

## **Episode 01 TRANSCRIPTION (Part 1. Inspiration Story Clip)**

**Title: Back to Where it All Began: BRAVE and the Inspiration Story**

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### **01 Transcript: Inspiration Story Clip**

**Note:** We understand this transcription is a work in progress. If you need additional support in order to access this content, please contact Meaghan Davis at [mdavis1\\_gps@nec.edu](mailto:mdavis1_gps@nec.edu).

**MD:** I am joined today by two amazing guests who are great friends of mine and former students who work very closely with me through the BRAVE organization. We have Shelby Mehmet, who is now a social worker, as well as Emma Whitmore, who is in her first year of law school at the University of Georgia. You all want to say hello and welcome.

**SM:** Hello. I'm Shelby, and my pronouns are she/hers.

**EW:** And I'm Emma, and my pronouns are she/hers.

**MD:** I'm so excited to have both of them here because we had such an incredible time working together, and I'm so excited to be reunited and to share some of our amazing work co-creating liberatory spaces together. Our topic is going to have two parts for this episode. First, I'd really love to share a bit of my inspiration story. Where did this idea of liberatory spaces come from? And it has a longer history for me than the length of my research so far. And then I'd really love to kind of hear from Emma and from Shelby about their experiences and connections to the 10 characteristics of liberatory spaces that I've identified so far in my research. To get started, I would love to share this kind of catalyst story I'm calling it, and I actually was inspired to share the story at my dissertation proposal meeting a couple of months back, and so it's really played a big role in my research, and it directly involves one of our guests, Shelby, so I think it's a timely story to tell.

**MD:** It was right when we were coming back for a spring semester, and we all know most college terms in the spring begin right around Martin Luther King Jr. Day or shortly thereafter. And I was at an event on campus, and there was a celebration taking place, and students were engaged in an activity where they were asked what their dream was, and they were asked to write that down and share it with the group. And I was an observer of this event and a guest and was really kind of just listening to these students and watching them take time to reflect and then share what their dreams were. And over and over again, I kept hearing folks share things like, my dream is to be a nurse or to be a social worker or to be a doctor, lawyer, teacher, right on and on. And so many of them

were just deeply connected to the career, and there really wasn't a lot of dreams in the room, at least being shared that were open to anything else that were connected to anything bigger than a career or just different.

**MD:** So I went back to my office after this event, and I was really thinking a lot about this. It was something that stuck with me because it just felt really limited, right? And it felt kind of like, this can't be it. This can't be all that there is. And so Shelby pops into my office that afternoon after this event I attended, and so I just kind of asked her because it was on my mind, and I'm like, I got to ask somebody. So I just said, hey, show, what's your dream? What do you dream of? And almost right away, like, instantly, she just said back to me, "to be free."

**MD:** And I had this big reaction to that beautiful and really compelling and powerful response. We weren't having a beautiful conversation that followed that response. That really was the impetus for so much more deeper thinking and for curiosity and for innovation in my own life and in my own work, and in many ways was kind of the beginning of this journey around Liberatory Space and thinking about what that means and what that looks like if you have anything since you're here that you remember from that afternoon.

**SM:** So after I said to be free and you had your reaction, and you were like, what? And then that's so amazing, or whatever, it was like, something big, right? I was like, what? What did I say? What did I do? I didn't even think twice. And I was more of an authentic response that I had really acknowledged at that time. And to be fair, like, looking back, I would suppose that also was a catalyst moment for myself as well, recognizing that that was my ultimate dream realized.

**MD:** Well, thank you for letting me tell that story. Thank you for that conversation and all the conversations I think that I've had with you and with Emma and with our entire BRAVE community. I feel like in many ways has been I don't know, each one was like a stepping stone to bring me to where I am now. I think I've mentioned many times now the name BRAVE, I believe it was in 2015 or even earlier than that, 2013, I started an organization or founded an organization that we called BRAVE, and that is where I met Emma and I met Shelby at the University of St. Joseph's and the University of Connecticut and where we worked together for many years while they were undergraduate students.

**MD:** So much of this work and this journey really started in BRAVE, in that organization, and in those spaces that we all worked together to co-create. And so that story I just shared was one of many. Many stories that really changed my life and changed my thinking and my work. And I hope we can share more of them today through the lens of the literature that I have been able to and had the privilege to over the last year and a

half. Connect with and integrate and analyze to really identify 10 characteristics of what we're going to refer to as Liberatory space.

**MD:** And so that's what I'd really like to do next and really create some space for Emma and Shelby to make connections to each of these characteristics based on their lived experiences. Not just a description of these characteristics, but some practical action items, right? And some practical strategies for how we can co-create more of these spaces and deepen and strengthen the ones that already exist.

**MD:** We'll also just note that there is a copy of the 10 characteristics of Liberatory Spaces in the show notes. They'll be linked in there for each episode because we're going to keep coming back to these. These will be the spine, if you will, of this entire podcast series.