



**Diversity, equity, and inclusion are at the heart of everything we do.**

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## Message from the Board

Dear Valued Members, Colleagues and Friends of ACTO,

With the passing of the Summer Solstice, we are at the half-way mark for the year, a time when the skies are clearer, the breeze is warmer and many of us in the world are in vacation season. We hope you are being nurtured with a refreshing break for your mind, body and spirit.

In this issue of our newsletter you will read a summary of the conference with several Glimmers, gleaned from conversations and feedback from our participants and speakers. Board member Sukari Pinnock Fitts said, *'As I experienced the conference unfolding, I felt a sense of being part of a global coaching community -- a community that values voices that were Afrocentric, Indigenous and Sociocultural in coaching frameworks and approaches to coaching practice.'*

We would like to express our gratitude for all of us, who together made the conference happen - the Conference Committee and support teams, the ACTO Board, our generous sponsors, the speakers and the participants. Each one of us brought a gift to the event! Halli McNab sums it up when she says, *'I appreciated that all of us (the presenters and attendees) were talking and learning about critical topics in coaching that you can't learn about in many venues. And in a very real and authentic (not canned) way.'*

With the conference behind us, we will move ahead with ideas for how we can continue

this exchange around critical topics in a real and authentic way. Our focus is to increase global engagement and to ensure we maintain and add to an active, creative and committed Board.

Many members of ACTO might be due for membership renewal and this is a gentle reminder to check the status of your membership and renewal status.

We hope you enjoy this edition of our newsletter.

Warmly  
ACTO Board Members



## Humans First

Embedding Social Identity Differences  
in Coaching and Coach Training

### 2025 ACTO VIRTUAL CONFERENCE

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#### CONFERENCE GLIMMERS

##### **Embracing Social Identity in Coaching Conversations: Key Takeaways from a Transformative Conference**

At the ACTO 2025 Conference in June, Humans First, Embedding Social Identity in Coaching and Coach Training, thought leaders from around the world shared powerful insights that are shaping the future of coaching. As professional coaches, we are tasked with not only guiding our clients through their challenges but also creating a space where they feel heard, valued, and seen—especially when navigating the complexities of their social identities. Here are some key takeaways from the conference that can deepen our work with diverse clients and make our coaching more inclusive and impactful.

##### **Embrace Difference as a Superpower**

Mahdi Davenport, the opening keynote speaker, set the tone for the event with a powerful message: *difference is a superpower*. Humans are designed to be different, to think

differently, and to express those differences. Davenport encouraged coaches to lean into these differences rather than shy away from them. When working with clients who have experienced trauma tied to their social identity, he recommended that coaches express three critical sentiments: *“I’m sorry you had to go through that.”* *“You’re safe with me.”* and *“Thank you for being different. Embrace it!”* Furthermore, Davenport urged coaches to practice *“listening from zero,”* as if hearing the client’s story for the first time. This approach encourages deep empathy and understanding, allowing the coach to hear not just the words, but the essence of the client’s lived experience.

## **Honoring Lived Experiences**

Christina Stathopoulos spoke about the importance of honoring clients' lived experiences. She highlighted the need to ask, *“What beliefs have you created around your experiences?”* As coaches, it's crucial to first be curious about a belief before attempting to shift it. This approach creates a space where the client feels understood rather than rushed to change.

## **The Power of Cultural Sensitivity: Code Switching vs. Code Shifting**

Jimena Andino Dorato introduced a useful distinction between *code switching* and *code shifting*. Code switching occurs when individuals from marginalized groups alter their behavior to fit into the dominant culture, often for survival. In contrast, code shifting is a more positive, intentional choice to adapt to different cultural environments. Andino Dorato’s distinction emphasizes the power of intentional adaptation rather than forced conformity, encouraging coaches to support clients in embracing their own cultural strengths while navigating different cultural contexts.

## **Naming Social Identity to Build Trust**

A key theme emerged during a community conversation on Day Two: we must *stop leaving race at the door*. Whether we’re aware of it or not, social identity is always present in the room. If we fail to name it, we miss the opportunity to create genuine trust and depth in our conversations. Coaches are encouraged to bring social identity into the conversation, naming it explicitly and acknowledging the power dynamics at play, particularly in white-dominated systems.

## **Embracing Social Identity in Business Development**

Sammie Walker Herrera, in her session, extended the conversation beyond individual coaching and into business development. She reminded us that our social identity influences every aspect of our professional lives, including our marketing and speaking engagements. By acknowledging the diversity within our audiences, we can create more inclusive messages and avoid the exhaustion that comes with trying to "translate" our stories to fit different cultural contexts.

## **The Cost of Erasing Social Identity**

Sukari Pinnock-Fitts challenged us to reflect on the emotional toll that erasing one's social identity can have. She asked, *“What is lost when people feel they can’t bring their full selves into the conversation?”* This is particularly relevant as we see global movements aiming to erase or marginalize certain groups. Coaches must create spaces where

individuals can fully express their identities without fear of rejection or harm.

## **The Power of Vulnerability**

Veronica King, the Day 3 keynote speaker, emphasized the healing power of naming and addressing social identity. *“What can’t be named, can’t be healed,”* she said. Although discussing social identity can feel uncomfortable for some coaches, she reminded us that discomfort is not danger—it’s data. This discomfort should be viewed as an opportunity for growth. The process of coaching, King said, is a sacred act of witnessing, and when we bring social identity into our work, we elevate the coaching experience.

## **Listening Beyond Words**

Joanna Davis’s session on listening reminded us that true listening isn’t just about silence. It’s about being attuned to what’s not being said. Often, clients’ social identities influence their unspoken experiences, and coaches must be sensitive to these nuances to foster a deeper connection and understanding.

## **Embracing Vulnerability**

In her closing session, Arianne Rice spoke about vulnerability, defining it as *“giving oneself permission to be open to risk and to others.”* While vulnerability can feel like a risk, it is essential in conversations about social identity. Whether as coaches or clients, we must allow ourselves to be vulnerable in order to normalize our experiences and facilitate healing.

## **Moving Forward**

The lessons shared at the conference invite coaches to approach social identity with curiosity, openness, and intentionality. By embracing the complexity of our clients’ identities and creating spaces where they can bring their full selves into the conversation, we not only enhance the coaching experience but also contribute to the healing process. We look forward to seeing how these insights shape the future of coaching and hope to continue these important conversations at next year’s conference.

## **BEHIND THE SCENES**

A shout out to this team that came together globally, across time zones, to put together several aspects of the conference including - ideation, outreach, marketing, fund raising, creating a visual communication, social media, tech support, communication, financials, enrolment and much more!



## OUR SPONSORS

Thank you to all of our generous sponsors!



**Humans First**  
Embedding Social Identity Differences  
in Coaching and Coach Training



We thank our sponsors for their support



# Resource of the Month

Each month in this newsletter we will highlight a different facet of identity, and provide a resource in this area for our readers.

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Following on our Conference theme of Humans First, Embedding Social Identity in Coaching & Coach Training, the coaching magazine Choice published their 2Q25 edition on a theme of *Coaching, Antiracism, and the backlash against Diversity, Equity & Inclusion*. The articles, all written by coaching colleagues, explore a variety of options for coaches who work in this space.

The magazine, the heart-work of Canadian coach Garry Schliefer, is published digitally, and you can purchase the entire edition for \$5.95 USD here: <https://store.choice-online.com/back-issues/>



## ACTO Membership Renewal

It is membership renewal time for many ACTO members. To check your membership status, log in to the ACTO website and click on your name. You will be able to view your active membership and if there isn't one, you can renew from there. You will also have received separate emails with additional information about renewing if your membership has expired.

## ACTO Monthly Community Conversations Calls

**Please join us on Thursday, August 7 at noon EDT for our next call**

If you would like to facilitate an upcoming call, [let us know](#). With community facilitation support, we can offer these calls at times that are more convenient for some in our global community.

Feel free to invite a colleague to experience this ACTO member benefit. You can learn more and see the full schedule [here](#).

## UPCOMING EVENTS

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### ACTO August Community Conversations Call

Date: August 7, 2025 Time: 12 noon EDT

[More information](#)

[Register](#)

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### August Monthly English Forum: Writing Toward Peace: A Reflective Practice for Coaches

Date: August 27, 2025, 8:00 US PDT, 11:00 US EDT, 17:00 CEST, 20:30 IST (90 minutes)



[More Information](#)

**Register**

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**September Monthly English Forum: Neurograph the Layers of Identity in Your Business for New Awareness and Possibility**

Date: Sept 24, 2025, 8:00 US PT, 11:00 US ET, 17:00 CET, 20:30 IST (90 minutes)

[More Information](#)

**Register**

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**October Monthly English Forum: Coaching Candidly™: Mastering Transformative Conversations in a Divisive Era**

Date: Oct 22, 2025, 8:00 US PT, 11:00 US ET, 17:00 CET, 20:30 IST (90 minutes)

[More Information](#)

**Register**

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**November Monthly English Forum: Coaching to elevate human dignity in times of erasure and moral injury**

Date: Nov 19, 2025, 8:00 US PT, 11:00 US ET, 17:00 CET, 21:30 IST (90 minutes)

[More Information](#)

**Register**

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*Beginning in September 2025, the fee for ACTO Monthly Forums will be \$25 USD for prospective members. The forums will remain free for ACTO members.*





## **ACTO STAND**

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ACTO is a community of coaches and coach trainers dedicated to co-creating a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive coaching profession. Through dialogue, learning opportunities, and change initiatives, we seed coaching excellence that values diverse cultural perspectives and eliminates bias and harm.

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To read the full details of the ACTO Stand, please visit [our website](#).



## VOLUNTEER WITH US

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Join our committees! Volunteer with ACTO and help shape a more inclusive coaching profession. Visit our website to learn more and explore opportunities to get involved.

[Visit our Website](#)



## August Multicultural Calendar

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We invite you to acknowledge and explore a diversity of significant dates and cultural celebrations with us. These dates were sourced from [Diversity Resources](#). Please visit their website to learn more about each date's significance. If you have important dates from your culture that you'd like our community to learn about, please let us know!

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### Awareness

August - Black Business Month  
August - Intersectionality Awareness Month  
August - National Civility Month  
August 7 - Purple Heart Day  
August 9 - International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples  
August 19 – UN: World Humanitarian Day  
August 26 - Women's Equality Day  
August 31 - International Day of People of African Descent

### Religious

August 1 - Pagan and Wiccan: Lughnasadh  
August 6 - Eastern Orthodox Christian: The Transfiguration of Christ  
August 15 - Eastern Orthodox Christian, Roman Catholic: The Assumption  
August 21 - Jain: Paryushana  
August 27 - Hindu: Ganesh Chaturthi

## ACTO MEMBER HIGHLIGHT

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We want to highlight and celebrate our members who embody the ACTO Stand for diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging in their coaching practice and training. Would you or your coach training organization like to be featured in our Member Highlights section? We're looking for individuals and organizations whose stories inspire others in our community. [Reach out to us](#) to share your story!

## Help Us Grow Our Community

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Invite your coach friends and colleagues to join us! Share the benefits of [ACTO membership](#), including access to our informative monthly forums. They can also join our community calls as your one-time guests for a taste of what we offer. We appreciate your support in cultivating a vibrant community!



## Share Your Feedback with Us!

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We value your feedback. Please share your thoughts, ideas, and suggestions with us at [ACTO@ACTOonline.org](mailto:ACTO@ACTOonline.org). We look forward to hearing from you!

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