



## PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

### S5E11 - COOPERATIVE SOLUTIONS FOR THE USE OF OUTER SPACE WITH CYNDA COLLINS ARSENAULT

**Cynda Collins Arsenault:** The buildup to any kind of conflict or the resolution of conflict or the rebuilding of a society after conflict. When women are present, you get better ideas, better solutions, and we have evidence of that over and over again.

**Sam Fuqua:** That's Cynda Collins Arsenault, and this is Well, That Went Sideways! A podcast that serves as a resource to help people have healthy, respectful communication. We present a diversity of ideas, tools, and techniques to help you transform conflict in relationships of all kinds. In this episode, we talk with Cynda Collins Arsenault about resolving and avoiding conflicts in outer space. And we'll talk with her about the role of women in driving social change. She is an activist and philanthropist involved in a wide range of issues including peace, security, and disability. Cynda Collins Arsenault is co-founder and president of *Secure World Foundation*, which promotes cooperative solutions for the secure and sustainable use of outer space for the benefit of humanity.

I'm Sam Fuqua, co-host of the program with Alexis Miles. Hi Alexis.

**Alexis Miles:** Hello Sam.

**Sam Fuqua:** And we're very pleased to be joined for this episode of Well, That Went Sideways! by Cynda Collins Arsenault. Hello.

**Cynda Collins Arsenault:** Hi, Sam. Hi Alexis. It's such an honor to be here with you.

**Alexis Miles:** I'm so glad that we finally got a chance to talk. So, let's jump right in. Can you give our listeners a brief overview of the *Secure World Foundation* and the kinds of conflicts and challenges that you address?

**Cynda Collins Arsenault:** Yes. So, *Secure World Foundation* was founded about 22 years ago. Um, it was when, uh, my husband and I first began doing philanthropy, and I spent several years trying to figure out, well, what and how, and what does it all mean? Uh, our primary goal is how do we get to a world beyond war. You know, that is just so wasteful, inefficient and all of those things and, and we could be using our funds for so much better stuff. I studied a lot of different things, but the part that most influenced me was Buckminster Fuller. And he talked about change happens most often when a better idea comes along, and that also the, it was a lot easier to create the positive than to undo the negative. And then through this serendipity, I got two emails in the same day talking about outer space. And that we were at a very critical point where we are very reliant on, on the services and, and our assets in space for understanding the Earth, for, uh, helping create connection, communication, particularly for developing countries where you can utilize telehealth, tele-education. Um, and so for the economy, it's growing, and yet we didn't have the infrastructure in, in space for how are we going to govern this, you know. On Earth we have the nation states. It doesn't work in space because you don't have the borders.

And so, it required a, the better idea, a whole new way of thinking. And hopefully with that, being able to bring together the Earth as a whole to recognize the value that we receive and it's set up such that any destructive part of it hurts everybody that there's, it can only, it can be win-win, or it's lose-lose. There's no, some win and some lose. It, it's all or nothing. Um, so it just seemed to really fit as a place to put our focus and nobody else was looking at that. It, it wasn't out there. And so, we've been able, over the last 20 years,

there's the science space, governments, um, and amateurs even. So, we bring them together to talk about what institutions, what structures, what rules of the road do we need to put into place in order to have the secure, sustainable, and peaceful use of space that can be beneficial to us back here on Earth?

**Alexis Miles:** Well, hats off to you for doing that because I, I think most people would've believed, like, I believed, that something like that existed. It's shocking to find that nothing existed.

**Cynda Collins Arsenault:** No, we, we have a treaty that was created in 1967, uh, just after Sputnik had gone up that, uh, basically prohibits nuclear weapons in space, but it doesn't prohibit other kinds of weapons in space. Unfortunately, the current, uh, president, administration, is looking at, maybe we should get out of that treaty, which would be a major, major setback because it's, it's, kind of, the one thing that's really, uh, passed the test of time over the years and has been beneficial to everybody. So that, that's one thing. But other than that, there's very limited, kind of, rules. And so, you know, here on Earth we have red lights, green lights, you know, the, the traffic rules. We don't have that in space yet. And so, understanding the positions of each other's satellites, understanding the debris that's up there and the danger it poses, how we launch, uh, understanding the consequences of our launches. What is it doing to our environment? So, there's a lot we still have to figure out.

**Alexis Miles:** What are some of the successes of the *Secure World Foundation*?

**Cynda Collins Arsenault:** We've had several. One of the very first things we worked on was the idea of an incoming asteroid, which would of course be horrific for everyone here on Earth. And, it's happened before and it will happen again. Through a series of working with other, uh, science associations, we held meetings globally, uh, in conjunction with the UN committee on use of outer space, Copious, it's called, to look at how to prepare for this. And so, over a ten-year period, with a series of conferences and gatherings and working with the UN, uh, what came out of that is there are now two new agencies associated with the UN, one of which, every country in the world that has telescopes looking out into space can deposit their information into a central depository. And of course, the more information you have about what's out there, the better able you can figure the angles and the details and, and understanding of it, compiling that data. So, so that is in place.

And a second, uh, entity that was established was to begin figuring out the process of what would we do if we find that there is something heading towards us and ha, you know, of course the sooner we know that, the better, then that's because of the other information. But then what do we do? Because it's a very complicated process. You know, if it's heading towards China, but China decides, oh, well let's just bump it a little over here, it's gonna hit the US, you know, and whether or not you can do that because it's very complicated. Um, but who decides? How do you decide? You know, the idea of nuclear weapons is, is not necessarily viable because that creates its additional problems. But anyway, the, those now entities are in place to at least begin having some of those discussions. At the beginning, it was the idea of, you know, do we weaponize space or don't we? And, and that conversation wasn't going anywhere. Space was already used for military purposes, but, but how do you begin getting people on the same page to have these conversations? And, it was actually a, a gentleman in France who was head of the space agency at the time that began, we've gotta change the conversation.

So, beginning to talk about the sustainable use of space, that more people, whether you had military purposes in mind or science in mind, it was how do we learn from our lessons here on Earth to plan ahead



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anything in space. So, being able to bring people together, all the various stakeholders to talk about their common interests, their common goals, and work on solutions that could work. So, many of those conversations have been happening. They did come out with some initial guidelines. There's been, um, at, at the Committee on the Peaceful Use of Outer Space, they were able to come up with 17 guidelines for the long-term sustainable use of space, which that was agreed upon, which is sometimes often very difficult to do in the UN system, to get consensus, but that is how they work. Um, and that included, uh, no intentional destruction of any space asset. It's an informal agreement, but it's a start.

**Alexis Miles:** That's pretty amazing considering you've been able to convene all of these parties.

**Cynda Collins Arsenault:** Yes.

**Alexis Miles:** And you yourself, your power, I guess, would be like organizational power, but you don't have any legislative or legal power.

**Cynda Collins Arsenault:** We don't. So, so we're, like, at the UN. We are a permanent observer to this committee. We're members of things like the International Astronautical Congress, and we are able to, uh, present papers, to hold meetings on the sidelines because a lot of times in these very large gatherings, and particularly, when you're bound by needing consensus, if you can just get people together to talk, you know, let's really see what needs to be done here, and that's where a lot of the action happens.

**Sam Fuqua:** In my reading, it seems that space, at least the, the orbital space around Earth is getting mighty crowded. I had read that there's something like 10,000 satellites orbiting the Earth. Most of them belong to Elon Musk. And is that, uh, de facto monopoly of, of near space?

**Cynda Collins Arsenault:** It is. There are other mega constellations, as they're called with, with, going up, and as I said, we, we don't yet fully understand some of the consequences of these kinds of launches, and we don't yet have all of the systems in place for how you manage that kind of traffic, and what happens when they go defunct. And in lower Earth or orbit, that, basically they come back down and, and disintegrate on their way to Earth. But in the geo orbits, um, where they're up there, they stay forever going around and when they no longer work, they become part of the debris issue there. Um, there are some guidelines that companies should save enough fuel to be able to send them outward into, make it somebody else's problem. There are the beginnings of those conversations happening as more and more people realize how critical it is if we do wanna continue to, to gain all these benefits from space.

**Sam Fuqua:** Yes, which you outlined some of those earlier, such as, uh, getting wireless Internet access to remote parts of the world for things like telemedicine.

**Cynda Collins Arsenault:** Right, right. And education. Communication. All our banking system now has based on the timing that we get from space, you know, and the Earth observation to understand our planet, you know, and water systems and, uh, weather, are essential in our everyday lives.

**Sam Fuqua:** So, will there ever be, or is it part of your vision to have, uh, some kind of governing body of space where conflicts can be resolved?

a nonviolent manner, uh, like we have the court systems here, um, that is definitely a goal. I think we're a long way from that, but the beginning conversations because, and we try to focus more on the positive, uh, things of just building relationships. One of the, um, early studies I read was about conflict in India that had happened, and it broke out in cities throughout India, between Hindi and, and Muslim, uh, communities. And those cities that had the less conflict, far less than others, there, there was a clear line, how many associations there were, how many community organizations where people got to know each other and to build the relationships, whether they were working on, you know, Rotary or building a park together or designing a building or a school. Um, if you can know people and be working towards a common goal, you're, you're far, far less likely to break into violent conflict. And so by, you know, just these convenings that happen, that people come together, well, what are we going to do about registration? What are we going to do about mega constellations? Getting people to work together and coming up with those solutions that work best for everybody. At least, that's my belief in that longer vision is that we can, um, work out some of those conflicts.

**Alexis Miles:** And I guess in this field we have to play the long game. It's...

**Cynda Collins Arsenault:** It is the long game. We're, we're in this forever. We have that commitment. And we're, *Secure World Foundation* is small. We have a dozen people. And when you see and hear where we are and what we're doing, you think we were this giant organization, but we're, we're small and flexible and uh, amazing staff that, you know, just get things done.

**Alexis Miles:** So, I'm really curious about, like, the core values and the strategies that this tiny team uses. 'Cause it is tiny when you consider the scope of what you're dealing with.

**Cynda Collins Arsenault:** Exactly.

**Alexis Miles:** So, what strategies or core values do you use when you're trying to bridge differences between international stakeholders?

**Cynda Collins Arsenault:** Well, a key value that we have is we need all voices at the table. And so, diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility. We, we do have a DEI committee, even in our small staff. We hold a summit, annual summit every year. I was in Japan last year. It's in Paris this year. Uh, prior years were in London in partnership with the UK Space Agency. And now it's with the, the French government and the French Space Agency. We have lower rates for younger people. We, um, you know, try to make sure we are accessible. We offer translation. We offer, you know, just looking at what is keeping someone away, and how can we take away those barriers to make sure that they have access. So, that's a very important part. A long time ago, all our staff committed to not being on any mantels. And so, you know, people say one of the proudest things after one summit, someone wrote in a, in the comment section or posted that anyone who says they're not women working on space policy, uh, needs to talk to *Secure World Foundation* because they find them and they bring them forward. So that is, is a very key, key value that we have. You know, as we put together these things, we do have to consider, we work with indigenous tribes and the issue of, uh, dark skies at night. How does space interfere with, with the astronomers? How does it interfere with some spiritual beliefs? So, making sure those people are also at the table having, being a part of this conversation as we create whatever it is we're gonna come up with.

**Cynda Collins Arsenault:** Well, it depends on the discussion and, and how it works because some are, you know, part of other conferences that we go to. On our website, we post the meetings that we're having and they're mostly all open and available. Um, our annual summit is both in person and online, so you can just sign up to attend that way, and there's a very active conversation component to it where you can be talking to other people. For the most part, we work with those people who are in the decision making positions as we look forward. They're the ones that need to have a full understanding of the issues and giving them the information they need to make the decisions that they are facing. And, and they're not that many people even interested, you know? So, it's a small group, uh, I think that, that have a concern and, and can focus on space.

**Alexis Miles:** I find it interesting you said there aren't that many people interested, and do you think that's because people don't understand what's at stake?

**Cynda Collins Arsenault:** That's part of it. That's part of it. But also, you know, there's enough issues going on down here on Earth, you know, so, uh, people particularly right now are, you know, consumed by so much going on and you have to prioritize in your own life, you know, where are you gonna put your energies? What are you gonna do? Um, and so, yeah, particularly, you know, 20 years ago, hardly anyone was looking at this. A lot more people are now. And I, I do think we played a role in that.

**Alexis Miles:** Cynda, I would like to hear a short story about a conflict that the foundation helped to navigate. Um, what was at stake and how did the different parties find common ground?

**Cynda Collins Arsenault:** One is, is what I mentioned before. Um, our current executive director, Peter Martinez, was the chair of a committee, uh, as part of the committee on the peaceful use of outer space that was called the Long-Term Sustainability Committee. And for ten years, you know, so they're bringing all the countries together. So, there's Venezuela and Russia and China and the US, and they're trying to come up with some common guidelines. Um, I, I kept reading the reports and, and I would hear this conflict and this person was doing that, and that person walked out and this was happening. And then every time though, this one guy, Peter Martinez, seemed to be able to bring people back, kind of move things around, get things done. So, I was just in awe of this man for many, many years. I read his reports. So, when he applied for the position, we had an opening for our next executive director, I was so thrilled. So, he has that talent of, of getting those conversations. But, he tells this one story that is so good. So, it was down to the near the end and they were stuck and they just couldn't get final approval on, on these other items, and they were all out at a bar. The men were sitting around the bar drinking, and the women were off in the corner. And so, he, kind of, went over to them and said, "You know, why don't you work on this?" And a couple other women joined and by the end of the evening, the women had figured out how to solve that issue. And that brings us very well to women and the role of women.

**Sam Fuqua:** Yeah, I was gonna ask what need you were responding to when you created Women Powering Change here in the state? We all live in Colorado, but I think it's a model that, that, uh, may have been replicated or certainly could be replicated in other places.

**Cynda Collins Arsenault:** Exactly. I, I am always pushing to have others replicate it 'cause it was pretty easy and it could be done everywhere. So, to my knowledge, no, nothing like it had existed before. And, and I have to backtrack just a little bit. So, when I was back doing all this research about, you know, what, what, how can we get to this world beyond war, the other big aha moment I had was I was reading about the

multiple concepts simultaneously, kind of multitasking, nurturing, the ability to look to the future and, and not be caught up in the moment. And as I'm reading all these, all of a sudden, and they did, didn't mention this, but I'm going those are all the feminine qualities. Duh. That's what we need. And it was this real aha thing of, you know, we live in a male created world and, and it served its purpose. I mean, looking at a, as a species, we, we survived. You know, that, that physical strength, the domination, the linear focus, and yet now in this very complex world, we really need those other qualities, and we need them both. It's not an either or. But um, that brought my attention then to the role of women.

And so that's, kind of, the other component besides space, is how to bring women forward, and particularly in the area of women, peace and security. Um, because there is, you know, that, that communication skills, that recognition of the consequences, you know, I think through nurturing and mothering, you think down the road you're planning ahead is a very critical skill that's needed. So, several things came out of that. But one of them, and this started in 2013, uh, that, so we are coming up on our eleventh year. We didn't have it twice during Covid. And it began when my husband was having lunch with a banker, and she said, "Oh, I really want my daughters to get involved in volunteer work, but I don't know where to begin." And he said, "Oh, talk to my wife, because she knows a lot of different things." So, so I, I go in to see her, and I take a half a dozen brochures of some local nonprofits, and I talked about, well, this is what a middle school girl could do and this is what a high school girl could do. And she was dumbfounded. She, she went, "You mean all this is happening here in Boulder?" And I go, "Oh yeah. And a lot more than this." And so she said, well, she felt that many of her colleagues and, and, uh, clients would love to know about this because, you know, many professional women, you know, they're working very hard, balancing their life, their family, their careers, um, but it, it's, it's contained. And yet, there is this larger thing happening out there in the world, this rising tide, uh, of women just really coming into their own, coming into leadership positions, working to change the world.

And so, to help these other women feel connected or knowledgeable about what's happening, you know, just like people didn't know, don't know about the nuclear weapons we have here in Colorado on Ready Alert, they're not fully aware of, of what all is happening. So, we decided in that conversation that I would invite some of these groups and she would invite her professional, uh, colleagues and clients and stuff, and we had an amazing afternoon in my backyard out in Superior. Anyway, it was lovely. And, so many connections. So, it was only meant to be a one time thing. And afterwards, I started getting emails like, oh, put me on your list for next year. And oh, I'm sorry I missed this. And I said, no, no, it was just a one time thing, you know? Um, but people said, oh, I got a new board member. Oh, I, I was able to sell my merchandise. Oh, I found another group that's doing the same thing I am. So, we formed an alliance together. Uh, so, so I agreed. We had the next one in Denver, the Red Line Gallery, and at that one we had 500 people come. I had 200 in my backyard. And at the end of that time, several women came up to me and said, this is important. We need to do this and, and we'll be your committee. So, it's all volunteer run, and now has about a thousand people. We have over a hundred nonprofits, all led by women across all issues. So, the environment, poverty, education, healthcare, you name it, it's covered.

And then we invite in everyone we can think of, but particularly, uh, professional women who might not otherwise know, but could have some capacity to get involved and become a part of this movement. And I think particularly now when so many nonprofits are really struggling, um, you know, the economy, all of that, um, there is power in coming together. And the energy, I, I call it the antidote to the nightly news. Um, you know, so far reading the news, and yet you walk into this room and you see so many dedicated, passionate people doing something. Someone's taking care of this, someone's taking care of that. Someone's working on this, and it's like, oh okay. I don't have to do it all, but maybe there's a little place

just a few more slots for exhibitors. I hope people will sign up. And it's [womenpoweringchange.org](http://womenpoweringchange.org) is the website.

**Sam Fuqua:** Well, we're, we're near the end of our time, but we wanted to ask you more about your work with women around peace and security issues.

**Cynda Collins Arsenault:** Yes. I, to me, that is our most essential critical thing we need to be doing right now. We, we have a UN Resolution 1325. We have a US law, the Women Peace and Security Act, and the agenda basically says, in order to have peace and security, women need to be an active part of all of that. Um, whether it's in the pre-thing of just our daily interaction or the buildup to any kind of conflict, it, or the resolution of conflict or the rebuilding of a society after conflict. When women are present, you get better ideas, better solutions. And we have evidence of that over and over again. So, another program that I started is called, Our Secure Future: Women Make the Difference. We have an office in D.C. and we work very specifically with US government, which is required by law that Trump signed in 2017 passed by both the House and the Senate, hopefully will hold that the agencies are required to develop their implementation plans for how they will include women.

Part of the UN resolution requires that all states, nations develop a national action plan for how they will implement this agenda. So, we work with other countries. We have a National Action Plan Academy that does regional convenings. We just completed in the Caribbean, bringing together seven countries to develop their national action plans. None of them had any. And Trinidad Tobago has now there a first official national Action Plan for how they will implement this. Uh, so we bring together those people in Parliament with the Women Leaders Civil Society and to learn how to do it, what works, what doesn't. Uh, many countries are already on their fourth and fifth rendition of this. So, it's making it happen. Making it a reality is the next step because the law really is a very viable tool that we have to, to begin to change the systems that we have that can work better, and women are essential in making that happen.

**Alexis Miles:** I was gonna ask you what gives you hope, but I think you just said it.

**Cynda Collins Arsenault:** Yes. It's women. And boy, there are some amazing ones out there. And you can meet a lot of them on May 7th, in person.

**Sam Fuqua:** Well, Cynda Collins Arsenault, it's been a pleasure to talk with you. Thank you for your time and for your work.

**Cynda Collins Arsenault:** You're very welcome, and an honor to be here. And thank you for what you both do.

**Alexis Miles:** Cynda, it was such a pleasure getting to learn more about what you do.

**Sam Fuqua:** Cynda Collins Arsenault is an activist and philanthropist. She's co-founder and president of *Secure World Foundation* and the founder of Women Powering Change. If you'd like more information on their May 7th event in Denver, go to the website, [womenpoweringchange.org](http://womenpoweringchange.org).

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is Mary Zinn, Jes Rau, Norma Johnson, Alexis Miles, Alia Thobani, and me, Sam Fuqua. Our theme music is by Mike Stewart. We produce these programs in Colorado on the traditional lands of the Arapahoe, Cheyenne, and Ute Nations. To learn more about the importance of land acknowledgement, visit our website [sidewayspod.org](http://sidewayspod.org). And this podcast is a partnership with The Conflict Center, a Denver-based nonprofit that provides practical skills and training for addressing everyday conflicts. Find out more at [conflictcenter.org](http://conflictcenter.org).