

Introduction Transcript

Amy Chatelaine: Welcome to 40 Days Toward Deeper Listening, Hearing the Heart of Humanity. This reflective offering cultivates listening as a practice of peace, one day and one story at a time. It's the first resource of its kind from A Peace of My Mind, and we're delighted that you've reached for it. I'm Amy Chatelaine, your host and the creative producer of this series, and I'll be guiding you through the weeks and stories ahead.

[A Peace of My Mind](#) is a media arts project founded by John Noltner in 2008. In many ways, A Peace of My Mind began out of a frustration with the loud voices of American politics and mainstream media that too often pull our attention toward what can separate us. Deep down, John knew there were other, perhaps quieter stories that deserve to be uplifted, ones that offered examples of everyday people working toward positive change. He wondered, what if we turned our attention to these American stories, and held them up as models for how to move forward?

Ultimately, A Peace of My Mind is a project grounded in listening and shaped by listening. It's been a journey of rediscovering what connects us in a divided world.

40 Days Toward Deeper Listening is an invitation to join us on that journey. Whether you're a longtime friend of A Peace of My Mind, or you're turning your ears, eyes, and hearts to a collection of our stories for the first time, welcome. We're glad you're here. We hope this daily reflective pause offers a place of rest, renewal, and inspiration in the midst of your life.

Over the course of 40 days, we'll travel together across five regions of the United States, meeting everyday Americans along the way. It's a journey that took John three years and 40,000 miles. But don't worry, we're asking you to join us for just 10 minutes each day in this listening practice.

Here's what you can expect along the way.

We invite you to move through one region at a time, listening to one short story a day. After hearing the six stories included in each region, you'll pause for a day of rest to integrate what you've encountered before moving on to the next region. At each stop, we'll take a moment to fully arrive in that particular stretch of American landscape as a way to awaken our attention and to deepen our presence to the story of the day. I'll then offer a warm handoff to the day's teacher who will introduce themselves and share their story.

You're likely to meet people you might not otherwise encounter from places you might not have ever thought to travel. Some will offer things that resonate and some will offer things that challenge you. There will be people who likely voted differently than you in the last election cycle and people who would be the first to give you a hand if your car broke down. You might encounter both in the same person.

The invitation is to stay present, to see what you can learn, and to remain open to the beauty you might find in unexpected places.

To support your practice, I'll offer two prompts toward deeper listening to take with you for further reflection. Choose one or both, or simply reflect on whatever surprised you, challenged you, or inspired you in what you heard. How you approach this reflection time and how deeply you dive in is entirely up to you. But know that the more time you spend with these stories, and your own, the more you are likely to discover.

If you're doing this by yourself, you can use these prompts to guide you in some journaling. If you're practicing with others, they can serve as an entry into group discussion. Through this collection, we hope that you'll connect with your own story and wisdom in new ways, and find enrichment in the stories and wisdom of others.

40 Days Toward Deeper Listening encourages a daily practice, but we designed it to be spacious and flexible so you can move through this collection at your own pace. Do one a day, or one a week, or as you're able. Whatever rhythm is right for you, we are confident in the value of a committed journey, and encourage you to be intentional about your process.

The design of this offering is in many ways inspired by the way John moved across America while receiving the stories you're about to hear. What that means is that this listening practice is also a *movement* practice that takes seriously the importance of getting proximate to each other. In turn, we hope it serves as a reminder of *our capacity to move each other*. We believe that peace movements begin with, and are sustained by, this capacity. So, as you receive each story — from this collection and from whatever surfaces in your individual or group reflection — notice what moves you. And maybe go a little further, and wonder what each story might be moving you toward.

We hope that, together, these stories become a compass that points you to the heart of humanity across America, and right in your own backyard.

So, that's it for today, with two prompts to take with you as we begin this practice together.

The first is actually a question that John starts almost every interview with:

If I didn't know anything about you, what would you want me to know?

And the second prompt might be one you revisit throughout this offering:

What brings you here?

Thanks again for joining us. Now let's get on the road.