ago. Last time we didn't take much time for those sorts of stories. So if you've got a couple more of those before the hour is up, that is great.

I think people may have a sense of what we mean by transformational advocacy... - Oh, and by the way, I find myself, when I was thinking about it in preparation, I would also say "transformational participation", "transformational activism". I think I understand the distinctions you made, but for me, I think the crucial word there, of course, is the transformational one, which is what takes it out of "job done" to "life expanding." You say that if you are giving advice to an individual, not to an organization, but to an individual, to find an organization that is committed to delivering transformation advocacy, what should they look for? If they're looking around and evaluating whether this is going to be an organization that's going to serve them with that?

Daley-Harris:

Well, let me tell folks what they should look for, but let me start with, why it's going to be a little hard to find at first.

There was a study in 2023 by the Independent Sector, and they found that 31% of nonprofits - 31% - had done advocacy or lobbying in the last five years. 31% was less than half of that percent doing it 20 years ago. So there are fewer nonprofits doing advocacy - problem number one. Hold on. It gets worse. And then the Congressional Management Foundation did a survey of congressional staff, and they asked the staff what their primary tactic was. This was professional advocacy staff in nonprofits, and 79% of advocacy staff said an email form letter was their primary - you know, give me your name and your zip code.

McNally:

Oh yeah.

Daley-Harris:

79% said an email form letter was their primary tactic, but only 3% of congressional staff said email form letters were highly effective. So you wanted to know what to look for. Well, I'm telling you, it's not easy to find.



McNally:

Okay, before you go on, let me just say something that always occurs to me. I will click on those things and I will add my name to that petition. But I think it's pretty clear to folks when they send you to that online page to sign that petition or say that you care about such-and-such, all these one-click actions, you'll notice that the next thing usually is, "So now that you've done that, donate."

Daley-Harris:  
Bingo.

McNally:

And if you think about it, they know this figure that congressional staffers don't pay much attention to these things, and that the real purpose of that click is to get you to donate. So I'm not saying don't do it, but I'm saying let's be clear, that is not to change your life or to change the issue. It's to get you one step closer to donating to that organization.

Daley-Harris:  
Yes, it's true.

Let me give you one other point though. If it's an organization whose members are having hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of face-to-face meetings with elected officials each year, then your email form letter has a little more impact because it's backed up with real face-to-face human interaction.

McNally:

And they can cite the numbers of how many petitions were signed. It bolsters their case a bit.

Daley-Harris:  
Yeah.

So let me say what to look for, and then one more comment about why it's hard to find. What you're looking for is an organization - this is oversimplified - that does these three things. One, recruitment and community building. They bring new people in, not just to build the e-blast list, but to form local chapters so you're not working alone. Recruitment and community building, so for example, they might have a whole-of-organization monthly webinar with guest speakers, Q&A, inspiration. So recruitment and community building, number one.

Two, training. How do you meet with a member of Congress? How do you plan for the meeting? What do you ask for in the meeting? How do you write a letter to the editor? Two, training.

Three, breakthroughs. The organization encourages members to have breakthroughs, to do things they thought they couldn't do. Because when you do that, your confidence, as you were alluding to earlier, your confidence grows. After the letter's published, you're different and your confidence is expanded.

Now, people ask me, why is it that it's hard to find groups that do that? Organizations and staff's fear of making big asks of volunteers. There's no fear to ask you to sign the email form letter, but to ask you to join a chapter, and to ask you to take a workshop on writing letters to the editor. The fear of making big asks of volunteers is what really stops most organizations from offering transformational advocacy. And I'll add one more thing. If people go to [reclaimingourdemocracy.com](http://reclaimingourdemocracy.com) and click on the "sign up, learn more" button, I will look at where they live and send them connections to groups that are in their area.

McNally:

And one other thing - when you say it's their fear of making too big an ask, there's a couple of fears there, right? One, intimidating and scaring off the volunteer because they didn't feel up to that. But two, you say, once the head of organizing for a very large nonprofit told you, quote, "We can't let our volunteers write letters to the editor or op-eds because they'll get it wrong and misrepresent the organization." So the other fear is protecting the nonprofit's brand versus achieving their goal.

Daley-Harris:

He was head of grassroots organizing for a very large group that everyone listening to this knows the name of...

McNally:

We're not going to name them.

Daley-Harris:

He said, we can't let them write because they'll screw it up, but then again, Citizens Climate Lobby volunteers - certainly in the year before Covid - had 4,300 letters, op-eds and editorials published that year. So one group saying, "They'll get it wrong and misrepresent the organization," and Citizens Climate Lobby saying, "Well, what do we have to do to help them get it right and give that to them?" And the net result is thousands of letters, op-eds, et cetera.

McNally:

...and thousands of transformed individuals.

Daley-Harris:

Exactly.

McNally:

Okay, let me tell people you're listening to FREE FORUM: A WORLD THAT JUST MIGHT WORK and I'm Terrence McNally, I'm speaking with SAM DALEY-HARRIS. founder of the anti-poverty lobby RESULTS as well as Civic Courage. His 2024 edition, that is the updated edition of his book, RECLAIMING OUR DEMOCRACY: *Every Citizen's Guide to Transformational Advocacy* is coming out in paperback in mid-January, and you can learn more at [civiccourage.org](http://civiccourage.org) or at [reclaimingourdemocracy.com](http://reclaimingourdemocracy.com).

You were just mentioning Citizens Climate Lobby, and I love something you wrote recently. You wrote that their director, Mark Reynolds, says that, when he's launching a new chapter of Citizens Climate Lobby, he reads a quote from E.B. White, and I actually am aware of this quote, I have a little folder with quotes worth quoting, and this is one of them. E. B. White says, "I arise in the morning, torn between a desire to improve or save the world and a desire to enjoy or savor the world. This makes it hard to plan the day."

And I think what Reynolds realizes there is, that's all of us. That's all of us even on a good day. He sets it up with that, and at that point, he asks people to share something they love that is at risk because of climate change, thus putting those two things - the savoring, the loving, the enjoying, and the saving - together.

Okay, we've talked about what it can offer and why it isn't done. As I said in the introduction, our first conversation a year ago recognized that the upcoming election loomed large for people, and for many people, their participation, their advocacy and so on, was going to be in that realm.

Can you talk a bit about the need for transformational advocacy during the second Trump administration?... and even more, maybe some of what you've heard from people, just a little more of your sense of how people are feeling, and how this will help them and all of that.

Daley-Harris:

The month after we did the interview last time, I was interviewed on an NPR national radio program called *OneA*. It goes to hundreds of cities. And I wanted to tell you and your listeners, question number two - which is both like the vibe of what's out there and also why the re-release of the book and the updating was so needed. This was question number two: "...The passive nature of our politics now. You can feel beat down by it. I mean, this is my career and I feel beat down by it. It's much more of an effort for me. I don't participate the same way others do because I'm a political journalist, but I do have to pay attention. It's a grind, Sam. I mean, I know you know that. What am I feeling? What is the way out of that?"

McNally:

Wow.

Daley-Harris:

And the angst in that question... and the vulnerability, I mean, I was really moved by that was so edifying, of how really lots of people feel. First thing I said to him was: Apollo astronaut, Rusty Schweikert said, "We aren't passengers on Spaceship Earth. We're the crew."

McNally:

We're all crew. Yeah...

Daley-Harris:

Are we? And if we are, how does crew operate? And the second thing I said was futurist and climate activist, Alex Steffens says, "In fact, these days cynicism is obedience."

McNally:

Well, yeah...

Daley-Harris:

If I'm cynical, I'm obedient to the way things are. I'm even obedient to the way things will be in a second Trump term. Why would I do anything if nothing I do makes a difference?

And if I could add one more thing, and it's quite relevant to this, I've been writing journalists by the hundreds, often responding to a column that they'd written or a radio interview that they did, and quoting back to them what they said and then how it relates to ideas and reclaiming our democracy. And one of the people I responded to, a professor at Stanford who had a piece in *Time Magazine*, Jamil Zaki is his name, and his book is titled, *Hope for Cynics: The Surprising Science of Human Goodness*. I love that title - *Hope for Cynics: The Surprising Science of Human Goodness*.

One of the great ideas in the book is: if you're cynical, it's like you're playing poker and you close your hand before the game even starts. If I'm cynical in terms of working between elections from now till the next presidential election, I close my hand before the first bill is introduced. Before the new Congress is sworn in, I close my hand. And with transformational advocacy and the groups that I've been working with, they help you keep your hand open and play your hand and play your part really.

McNally:

Yeah. I remember actually... we're going back maybe 20 years... one time I saw Robert Reich speak, and he said, "Cynicism and resignation are what they want you to feel." And as you point out, it equals obedience.

For those who live in districts or states where their representatives hold different

positions than they do, you actually have recommendations. You don't need to go into deep length on it, but a few of the things that will let people see the possibilities that exist even in that situation.

Daley-Harris:

Okay, I've got too many stories to tell. Let me tell one, and then I could do a reading on another at some point. In 2019, Trump's third year in his first term, President Trump called for a 29% cut to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria after the Global Fund had saved with its partners 38 million lives. Where do we read about saving 38 million lives?

McNally:

Right...

Daley-Harris:

It was time for a replenishment of the Global Fund to fight AIDS, TB, and Malaria, and many countries would follow the U.S. lead. Now, most people didn't know that Trump called for a 29% cut, and, if they did, they'd probably throw up their hands, "What can you do? You can't fight City Hall." The folks I know roll up their sleeves and get to work. And they generated - this is folks in Results - they generated hundreds of members of Congress - Republicans and Democrats - co-sponsoring resolutions in the House and Senate in support of the Global Fund, and signing letters to Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and to the lead appropriators in the House and Senate, all in support of the Global Fund.

And in my talks, I say, what do these revolutionary volunteer advocates look like? And when we're on Zoom, I have people look at gallery view, they look exactly like you. And then I show a photo of - well, she's a friend and she's about my age, so I can say a little old lady named Margaret Smith holding Senator Ted Cruz's hands with two hands. And she says, "I learned in Results that I hold Senator Cruz's hands with two hands, and I don't let go until I finish my laser talk on the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria.

That was the first year Senator Cruz ever said "yes" to a Results request. He co-sponsored the Senate resolution supporting the Global Fund, and at the end of 2019, two House Republicans and two House Democrats stood on a stage in Lyon, France and announced that the Congress would provide a 16% increase, which they did. And President Trump signed into law.

And by 2022 - that's a 20-year span; the Global Fund was launched in 2002, and by 20 years later, 2022 - the Global Fund Partnership had saved 59 million lives, people who would otherwise have died of AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria." It's a great photo. I wish we had video, but he's taller and she's shorter, and she's holding both his hands with both of her hands.

One of the things I coach a group when they're meeting with a member of Congress who doesn't support their bill, I have them ask these three questions,

McNally:

Right...

Daley-Harris:

Question one: "We know you don't support this bill, what would it take to change your mind?"

Now, you're listening for assignments - "What would it take to change your mind?"

Two, "Could you say more about that?"

Three, "Why do you think that is?"

So it's essentially a deep listening exercise and you're listening to...

Sorry, I'm going to tell one other quick story. This is quick. So I know a guy...

McNally:

No, no, keep the stories coming.

I want to say to listeners, make a point, go back and listen to the one we did a year ago. That one doesn't have as many stories. It has more of this-is-the-way-we-do-it and this-is-what-you've-got-to-look-for, and stuff. But we're filling this one with the stories, and the two of them for you will serve as kind of companion pieces. This is kind of fleshing out in real life all the good ideas we talked about a year ago.

Daley-Harris:

In chapter two of *Reclaiming Our Democracy*, I interview Jay Butera, volunteer from Pennsylvania, who decides he wants to take the lead at a volunteer level in creating a House Climate Solutions Caucus. This is 2013. It gets set in 2016. I can give an update, but when you're not really allowed to say climate, if you're a Republican, and he wants Noah's Ark style, Democrat coming on Republican.

He decides to do his search in South Florida where sea level rise will be a factor and there are a number of Republican and Democratic members of Congress. He goes and he meets with a member of Congress and he says, essentially, "What will it take to change your mind?" And the member of Congress says, "Well, if you could get the Chambers of Commerce on board..." And he did. Miami, Miami Beach, Coral Gables, North Miami. He comes back with letters and the member of Congress says, "Well, if you could get the mayors on board..."

McNally:

Oh my God. Yup.

Daley-Harris:

And he did. Miami, Miami Beach, North Miami, Coral Gables. And the Climate Solutions Caucus was launched in 2016 and grew to 10 Republicans and 10 Democrats by the end of that year. And President Trump was elected and the caucus fell to six-and-six because some had retired or lost their seat. And by the end of the first two years of President Trump's first term, the Climate Solutions Caucus grew to 45 Republicans and 45 Democrats. Now, I don't want to overstate what a climate solutions caucus will do, but it starts getting people talking at least, so that's another example of working on the other side of the aisle.

McNally:

What I loved is, I said, "So what do you tell them?" And you didn't just tell me what you tell them, you told me how putting it into use...

Daley-Harris:

Yeah.

McNally:

Now admittedly, it wasn't merely asking, "What do you need? What would change your mind?" It then entailed taking that on and delivering to him what it would take to change his mind...

Daley-Harris:

Essentially delivering on the assignments.

McNally:

That's right. But isn't being given a concrete assignment that you can do... Imagine how much better that feels, even though it involves work, how much better that feels than this formless mess of, "I can't do anything."

Daley-Harris:

Yeah, exactly.

McNally:

Yeah...

Daley-Harris:

Exactly. Maybe I can tell one more story...



McNally:

Oh, you absolutely can.

Daley-Harris:

Okay, great. So let me tell you about this person. She was a volunteer at the time of this story that she told me. She's now on staff in this case again, Citizens Climate Lobby. And she said, "When I joined CCL, I was suffering from climate trauma. I would read Bill McKibben's book *Earth*, and I would weep at home and I would weep at work. And then I joined CCL and 18 months later, I was co-leading a workshop on building relationships with members of Congress and editorial writers.

She said, "Our executive director used to say, 'We're betting the farm on relationships. Now go get a relationship with your member of Congress and your editorial writer.'" And she said, "What in the world does a relationship with a member of Congress look like and how do you get a relationship with an editorial writer?" She said, "Some in CCL use the model of a work relationship.

Her name is Ellie Sparks and I'm quoting from her in the book. This is what she said, "My relationship model is different. I adore romantic relationships, so I use romance as my model. That first meeting with the editorial writer, it's like a blind date. Only you've decided beforehand you're going to marry this fellow. You're going to be sweet and interesting, not too intense. If it doesn't work out with the editor, you're going to marry one of his friends at the newspaper - the business editor, environment writer, city editor. Someone at this paper will find you interesting and compelling. It's just a matter of being persistent until you find the right connection.

I see the relationship with a member of Congress as an arranged marriage. If you live in her district, the member's aide has to meet with you. That's what our Congress Legislative Director told us in January."

This is now July, seven months later. "Since January, we've met five times with the legislative director. We scheduled 45-minute meetings. He keeps us well over an hour. Why does he not want us to leave? Because a good arranged marriage starts out cold and slowly heats up over time. That's different from a love match, which starts out hot and slowly cools down..."

And then this is the end. She gets to the essence of transformational advocacy. "During our conference, I met with 20 congressional offices over four days. I met with many folks whose view of the world was very different than mine. Going into their offices was hard. I had to let go of a lot of emotional baggage. I could no longer judge them or hold hostility in my heart toward them. I had to let go of my fear of climate change and my fear that they wouldn't listen to me. I had to center myself in love. Releasing fear and centering in love - this is sacred and profound work." End of quote.

McNally:

Yes.

Daley-Harris:

How many of us think about advocacy as sacred and profound? Well, it's available if we find the right organization and then open ourselves up to it.

McNally:

Yeah. You actually say that there are two competing visions for who we are as people and our ability to change the world. One sees individuals as timid, inadequate, inconsequential, not up to it, and the other sees people as inherently strong, committed, brave, visionary, audacious, heroic. And it is that choice, if you will, that once one makes it and ventures into the arena - to go back to Theodore Roosevelt's famous quote about the value of being in the arena - then that transformation actually is built by your activity, and the definition of yourself and your capability grows with it.

Daley-Harris:

And the missing piece is connecting with an organization that can open up your courage, that can open up your heroism, that can open up your desire to make a big difference. In other words, "Yes, but don't try and do it alone. Yeah..."

McNally:

That's so critical. And as you say - if we're for the third time mentioning - there is a button on the website that actually leads you to organizations that are likely to treat you that way and inspire that transformation.

Daley-Harris:

And what it's going to lead you to is letting me know which of those organizations you're interested in, and I urge people to pick one, and then I will write you and connect you to that one or whatever it is. And frankly, there's some other options there, like you know of a speaking opportunity for me or you'd like to be part of my mailing list. There are some other options, but linking you to a group that works to deliver transformational advocacy is the key piece.

McNally:

I'm going to ask you a couple of questions that aren't quite so specifically on transformational advocacy and the work of your organizations and your own coaching.

You've alluded to this. What do you think the press is not paying enough attention to? What under the radar issues do you think are happening? As you pointed out, with all the lives saved by that organization, that, of course, doesn't get reported. We will see a sign that says this many people have died in traffic accidents this year. We won't see a billboard that says how many people were saved by good work.

What do you think the press and the media and basically the public attention is not paying attention to that there would be value if they did?

Daley-Harris:

I think there's a lot of levels to that question and the response. One thing that much of the press doesn't pay attention to is, there's a kind of journalism called solutions journalism. There's not enough stories about the solutions out there and how people can be part of the solutions. So that's not really available as it needs to be.

Then another level of it is, well, what are the pressing problems that we face that seem to be avoided? And whether it's issues around poverty, issues around climate change, et cetera. Let me tell you this very quick story. During covid, the Congress and President Trump signed into law a child tax credit...

McNally:

Yeah...

Daley-Harris:

...that cut child poverty in half, just about half, for the 18 months that it existed, and then it expired and child poverty shot back up. Well, that wasn't really a major theme of the election that just passed. And so there are these opportunities to make a big difference that just don't appear as they need to be.

By the way, I'll just add this, the House of Representatives, Republican as it is, passed by something like 360, like two-thirds, a reinstatement of the child tax credit and it failed in the Senate. But I'm expecting it's possible for the child tax credit to be reinstated in 2025 - possible. But one of the missing ingredients will be citizens calling for it, and Results, the anti-poverty lobby will be working hard on that and other things.

McNally:

As I was thinking about this interview and thinking about this question, I thought of one, and I'm not asking you to endorse it even, but it just crossed my mind - why not an unstoppable campaign to raise the cap on Social Security?

We're going to hear a lot about cutting Social Security. It's going to run out of money in 10 years or eight years or something. But I think most people don't know that Social Security is taken out of your income up to - this year, it's \$168,000. In 2025, it'll be \$176,000. So for anyone who makes up to \$176,000, they pay Social Security on 100% of their earnings. For someone who makes a million dollars a year, they're paying social security on 17% of their income. It seems to me a winning argument because the top 1%, 2%, 10% will oppose it, but that leaves 90-98% for whom there's a clear benefit.

I'm thinking if I were the Democrats that child tax credit would be one, but this raise the cap on Social Security, which first involves people knowing there is a cap, knowing where it is, and knowing where they stand, and knowing that in 2026 they could vote for a Congress that's going to raise it. I mean, I'm sorry, but it just seems to me that's a no-lose proposition.

Daley-Harris:

But sadly, there are a number of issues like that, whether it's background checks or assault rifles with 70-80-90% approval and what you just said, there are a number of issues that are in that category. And again, it gets back to... Let me just say this for a moment. When President Trump was first elected, a hundred million Americans did not vote.

McNally:

That's right. I have run the numbers on the percentages of how many voted for Harris, how many voted for Trump, how many didn't vote, and, of course, didn't vote wins by a landslide.

Daley-Harris:

Well, and the other thing about it is, when Biden was elected, it was the largest voter turnout in 120 years and 80 million didn't vote.

McNally:

That's right.

Daley-Harris:

So this kind of asleepness is certainly one of our problems.

McNally:

Yeah. I'm going to ask you, this is going to be the final question. You've got a couple of minutes. You're standing in the future, 10, 15 years have passed. You're looking back. Did we turn things around and, if so, what were some of the events that happened?

Daley-Harris:

Yeah... I only come from, we can do it,

McNally:

Right.

Daley-Harris:

I don't exactly come from “we will”, but I only come from “we can do it”.

I always talk about transformational advocacy as an important missing ingredient. It's not the only thing that's needed, but it's a critical missing piece: citizens' awakening to their power. I don't think we're awake to our power. And when I stand 15 years from now, 20 years from now, and look back at why we did make it and we did turn things around, it was because citizens awakened to their power.

My work in civic courage has been coaching nonprofits to do this transformational advocacy, but I've almost put that on the side to focus on getting out to the media and public speaking so that people would even know that there is an option beyond voting and taking a nap or beyond the protest march and signing a form letter that Congress says isn't very effective - that there is this other option the result of which lights you up. So yeah, I see the possibility for great success provided we awaken to our power.

McNally:

Very good. I'll tell you what... Most people - I ask this question not every time, but when I ask it - most people sort of don't know quite what to say, but I think you do have a clear answer that if you're looking back 15 years ago and we turned things around, it's because people awakened to their power and exercised it for the good.

Daley-Harris:

Yes,

McNally:

The common good.

Daley-Harris:

Yes.

McNally:

Okay. We're going to bring this to a close. The book is RECLAIMING OUR DEMOCRACY: *Every Citizen's Guide to Transformational Advocacy*. The websites are [civiccourage.org](http://civiccourage.org) or [reclaimingourdemocracy.com](http://reclaimingourdemocracy.com), and the one that has the button to help them find organizations that will offer them the opportunity for transformational advocacy is the Reclaiming Our Democracy website?

Daley-Harris:

Yes.

McNally:

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Okay. Very good.

For this conversation and many other interviews, articles, to join me in pursuit of a world that just might work, go to [terrencemcnally.net](http://terrencemcnally.net) or [aworldthatjustmightwork.com](http://aworldthatjustmightwork.com). They're the same website.

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Thanks to Kiyana Williams in production. George Vasilopoulos at Progressive Voices, and most of all, you my listeners, please share this podcast widely - and share this one and share the Marshall Ganz one. Give people some hope that there actually are things they can do that will make these next four years very different than cynicism would leave them, and it will also transform them and the folks that they work with. And finally, thank you Sam Daley Harris, keep up your good work.

Daley-Harris:

Thank you.