

The Personally Connected Pedagogy Workshop for Teachers, Trainers, and Leaders starts with the performance of poetry and storytelling that leads audiences through the performance process to consider their own sense of self, community, and agency. As we learn to express ourselves more clearly, we also learn to listen more actively and compassionately to our fellow community members. We are challenged to move beyond political correctness and popular cancellations to lasting *personal connections*. We work collaboratively through facilitated open dialogue to develop courses of action for more equitable, inclusive, and loving learning spaces and communities.

This interactive workshop will be led by Dr. Sonny Kelly, an expert in interpersonal communication. Participants will engage the subject of forging diverse personal connections in an innovative and practical way. Using storytelling, poetry, and examples from participants' own experiences, Dr. Kelly will lead them through a process of diagnosing and developing positive and confirming communication environments versus negative and disconfirming communication environments. Participants will learn clear tactics on effective ways to create and maintain positive and confirming communication environments by optimizing diversity through a continuous and thoughtful practice of inclusion. All of this hinges upon the practice of taking on a *dual perspective* – putting ourselves in others' shoes just long enough to understand the world through their eyes (Wood, 2020). This workshop can be conducted face to face or virtually.

The Personal Connections Workshop has three objectives:

- To empower participants to share their thoughts and feelings more courageously and graciously (with each other and with students) and to listen to each other and their students more actively and empathetically.
- To enrich participants' perspectives, inciting a more equitable, inclusive, and collective understanding of our past and our present.
- To share some tips and practices that can help community members to build and maintain more equitable, inclusive, and connected classrooms and communities.

Format

This workshop can be conducted virtually or face-to-face. Dr. Kelly will use a PowerPoint slideshow, dialogue with participants, and a large notepad (chat box when virtual) to conduct this workshop. The workshop duration can be 60 to 180 minutes. Ideally, it is conducted in three 60-minute segments.

Legacy Heirs Productions Inc has conducted performances, lectures, and workshops for hundreds of satisfied clients like: GlaxoSmithKline, QIAGEN, The Association of Community Health Workers, Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs, HMA Community Strategies, RTI, Sentara Health, The USO, The Junior League, Cumberland County Arts Council, Duke University, Syracuse University, UNC Chapel Hill, UNC Greensboro, East Carolina University, Fayetteville State University, Georgia Tech University, St. Andrews University, Fayetteville Technical Community College, Sandhills Community College, Durham Technical Community College, The Levin Jewish Community Center, Cumberland County Schools, as well as numerous churches, community organizations, and K-12 schools across the nation.

Why a Performance-Based Workshop?

Dialogic Performance practitioner Augusto Boal (1995) privileges performance spaces as “*spaces of liberty* where people can free their memories, emotions, imaginations, thinking of their past, in the present, and where they can invent their future instead of waiting for it” (p. 5). From the beginning, Dr. Kelly’s goal has been to actualize Augusto Boal’s belief that performance can create spaces for positive collective growth and change (Boal, 1979).

The Power of Dialogue

My use of the term dialogue is also based upon David Bohm’s (1994) definition of dialogue as an open, empathetic, collective, coherent, iterative, and reflexive sharing of unique perspectives, ideas, and ideals between participants that comprises a “*stream of meaning* flowing among and through us and between us” (p. 7). The kind of dialogue that *The Talk* pursues is what Lisa Schirch and David Camp (2007) conceptualize in their work on “dialogue for difficult subjects” as an open and continuous mutual learning process that “aims to build relationships between people as they address a common concern” (p. 6). It is through the episteme of critical dialogic performance and performance-making that I seek to facilitate intrapersonal and interpersonal dialogue that can reframe and reclaim a positive, dignified, and agential sense of self for, and with diverse community members.

About Dr. Sonny Kelly (CEO & Lead Teacher/Learner)

Dr. Sonny Kelly is a professional performer, storyteller, motivator, speaker, communication scholar, and veteran. Currently a full time professor of Communication at Fayetteville Technical Community College, Dr. Kelly holds a PhD in Communication from UNC Chapel Hill. He is a graduate of St. Mary’s University (MA, Communication Studies, ’08) and Stanford University (BA, International Relations, ’98). Dr. Kelly has been a professional actor on stage and television for over 25 years. He has served our nation as a U.S. Air Force officer, and his community as a non-profit organization program director, a youth worker and church minister. He volunteers as an Artist in Residence and Advisory Council member for Fayetteville Urban Ministry’s Find-A-Friend youth program in Fayetteville, NC **To learn more, please visit www.legacyheirsproductions.com or contact Sonny Kelly at (210)793-5241.**

References

- Boal, Augusto (1979). *Theater of the oppressed*. New York, NY: Urizen Books.
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- Schirch, L. & Camp, D. (2007). *The little book of dialogue for difficult subjects: A practical, hands on guide*. New York, NY: Skyhorse Publishing.
- Wood, J.T. (2020). *Interpersonal communication: Everyday encounters*. Cengage Learning, Inc.