



# Creating Space for “We”

How to Change Minds, Resolve Conflict,  
and Find Peace in Troubled Times



**Walking Distance**

Steps Toward Peace

# Declaration of Interdependence

by Richard Blanco

*Such has been the patient sufferance...*

We're a mother's bread, instant potatoes, milk at a checkout line. We're her three children pleading for bubble gum and their father. We're the three minutes she steals to page through a tabloid, needing to believe even stars' lives are as joyful and bruised.

*Our repeated petitions have been answered only by repeated injury...*

We're her second job serving an executive absorbed in his Wall Street Journal at a sidewalk café shadowed by skyscrapers. We're the shadows of the fortune he won and the family he lost. We're his loss and the lost. We're a father in a coal town who can't mine a life anymore because too much and too little has happened, for too long.

*A history of repeated injuries and usurpations...*

We're the grit of his main street's blacked-out windows and graffitied truths. We're a street in another town lined with royal palms, at home with a Peace Corps couple who collect African art. We're their dinner-party talk of wines, wielded picket signs, and burned draft cards. We're what they know: it's time to do more than read the New York Times, buy fair-trade coffee and organic corn.

*In every stage of these oppressions we have petitioned for redress...*

We're the farmer who grew the corn, who plows into his couch as worn as his back by the end of the day. We're his TV set blaring news having everything and nothing to do with the field dust in his eyes or his son nested in the ache of his arms. We're his son. We're a black teenager who drove too fast or too slow, talked too much or too little, moved too quickly, but not quick enough. We're the blast of the bullet leaving the gun. We're the guilt and the grief of the cop who wished he hadn't shot.

*We mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes and our sacred honor...*

We're the dead, we're the living amid the flicker of vigil candle-light. We're in a dim cell with an inmate reading Dostoevsky. We're his crime, his sentence, his amends, we're the mending of ourselves and others. We're a Buddhist serving soup at a shelter alongside a stockbroker. We're each other's shelter and hope: a widow's fifty cents in a collection plate and a golfer's ten-thousand-dollar pledge for a cure.

*We hold these truths to be self-evident ...*

We're the cure for hatred caused by despair. We're the good morning of a bus driver who remembers our name, the tattooed man who gives up his seat on the subway. We're every door held open with a smile when we look into each other's eyes the way we behold the moon. We're the moon. We're the promise of one people, one breath declaring to one another: *I see you. I need you. I am you.*

Two **wrongs** that get in our way:

1. Wrong Goal
2. Wrong Story



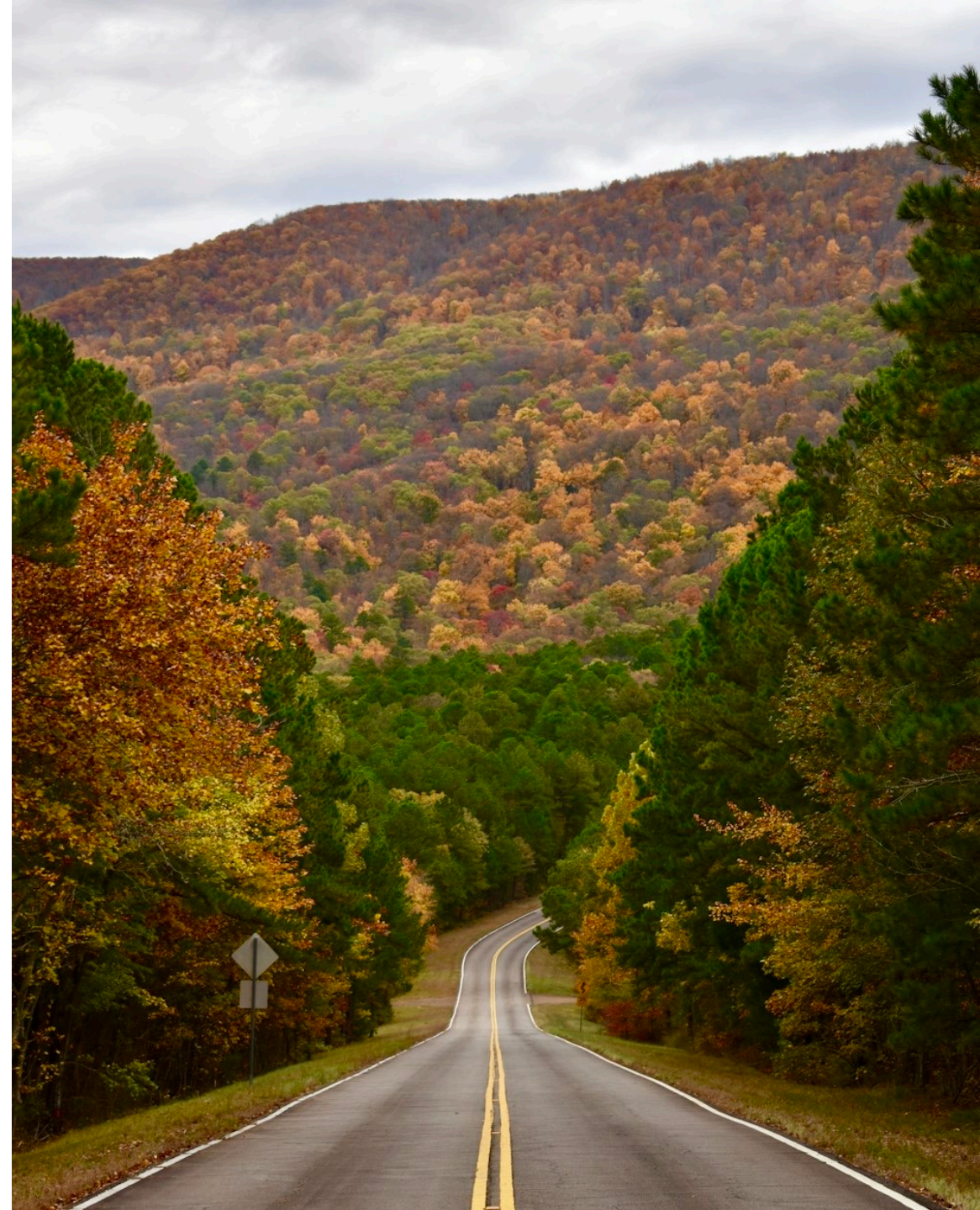
# Today's Road Map

Part I: How to Argue with a Teenager

Part II: Mirrors and Windows

Part III: Show Don't Tell

Part IV: Into the Pool



Part I:  
How to Argue with a Teenager

How do you change  
someone's mind?



Changing minds



Mutual understanding



Part II:  
Mirrors and Windows

# Mirrors & Windows

Underlying Narratives of Stories:

The Story of Self



The Story of Other



# The Story of Us & Now



# Uneven Standards of Judgment

When They  
"Mess Up"

Boo! You're  
an idiot!



CHARACTER

When I  
"Mess Up"

Traffic was  
crazy! My kid  
was sick. I didn't  
get the  
message...



SITUATIONAL

CONFLICT  
COMPONENTS:

1. Disagreement
2. Something is wrong with you

# The Danger of a Single Story



"The consequence of the single story is this: *It robs people of dignity.*  
It makes our recognition of our equal humanity difficult."

— Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

Part III:  
Show Don't Tell



# CURIOSITY

Feel vs. Act

## *Showing Curiosity*

Language

Pause

Disruption

Discomfort





Part IV:  
Into the Pool

**Goal:** enlarge the pool of shared meaning

**Silence:**

any action to withhold  
info from the pool



Pool of  
Shared Meaning

**Violence:**

any action to compel  
someone to your view

# Storytelling Activity

**Step 1:** Write down 3–5 things that are important to you (people, places, ideas, etc.)

Choose one and circle it.

**Step 2:** Think of a few memories associated with the thing you circled in Step 1.

Choose one.

**Step 3:** Prepare a 3–5 minute version of the memory you chose, and get ready to share it with someone near you.

**Step 4:** Pair up with someone near you and take up to five minutes each to share your stories.