



Deep Listening. Fostering Trust. Bridging Communities.

Madison Police & Family Listening Circle #2

May 30, 2019

Thank you to Sherman Middle School for hosting this event.

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Executive Summary

The second Madison Police & Family Listening Circle took place at the Sherman Middle School in Madison on Thursday, May 30, 2019. The topic of the listening circle focused on implicit bias. Participants were asked two rounds of questions by facilitators who were trained by the Zeidler Center:

1. *"Talk about a time when you felt an interaction you had with someone was motivated or influenced by how you look. How did you feel and how did you react?"*
2. *"What do you wish others would know about who you really are?"*

If time permitted, participants were asked to participate in Connected Conversation and were asked the following questions:

"Have you been in a situation when you had to interact with someone who had done something bad to you in the past? How did that influence your interaction?"

"Can you talk about a time when you thought you wouldn't get along with someone and you actually did? Why did you think you wouldn't get along and what made it work?"

"What questions of curiosity do you have for each other that came up during the go-arounds?"

During Question Round One, participants shared many examples of how they experienced implicit bias, such as clothing, gender, weight, to name a few. Racial bias was discussed. One participant spoke of not fitting in any one group and how that made them feel. Another individual spoke of a time in which they felt treated equal; no bias was felt. Participants' reactions to implicit bias varied with one choosing to *"pick their battles"*, another soothed a friend after witnessing cruel behavior, and others used it as motivation.

During Question Round Two, participants shared how they wished others perceived them and described traits that they carried that others might not know about them. Many participants challenged stereotypes by pointing out traits that went against what others thought and assumed. Many wished positive characteristics would be recognized such as being nice or caring.

Other participants simply wanted people to be know they had talents and skills that are currently not recognized.

During the Connected Conversation participants shared personal experiences of interacting with people with whom they had a bad experience in addition to overcoming those bad experiences. Community was also a key topic. Participants discussed initiatives to make Madison a better place while comparing Madison to other cities to point out challenges. Participants discussed how police officers were also members of the community and should be seen upon as such. Some spoke of participating in a listening circle with police officers as a new experience and of wanting expansion of the Police and Youth Initiative.

Questions about this dialogue may be directed to:

Zeidler Center for Public Discussion

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Evaluation@ZeidlerCenter.org

Analysis

Question Round One: *"Talk about a time when you felt an interaction you had with someone was motivated or influenced by how you look. How did you feel and how did you react?"*

1.1 Clothing Influenced Perception

Several participants discussed experiences in which they were perceived a certain way due to the way they were dressed. One participant spoke of the difference of interaction they experienced when wearing a business suit versus wearing a sweat suit:

"As an adult, I spent 18 years in the insurance industry. If I ran into the same people sometimes in a suit and sometimes in a sweat suit, they treated me differently. It was very frustrating, and it happened enough that I learned to deal with it and understood I needed to choose what battles to fight."

Another participant chose to use the assumed bias as a motivator for herself:

"When I was in high school my school counselor judged me based on the clothes I wore, even though I had a 4.0 GPA. They said, 'You are more like the type to be pregnant and barefoot.' I didn't attend college, but I became a beautician and then a financial accountant because I could."

One Police Officer participant shared how wearing a police uniform affected a job candidate's perception of them:

"When I interview applicants for a job at the police department, I always wear a uniform. I want to see how applicants react to an officer in a uniform. Often after someone is hired, and they get to know me better they say that I was so intimidating during the interview. I don't act differently but they are reacting to the uniform itself, not me."

Two Police Officer participants noted the change that occurs when officers in uniform respond to the scene. One explained:

"When I get to a scene, people lie and become apprehensive. I wish that at the end of the day they recognize we are just citizens."

1.2 Physical Characteristics that Affected Interaction

Participants shared times in which they were treated differently due to gender, weight, and facial hair. One person shared how they responded to a gender bias comment. They were surprised to learn that their coworker held on strong to her gender bias views, despite parallel situations:

"I was at work and I brought avocados and baguette for lunch. When I was toasting the bread a coworker said, 'Very domestic of you.' I said to her, 'I do most of the cooking in our house' and she said, 'My husband does the cooking at our house.' Even with the experience she has she assumed something about me because I am a man."

Another participant shared how they were motivated to challenge the assumed bias and show that she could play basketball, even though it was assumed she could not because she was a girl. A woman spoke of her line of work and commented on how she is treated differently because she works in a male dominated field:

"Being mansplained to because I am a woman in mechanics and men seem to speak down to me."

Stories were shared of how weight has affected their life and interaction with people. One participant recalls losing a relationship because of her weight, how that affected her, and stated, *"My pain is now my power."* Another woman spoke of how since losing weight, she is treated differently in a store:

"I lost 80 points in a 6-month period. Now when I go to the store, where I used to be ignored, people talk to me. As I get older, I'm not angry anymore."

Lastly, one person pointed out that people assumed things about his personality due to his facial hair:

"I can have fun, but when people see my beard, they think I'm serious."

1.3 Racial Bias

Two participants discussed incidents that they believed were dictated by the color of their skin.

"I am going to share both a youth and adult experience. I went to a record store a lot when I was young, I went to the same place to buy albums. One time, I was there with some friends, and we were laughing and talking. The clerk asked us to leave for no reason and when we didn't leave, he called the police. The police made us leave. I think it was because we were black teenagers."

"One time at the park someone wouldn't play with me because I was Black. It's pitiful. I ignored them."

One woman felt that she had an advantage because of her gender and race, noting she felt that this would not happen to everyone and expressing the lack of fairness for others.

"I was driving to work on a very cold day. I realized I had a flat and at the same time saw that I was being pulled over by a police officer. I just jumped out of the car and didn't follow the expected protocol, but I was treated fine and in fact, the officer drove me to work. I think because I was a white woman I was treated differently – I don't think that is fair."

Participants also offered examples of when they were perceived as being racist themselves. Someone shared that they were perceived to be a racist when new residents moved into her townhome complex, as she was the only white woman living there. One individual spoke of an incident where she worked and how it initially affected her:

"I grew up in rural Wisconsin with people who looked like me. I went to a college where most everyone was white as well. My first job was at the Meadow Ridge Public Library, and they do have some issues with youth. I tried to correct a kid's behavior, but he turned it into a 'racial thing.' He told everyone that I didn't like black people. I took it very hard and personally. When I finally understood it wasn't about me, it made me want to grow as a person. There are few places where you experience so many different situations that at the front desk of a library. But that initial horrible experience was very valuable to me."

1.4 Language

Two participants recalled a time when felt they were treated differently due to language. One individual shared how people react in public when her family speaks Spanish to public:

"My husband is from Mexico and is a permanent resident. I am white, and we have a 3-year-old. We speak Spanish when we are in public, we are a bilingual household. We have had people say things like "Go back to your own country" or "Speak English." My kids are harassed when they speak Spanish. We are not doing anything wrong."

Another participant spoke of their inability to speak Spanish and how one experience became motivation to learn Spanish:

"I was vacationing in Mexico and I was renting a car. I speak a little Spanish. I was the minority and stood out as a tourist. The people behind the counter were talking in Spanish, and I could tell they were talking about me. I felt ignorant, and I was frustrated by my inability to understand the conversation. It also felt belittling. It did motivate me to try to learn more Spanish."

Question Round Two: *"What do you wish others would know about who you really are?"*

2.1 Challenging Stereotypes

Several participants shared times of encountering stereotypes. Assumed characteristics were linked with aspects including job, location, and personality traits. One participant explained that just because they were quiet did not mean they *"hated people"*, further pointing out that *"I am outgoing once you get to know me."* One participant stated that her career as a librarian affected the way people perceived her, thinking she had only a sweet demeanor, but she wanted to point out that she can get very passionate and of course could get angry. A participant discussed challenging the stereotype that comes from moving from another state.

Two police officers shared the stereotype they face when wearing their police uniform. One cop shared, *"As a police officer, people think I hurt, shoot, and arrest people for no reason just because of my badge and gun."* He stated, *"People look at me and think because I am tall and have a beard that I am tough. I am afraid and scared every day."* Another officer explained:

"I think I am who I am. I wear my feelings on my sleeve. I do what I do [police officer] because I care about this city and Madison. I see things that my colleagues do that are inappropriate, and I am embarrassed as a police officer. Most people think most police officers are like the few that get in the news and I understand why. It is not true though – I guess I can just deal with one person at a time."

2.2 Being Strong & Fighting Adversity

One participant stated that they would like others to know that they are adventurous with their life choices, *"I would want people to know that I've never been afraid to do anything."* Others are facing their fears and overcoming them. One participant shared:

"I have fears and I fight them by travelling alone. I went to Philadelphia and was afraid to go out. But once I did, I found that everyone was so friendly. I intentionally sent my kids to school in Philadelphia – it's a wonderful city."

Another participant shared that they have overcome extreme hardship:

"I am a survivor. I have been abused every day of my life. I do not know how to live with conflict in my life. After fuse to allow what happened to me to stop."

One participant shared that while she likes to connect to others, they are not aware that this year has been extremely challenging for her:

"I like connecting in building through empathy. Lately, I feel like I have been carrying the load. I wish people knew there are caring members and I am sensitive as well. I wish people knew that this was the hardest year of my life."

2.3 Recognize Talent & Skills

Several participants wished others would recognize their talents and skills that might not be known. Most talents mentioned were sports. Another participant stated, *"I wish people would know that I like to play guitar."* Another participant shared:

"I wish people would know that I enjoy investing money into the stock market."

2.4 Needs to be Met

Participants described emotional needs they wished others would take notice of. One individual wants to be happy and experience connection.

"I just want to be happy I know that if I just connect with my heart into my neighborhood, I will feel safe. I do not want to be in this neighborhood anymore that people have to struggle to survive in."

Another individual stated her preference to be cared for:

"I work, prefer to be taken care of and to feel that my vulnerabilities would be seen and addressed."

2.5 Positive Characteristics

Individuals also shared positive characteristics that they wished others knew they possessed, such as being nice, caring, learning, and listening to others. One participant shared:

"I am very task oriented. I am very caring. I am here to minimize pain and expand joy."

One participant shared how a characteristic of theirs was used in a negative way:

"I am laid back. However, I feel taken advantage of being as a way to describe yourself. That is what I am just being."

Connected Conversation: *"Have you been in a situation when you had to interact with someone who had done something bad to you in the past? How did that influence your interaction? Can you talk about a time when you thought you wouldn't get along with someone and you actually did? Why did you think you wouldn't get along and what made it work? What questions of curiosity do you have for each other that came up during the go-arounds?"*

3.1 Personal Experiences

Much of the discussion during Connected Conversation centered around sharing snippets of their own personal experiences. One participant shared that their neighbor would tell them, *"Stay away from me"*, while another participant asked how that came to be. Others shared uplifting stories of becoming friends with a person after an unlikely scenario:

"I got into a fight at school, and the teacher made us apologize. Then, we became friends."

Another youth recalled a time when playing soccer and, *"someone kicked the ball and me and my friend fell, and we became friends even though she got mad at me for trying to kick the ball."*

3.2 Community Interaction

Participants also compared the Madison-area community to other communities. One participant stated, *"It seems that Madison is broken in a funny way."* Hope was expressed that Madison can change for the better.

"In Lake Mills, I watched my partner interact positively with police officers. I hope that Madison can overcome that – other communities are different."

One participant shared how they try to relate from all perspectives:

"I've lived in the Bay area, Philly and Madison. I experience a lot and saw a lot and witnessed both kind and compassionate people and others that rough you up for no reason except that you are black. I sympathize with police officers and I understand the history for black people and their experience. I try to take everyone as a unique individual."

3.3 Community & Individual Initiatives

Participants discussed how they work as an individual to try to connect with others, sharing that their strategy is *"to focus on what we have in common versus what we are against."*

Current community initiatives were also discussed, such as the recent change of law regarding reporting for possible overdose. There was also hope that the YPI (Youth-Police Initiative) becomes more integrated into the community:

"I hope the YPI (Youth-Police Initiative) becomes a bigger thing. When you ask 19-year-old when they see a police officer what they do – they run. We won't change that until we have these conversations. They must know officers and know their names."

3.4 Comments Regarding Police Officers

Two participants recognized that police officers are similar to them, noting that they feel vulnerability and are members of the community, just like everyone.

3.5 Participation in Listening Circle

A few participants spoke of their experience participating in this listening circle. One felt "triggered" by walking through the school to get to the discussion, while another expressed the disbelief of participating alongside police officers, noting the new experience:

"I never thought I would be in a circle talking to the police."

One participant asked a police officer how they connect this discussion back to their work and one replied: *"We have tried to get as many officers here as possible. We think the benefit is listening not venting."*

Parting Words

Overall, all participants who shared parting words stated positive words and feelings, such as laughter, connection, respectful, humble, and openness. Two participants stated they were "impressed" during the closing remarks. *"Enlightened and turned around"* were also parting words shared at the end. Others shared words that had a hint of forward thinking, such as *"recharged, empowered, inspired, determined, and hope."*

Feedback Forms

2 Youth Resident Participants = estimated based on the number of pre-surveys received

8 Adult Resident Participants = estimated based on the number of pre-surveys received

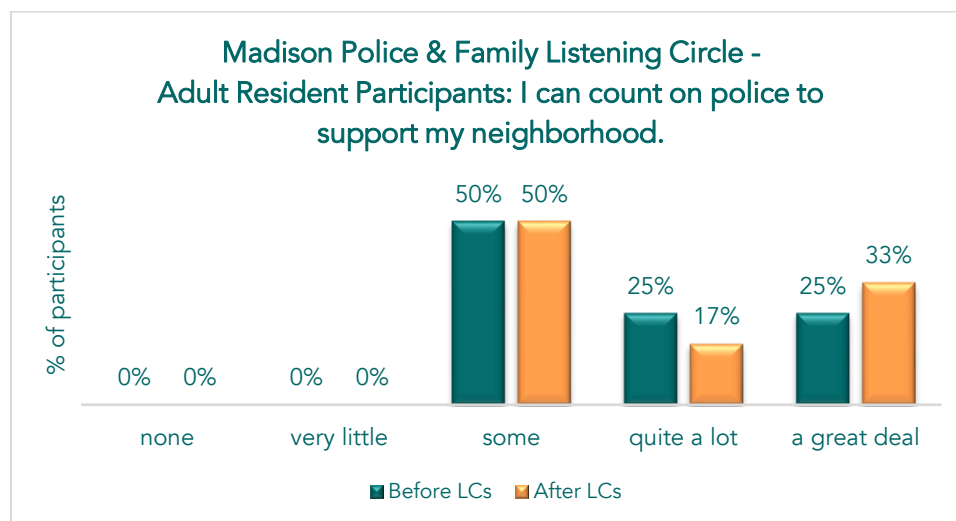
5 Police Officer Participants = estimated based on the number of pre-surveys received

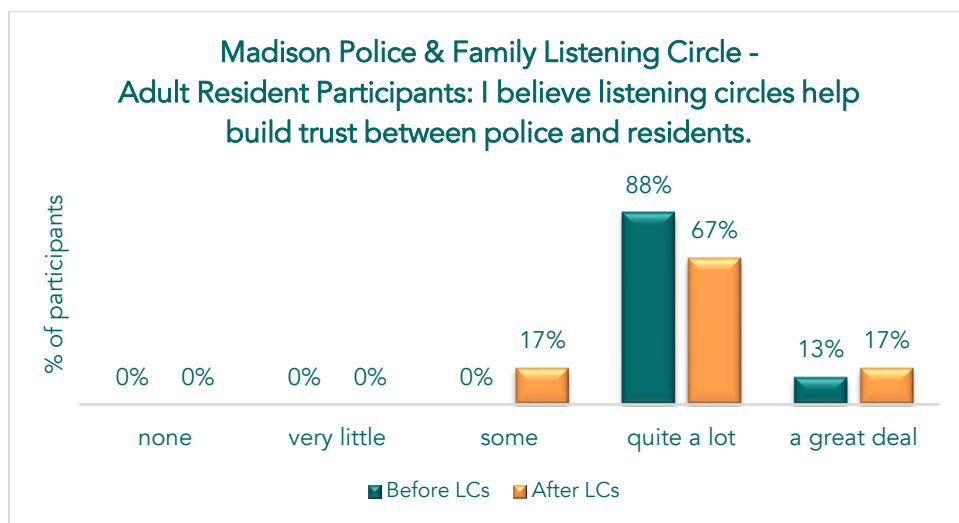
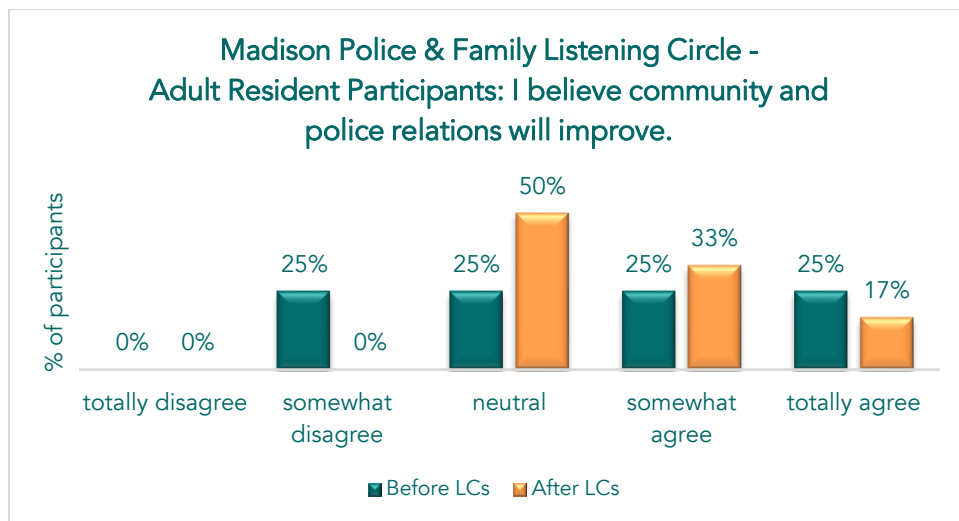
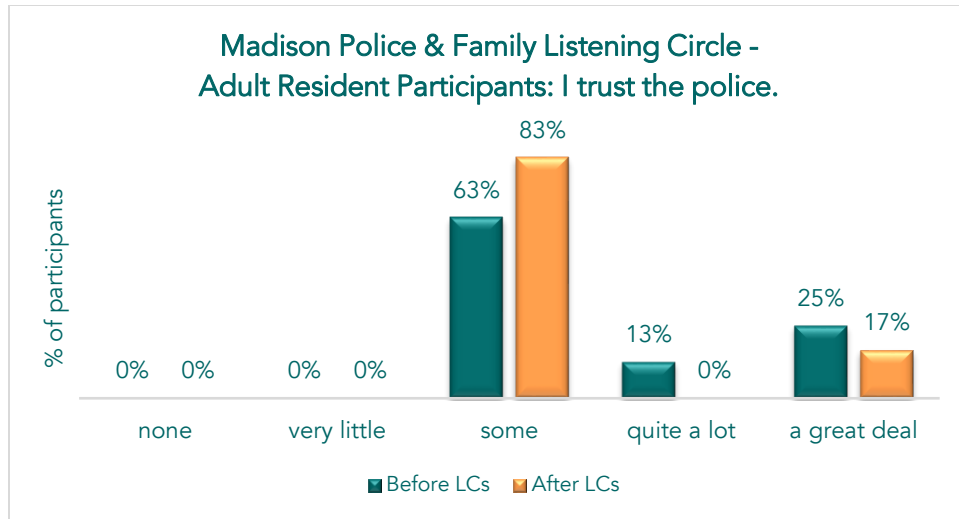
Survey Results for Youth Resident Participants

Due to logistical issues, Youth Resident Participants completed pre-surveys and did not complete post-surveys. Therefore, there are no results illustrating changes in their responses from pre- to post-surveys.

Survey Results for Adult Resident Participants

Due to logistical issues, 8 Adult Resident Participants completed pre-surveys and 6 completed post-surveys. Therefore, the results may be skewed based on the difference in number of pre- to post-surveys completed.





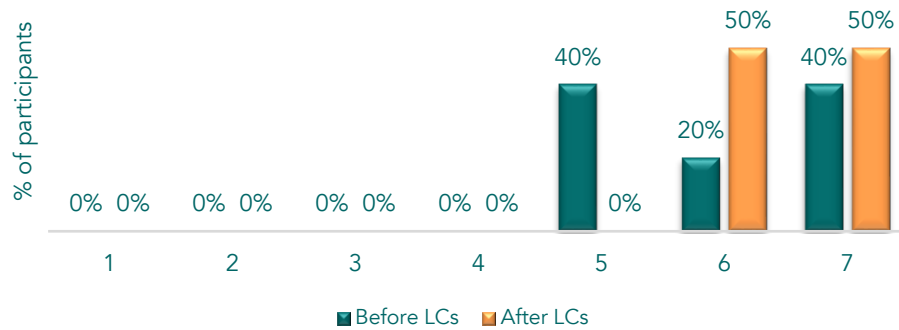
Answers to Open-Ended Questions for Adult Resident Participants

- What was most satisfying or valuable about this experience? What, if anything, did you learn about the police today?
 - Interesting hearing the officers tell stories of being judged.
 - I think that these discussions need to happen on a regular basis.
 - We're all in the same boat.
 - Everyone's vulnerability and lack of judgment. It was a good reminder that officers are individuals.
 - The chance to hear so many stories.
 - Blank.
- What questions or concerns are you leaving with?
 - Blank.
 - Will this continue? (Discussions)
 - The same I arrived but the door has opened a bit.
 - What are steps forward?
 - N/A
 - Blank
- What is one important topic you would like to discuss for an upcoming listening circle?
 - Blank.
 - Police interactions with youth - positive and negative.
 - Police policy and procedure.
 - As a community, getting connected to support youth.
 - N/A
 - Blank.

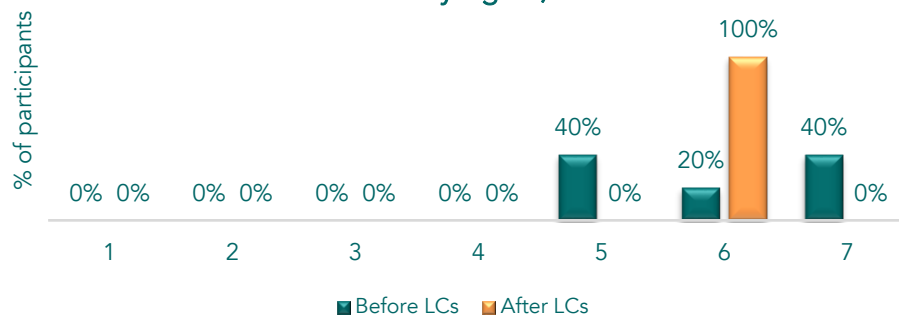
Survey Results for Police Officer Participants

Due to logistical issues, 5 Police Officer Participants completed pre-surveys and 2 completed post-surveys. Therefore, the results may be skewed based on the difference in number of pre- to post-surveys completed.

**Madison Police & Family Listening Circle -
PO Participants: I believe youth and police relations will
improve. (1 = Totally Disagree; 7 = Totally Agree)**



**Madison Police & Family Listening Circle -
PO Participants: I believe listening circles help build trust
between police and youth. (1 = Totally Disagree; 7 =
Totally Agree)**



Annex

Question Round One: *“Talk about a time when you felt an interaction you had with someone was motivated or influenced by how you look. How did you feel and how did you react?”*

1.1 Clothing Influenced Perception

- When I was in high school my school counselor judged me based on the clothes I wore, even though I had a 4.0 GPA. They said, “You are more like the type to be pregnant and barefoot.” I didn’t attend college, but I became a beautician and then a financial accountant because I could.
- As an adult, I spent 18 years in the insurance industry. If I ran into the same people sometimes in a suit and sometimes in a sweat suit, they treated me differently. It was very frustrating, and it happened enough that I learned to deal with it and understood I needed to choose what battles to fight.
- When I interview applicants for a job at the police department, I always wear a uniform. I want to see how applicants react to an officer in a uniform. Often after someone is hired, and they get to know me better they say that I was so intimidating during the interview. I don’t act differently but they are reacting to the uniform itself, not me.
- Officer responded to a call about kids with a gun. I had to cuff the young man with a gun as he insulted me. He said when you put on that uniform you are just like a white man to me. I learn that talking to people, you can learn more.
- When I get to a scene, people lie and become apprehensive. I wish that at the end of the day they recognize we are just citizens.

1.2 Physical Characteristics that Affected Interaction

- I was driving to work on a very cold day. I realized I had a flat and at the same time saw that I was being pulled over by a police officer. I just jumped out of the car and didn’t follow the expected protocol, but I was treated fine and in fact, the officer drove me to work. I think because I was a white woman I was treated differently – I don’t think that is fair.
- I was at work and I brought avocados and baguette for lunch. When I was toasting the bread a
- coworker said, “Very domestic of you.” I said to her, “I do most of the cooking in our house” and she said, “My husband does the cooking at our house.” Even with the experience she has she assumed something about me because I am a man.

- Being mansplained to because I am a woman in mechanics and men seem to speak down to me.
- I lost 80 points in a 6-month period. Now when I go to the store, where I used to be ignored, people talk to me. As I get older, I'm not angry anymore.
- When people see me, they think since I'm a girl, I can't play basketball, so I show them.
- My son's father left me because I was 350 pounds. I felt that some people can be narrow-minded, and my pain is now my power.
- I can have fun, but when people see my beard, they think I'm serious.

1.3 Racial Bias

- I am going to share both a youth and adult experience. I went to a record store a lot when I was young, I went to the same place to buy albums. One time, I was there with some friends, and we were laughing and talking. The clerk asked us to leave for no reason and when we didn't leave, he called the police. The police made us leave. I think it was because we were black teenagers.
- One time at the park someone wouldn't play with me because I was Black. It's pitiful. I ignored them.
- I grew up in rural Wisconsin with people who looked like me. I went to a college where most everyone was white as well. My first job was at the Meadow Ridge Public Library, and they do have some issues with youth. I tried to correct a kid's behavior, but he turned it into a "racial thing". He told everyone that I didn't like black people. I took it very hard and personally. When I finally understood it wasn't about me, it made me want to grow as a person. There are few places where you experience so many different situations that at the front desk of a library. But that initial horrible experience was very valuable to me.
- We live in a townhouse where there are mostly African Americans. I am the only white person and sometimes new residents see me as racist.
- I worked at the school district and it was always seemingly interesting that the parents of color would assume something had been done wrong to their youth if any incidents occurred.

1.4 Language

- My husband is from Mexico and is a permanent resident. I am white, and we have a 3-year-old. We speak Spanish when we are in public, we are a bilingual household. We have had people say things like "Go back to your own country" or "Speak English." My kids are harassed when they speak Spanish. We are not doing anything wrong.
- I was vacationing in Mexico and I was renting a car. I speak a little Spanish. I was the minority and stood out as a tourist. The people behind the counter were talking in Spanish, and I could tell they were talking about me. I felt ignorant, and I was frustrated

by my inability to understand the conversation. It also felt belittling. It did motivate me to try to learn more Spanish.

Other Responses

- I have family from India. My family would say I was lucky because I have fair skin. I was ignored as a person of color in college.
- I had a friend who talked to a girl who said 'Ew' when he talked, and he was sad, and I cheered him up.
- Kevin Looney with the Golden State Warriors of Milwaukee 150 will come and talk to us during the summer and treat us like we are his equal.

Question Round Two: *"What do you wish others would know about who you really are?"*

2.1 Challenging Stereotypes

- I am a quiet person but that doesn't mean that I hate people. I mind my own business. I talk seriously with my family and friends – I am outgoing once you get to know me.
- I am a children's librarian and many people just think I am sweet. I am very passionate and can be very angry.
- I am also from the East coast, Philadelphia. People think that people in Philadelphia behave and act a certain way. I have never been arrested; I am a diehard Philadelphia sports fan.
- I think I am who I am. I wear my feelings on my sleeve. I do what I do [police officer] because I care about this city and Madison. I see things that my colleagues do that are inappropriate, and I am embarrassed as a police officer. Most people think most police officers are like the few that get in the news and I understand why. It is not true though – I guess I can just deal with one person at a time.
- People look at me and think because I am tall and have a beard that I am tough. I am afraid and scared every day. My job challenges me every day. I struggle like everyone else. As a police officer, people think I hurt, shoot, and arrest people for no reason just because of my badge and gun. Before I was a police officer, no one judged me. If I am in street clothes people don't believe I am a police officer. I am the child of a black man and white woman, and we are just people.
- I wish people would know I have something to say beyond my stutter.

2.2 Being Strong & Fighting Adversity

- I would want people to know that I've never been afraid to do anything. I moved to St. Martin Island. I worked for 7 years, 365 days a year with no day off. I raised twins. The hardest thing I have ever done is to be married to a black man and live in Madison.
- I have fears and I fight them by travelling alone. I went to Philadelphia and was afraid to go out. But once I did, I found that everyone was so friendly. I intentionally sent my kids to school in Philadelphia – it's a wonderful city.
- When people first meet me, they think I am strong.
- I am a survivor. I have been abused every day of my life. I do not know how to live with conflict in my life. After fuse to allow what happened to me to stop
- I like connecting in building through empathy. Lately, I feel like I have been carrying the load. I wish people knew there are caring members and I am sensitive as well. I wish people knew that this was the hardest year of my life.

2.3 Recognize Talent & Skills

- I wish people would know I'm good at sports and smart.
- I wish people would know that I'm athletic and good at sports.
- I wish people would know that I like to play guitar.
- I wish people would know that I enjoy investing money into the stock market.

2.4 Needs to be Met

- I just want to be happy I know that if I just connect with my heart into my neighborhood, I will feel safe. I do not want to be in this neighborhood anymore that people have to struggle to survive in.
- I work, prefer to be taken care of and to feel that my vulnerabilities would be seen and addressed.

2.5 Positive Characteristics

- I am laid back. However, I feel taken advantage of being as a way to describe yourself. That is what I am just being.
- I am very task oriented. I am very caring. I am here to minimize pain and expand joy.
- I like to learn and listen with others.
- I wish people would know that I am really nice.

Other Responses

- I am not from the Midwest; I grew up on the East Coast. I've lived a lot of places. Most of the people in my workplace have lived here their whole lives. They assume that I share

some cultural experiences with them. My wife is Indian, and we have a very culturally diverse family. I want people to know that I am more than the Midwest.

Connected Conversation: *"Have you been in a situation when you had to interact with someone who had done something bad to you in the past? How did that influence your interaction? Can you talk about a time when you thought you wouldn't get along with someone and you actually did? Why did you think you wouldn't get along and what made it work? What questions of curiosity do you have for each other that came up during the go-arounds?"*

3.1 Personal Experiences

- I have a neighbor that every time she would see me she would say stay away from me.
- How did the shift happen? How did your neighbor go from not liking you to caring?
- I got into a fight at school, and the teacher made us apologize. Then, we became friends.
- We were playing soccer, and someone kicked the ball and me and my friend fell and we became friends even though she got mad at me for trying to kick the ball.
- This job is always something different.
- I've been tased, but I never tased anyone.

3.2 Community Interaction

- I want to build on the comments from the police officers. It seems that Madison is broken in a funny way. In Lake Mills, I watched my partner interact positively with police officers. I hope that Madison can overcome that – other communities are different.
- I've lived in the Bay area, Philly and Madison. I experience a lot and saw a lot and witnessed both kind and compassionate people and others that rough you up for no reason except that you are black. I sympathize with police officers and I understand the history for black people and their experience. I try to take everyone as a unique individual.

3.3 Community and Individual Initiative

- When I was in Philly, I decided to reach out and mix with people. My strategy is to focus on what we have in common versus what we are against.
- Sometimes I think people won't get along with me because of my job. I worked closely with others in the community to reduce the overdose deaths. We approached it a little differently at first, and we got to be good friends. Ultimately, a law passed that said you would not be arrested for using if you called in a possible overdose. This was a long-standing practice of the police (discretion) but now it is law.

- I hope the YPI (Youth-Police Initiative) becomes a bigger thing. When you ask 19-year-old when they see a police officer what they do – they run. We won't change that until we have these conversations. They must know officers and know their names.

3.4 Comments About Police Officers

- I want civilians to recognize that police officers are like us – vulnerable.
- I get that the offices are members of our community

3.5 Participation in Listening Circle

- I never thought I would be in a circle talking to the police. I never thought I would be in a circle talking to the police the girls in the U circle I hated them says the officer by the end of the week I love the mall
- When I walk through school on this work, I am triggered by the students in the hallway.
- One participant asked officers how this carries back to their work. We have tried to get as many officers here as possible. We think the benefit is listening not venting.

Parting Words

- Laughter, connection
- Thankful, grateful, humble, and thanks.
- Impressed and respectful.
- Openness.
- Impressed.
- Heartful and curious.
- Enlightened and turned around.
- Recharged.
- Empowered, determined.
- Inspired.
- Hope.