



Zeidler Report: “My Sister’s Story” Women’s Dialogue

Introduction

In celebration of Women’s History Month (March 2015), the “My Sister’s Story” series hosted by FROM HERE TO HER Women’s Artist Collective, TRUE Skool, and the Frank Zeidler Center for Public Discussion, and featuring an art exhibition, spoken word showcase, and intergenerational dialogue in Milwaukee, WI. The exhibition partnered female visual artists and poets with individual women in the community — someone whose story may not otherwise be heard or told — to share their defining experiences through art and spoken word poetry.

The intergenerational dialogue brought together over 40 women from the Greater Milwaukee area of diverse ages, races, ethnicities, abilities, orientations and neighborhoods of residence, to share life stories, build coalitions, explore assumptions and challenge prejudices in a safe environment. Participants represented women spanning the ages of 17 to over 70.

The following report represents participant feedback and facilitator notes from the women’s dialogue. Participants began with a shared meal, then six Zeidler Center facilitators worked with small groups, recording participant responses anonymously and non-attributably to the best of their ability. The following questions were used during the structured portion of the dialogue:

Question 1: Tell a story about a relationship you currently have or you’ve had with another woman that was personally supportive through a struggle or transition in your life? What particularly made it so?

Question 2: What do you believe women could achieve or change by improving how we work together? What’s one specific initiative or challenge you’d like to see women tackle together in this city?

Question 3: What inspires you to build coalitions and connections between women? And what holds you back?

The Zeidler Center is grateful for the opportunity to partner with FROM HERE TO HER Women’s Artist Collective and TRUE Skool to promote women’s empowerment and social change through community dialogue.

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Method

Reflective Structured Dialogue, the dialogue method used to facilitate this discussion utilizes small circles of diverse individuals (5-7 people) discussing personal experiences, values, and uncertainties in structured and facilitated conversations. The specific goal is to encourage greater trust, and create a platform for mutual understanding and less demonization. Participants experience both structured and unstructured portions of dialogue. During the structured portion, each participant is given the same amount of time to speak, without interruption. After each speaker, there is a short pause of silence so that all may reflect upon the speaker's response.

In this method, facilitators are not participants in the dialogue, but work to create spaces for others to have dialogue. The three main roles of the facilitator are as follows: 1) take notes on participant responses, 2) keep time to ensure all participants have an equal amount of time to share, and 3) remind participants of their communication agreements if/when necessary.

The following communication agreements were used to facilitate the small group discussion:

Communication Agreements:

The following is a draft list of communication agreements used to facilitate the small group discussion. These may be revised and/or amended before or during the dialogue:

Regarding the *spirit* of our speaking and listening:

1. We will speak for ourselves. We won't try to represent a whole group, and we will not ask others to represent, defend or explain an entire group.
2. We will avoid making grand pronouncements and instead speak to our own personal experiences
3. We will refrain from characterizing another person's views in a critical spirit or from attempting to persuade them to adopt our own views.
4. We will listen with resilience, "hanging in" when something is hard to hear, open to hearing various points of view, and promising to listen to others' positions seriously.

Regarding the *form* of our speaking and listening:

6. We will share airtime and participate within the suggested timeframes.
7. We will not interrupt except to indicate that we cannot or did not hear a speaker.
8. We will "pass" or "pass for now" if we are not ready or willing to respond to a question.

Regarding *confidentiality*:

9. If asked to keep something confidential, we will honor that request.

Small Group Participant Responses

The following represents participant responses to specific questions. Responses have been organized in themes.

Question 1: Tell a story about a relationship you currently have or you've had with another woman that was personally supportive through a struggle or transition in your life? What particularly made it so?

Theme: Built Confidence/Purpose/Courage

- I didn't consider myself to be an artist. She helped me build confidence. We both realized together that it's important to have a life that you enjoy and not just pursue money.
- She made me feel appreciated and helped me find my purpose. I gain energy and ideas and confidence from the community and everyone I met through her.
- A sense of desire for genuine connection and belief that you bring something special to the world
- Being 'believed' and understood
- My godmother encouraged me to confront my abusive male family member. Then my godmother, grandmother, and mother helped me understand that I was being abused and then helped me with the healing.
- In my job, it's very competitive and you move around a lot. A woman asking me "what do you want" and sometimes we are too afraid to ask each other -- what do you want? Don't think about what your parents think or anyone else. A huge leap of faith. This woman made me see this realization.
- She has been there for me to find myself and listen to my calling. She's the mac to my cheese. She's my unconditional support. She will hold my hand when I cry.

Theme: Sharing Wisdom/Experience

- A mentor showed me that it was all right to have friends outside my family and to be connected to people who are not in my family. This was not part of my culture. She was the only person who told me that was worth more than I thought and that we all have our own wisdom.
- Having someone with shared experience helped make me feel like my problems were not unique to me
- A woman who supported her had also gone through a similar divorce experience and had a helpful insight about the family systems involved—women

tended to judge, men supported. The woman was, in turn, inspired by the speaker to make a similar relationship change. The support from her was unexpected and valued.

- A woman in her life personified wisdom, and knew her better than she knew herself. she was present and close for accomplishments and struggles. She stood in for her mother, who had died when speaker was only 3. This mentor died recently, but before then had been a companion; been present.

Theme: Withheld Judgment

- During difficult times, I "go in" (have a "retreat within myself"). She offered advice and knows my heart. She listens without judgment. Other people are cut and dry and offer advice. People need to find their own solutions and that's what she does for me.
- Lots of agreement that feeling supported meant engaging from a place of non-judgment
- No blaming
- After the breakup of a long-term relationship, my partner's mother reached out to me, let me know that she understood my decision to leave the relationship, and said she didn't blame me.
- My grandmother embraced me as a girl in a way no one else did. She understood that I wanted to wear dresses and act like a girl.
- I picked my friend because she's super supportive even when she's not super supportive of everything I do
- I was in a relationship that ended a short time ago. Before it ended I had a lot of questions about what I wanted and I became friends with a girl I worked with. She was there with me through the whole thing. What she gave me...she was always there to listen and let me talk through things and work through things. She was there for me when I cried. She spoke from her experience but didn't tell me what to do. She had an open heart. I felt that and relied on that.

Theme: Non-competitive/Oneness

- Our relationship is very different. She endures a lot of competition and cattiness from other women but we're not like that. I see her spirit.
- A childhood girlfriend who was my most supporting friend moved away when I was young. I reconnected with her after 40 years and now we have talked to each other every day for the past seven years. She filled a space in my soul and is a true sister; we tell each other everything. We clear up any misunderstandings that we have with each other before we get off the phone.

- Tends to feel competition with other women, especially based on darkness of skin. struggles with self-hatred; will not allow closeness with other women.
- This woman did not gossip about her while others did. Though this woman has moved away, they still maintain daily contact.

Theme: Helping to Heal/Being There/Showing Up/Caring

- This trauma was so painful for my family. It made me scared and insecure. It was hard to face. I felt like a bad person. But my friend was always there even though I was so sad and devastated. She has a lot of her own pain and she said it was okay for me to feel bad.
- My younger sister helped me deal with the death the grief of my mother's death and the guilt I felt about being relieved by her death because I was my mother's caretaker before she died.
- A friend taught me how to forgive, forget, move on and not remind people of the wrong they did you.
- An older sister helped me help myself through a difficult situation when I didn't think I had the strength. She was there for me.
- Willingness of others to respond right away-literally showing up
- I renewed a relationship with my sister after several years. She was the only person I could talk to when we experienced a death in our family. It felt like the years had not passed. With her, I can share family experiences.
- Just the presence of the other woman mattered, not what she said or did
- A group of women in college reached out to me when I was feeling isolated. They went out of their way to make sure that I knew they cared about me. They are the main reason that I didn't transfer to another school when I was thinking about it.
- My therapist told me I need to give myself love, cut myself slack, and recognize that what I am doing is important.
- A woman of faith prayed for her and guided her through the suicide of her son. Reassured her that healing would happen, but would not be complete in this world.
- While going through a divorce, a woman told her: "Love yourself."
- A woman used lessons from her own life to know what would be supportive; could see that the speaker was not being supported well following a sexual assault. The woman gave up a longstanding friendship with the assaulter in order to become an ally. The same woman would stay near and sometimes even sleep near her when memories of childhood abuse surfaced. She felt loved by that support.

- through my divorce I connected with the Hmong Advocates and the woman helped me through out everything. She was a lifesaver w my ex in jail.
- I was able to help a friend in the hospital
- She was there when I needed her
- I'm lucky I have one of those awesome moms. My first real romantic relationship didn't happen for me until I was older. Then, out of the blue he told me that he cheated on me with a prostitute and he didn't use protection. And I lost it. I made it through. All my tests came back negative. She's a consistently supportive force in my life and I'm grateful to have her.
- She is still there for me even when I don't call or text her for days. Kids suck and I'm bullied and my friend is there for me. When I get mad at another kid for some dumb thing, she's there for me.

Theme: Trust

- I had to learn that it's okay to let my daughter go and find her own way. I know that she's strong.
- Had been betrayed by mother who allowed intense and repeated sexual abuse by brother to happen.
- When a co-worker was able to reveal the 'story behind the message' in the workplace; felt supported by her willingness to trust that she would use that information wisely
- My oldest daughter, her courage to set boundaries for me as her mom taught me the distinction between protecting her to help myself and protecting her to honor her.

Question 2: What do you believe women could achieve or change by improving how we work together? What's one specific initiative or challenge you'd like to see women tackle together in this city?

Theme: Desire for continued dialogue

- Find women that want to come together and support each other. Someone reached out to me and that's why I'm here. This can grow.
- I now realize that there are lots of groups that do accept people. In the past I was in a situation where people spoke for me. It's important to do more activities like this where people speak for themselves.
- We need dialogue – then we can help each other instead of judging.
- It starts with things like this discussion. I would start with my family. When you start talking about breaking down barriers, people get nervous. If we love each other hard we can change things.
- I always forget to breathe: working together...just sitting here with women I wouldn't meet and just hearing your stories and sharing so openly. It's an amazing thing. And being new to MKE, and sharing, I feel like, I've got it. If more women could do this on a daily basis. I need to work on listening. That's all it takes.
- Wants to see more women's dialogues, because "this is dope." Teen girls especially should benefit from dialogues with women of many ages; it would help with their self-esteem. "It's hell being alone." Mature women need to speak to teen girls and point out the positive, rather than seeing only brokenness and setting crazy expectations.
- Women can accomplish much through dialogue, with the kind of acceptance and respect being shown here. Wants to work on problem of homelessness so that shelters could be eliminated.
- More dialogue and hearing other voices/stories could increase self-esteem and make it clear that women are not alone in their experiences. Women need to build each other up rather than tearing down. Wants to work on the global problem of human trafficking.

Theme: Desire for collaborative, non-competitive, non-judgment spaces, programs

- We can heal ourselves through these collaborative, non-competitive spaces.
- Create collectives around common interests/themes. This can spread like wildfire.
- Instead of making it to the top of the current system, why can't we change the whole structure. In order to succeed, what if we talked like this rather than

shaking hands in our business suits and rebuild the scaffolding. Women have a better capacity to approach things collaboratively, that's what we need.

- We can break the cycle. Let's not compete over our struggles. We allow things (race, creed, gender) to divide us instead of being inclusive. We need to all know that we need each other and that each person matters and is beautiful and is enough. We each need to keep our power.
- Dismiss with the competition and judgment. Judging others appears to be socially engrained and we would be better served to surround ourselves with women who do not bring that to the relationship
- Provide greater opportunities to develop meaningful relationships vs. superficial
- Women are already good at working together. Examples: this gallery, TruSkool. We know we can learn from each other—art therapy shows this is true.
- Improving how we work together
- I agree with the whole competitive nature, I wish we could stop that.
- Reward the 'village' model of supporting one another around a shared goal
- Create regular opportunities to build trust
- Don't give up too early! Women tend to throw in the towel on relationships, efforts and initiatives too soon
- Love and community. If we women and people can have a stronger sense of community, that would shore up so many lines in the sand. There used to be a stronger sense of community here. At a certain point people stopped being so inviting on their porches, class divides etc. Breakdown of community... If women could unite together then things will start to fall into place.
- Greatest initiative is getting communities together and respect each other's differences
- Let go of the internalized sexism that tells us we are 'less capable or less worthy'
- Being present – when we are together, I want to know that you are there
- If women were together more, it would provide more space to heal. Women together provide more support to each other. We could provide more spaces like this to be free to talk and not be judged. It's easier now to find support from other women.
- Acknowledge the positive work of other women.
- Women could accept each other's difference by improving how we work together. Would like to see workplaces empower women to strengthen their families.
- I think sisters could achieve a lot if we work together, work together and support each other. I have seen this with a lot of women that I work with and stop competing with each other. Better stronger network.

Theme: Youth Involvement/Mentorship/Role Models

- Kids are full of potential but they need encouragement. I want to see children be encouraged. We need to play with them and understand where those kids come from – if they are dirty, hungry, etc – things that aren't their fault.
- From Here to Her is it! Collaboration. We need to do more of this and create spaces where we can tell each other's pain through art and support each other instead of being competitive.
- Change community because women raise children who become leaders.
- Initiative would be mentorship and self awareness help
- Intentionally seek role models who exhibit a way of being that nurtures relationships
- Mentor young girls as a way of breaking the cycle of competition and judgment

Theme: Empowerment/Acceptance

- Women can change politics and education, particularly problems with racism and education. Women allow for more feeling-level interaction. If women could present a united front they would make more headway. Women are good at pushing issues to the forefront.
- I started my first org because I didn't want anyone telling me what to do.
- Women tend to blame themselves when they don't succeed. I'd like to see women "take off" their own failures. Dismantling male patriarchal structures is what I want to focus on.
- Women can be each other's worst enemies. We hold a lot of power that we don't know that we have. We share our power. Women drive social change. If we work together we can decide how we want to be, how we want our children to live.
- "You've come a long way baby" speaks to the power of women. When women get together positive things happen. I'd like to see people in this city come together; we're not very different except culturally. I'd love to see us as sisters, mothers, friends, daughters, come together to create change in Milwaukee.
- Social justice and the racial divide
- We can also achieve plurality--what does it mean to be a woman? It's a touchy subject for me as a bisexual and no children and no married I feel less valuable if I'm not out having kids. Somehow my vagina is less valuable if I don't have the children. And that's not right. Bisexual thing--the lesbians don't want anything to do with you because you're not gay enough. It's ridiculous and lonely.
- The spectrum of impact of interpersonal relationships through healing of conflict, trauma, and abuse.
- Heal the divide of racial disparity.

- Compliment and acknowledge intercultural communications. Recognize your own bias and discuss it. The bias should not interfere with the community.
- Overhaul the policing system with the mindset of caring for people. Women can lend this voice to policing.
- Maternal care (breast feeding in public, work leave, infant mortality, keeping babies healthy) more women in positions of power can help this happen.
- Women's capacity for empathy (a skill to work at), couple be used as the basis for forging peace, empathetic work schedules and health care system.
- I've started a group of domestic violence survivors, we meet once a week in women's homes with dinners and talk. Or we'll dance in homes. And learn songs. When one woman goes to court, I'll ask some of these women to sit with them.
- Empowering young women. I would not go back to high school and so when she was talking I wanted to say it's going to get better. As women if we could teach little girls to focus on themselves and their goals. I think too often there are societal things that make it hard for young women to know where they fit.
- I didn't feel like I had a network around me when I was growing up and I have that now in a strong way. I think women have the power to form networks in a really small interpersonal way...and grow that in powerful ways. Women can change the networks of support we have for each other. I'm 26 and moving through self-awareness.
- I think that women and people of color should have more power in government. Studies have shown that studies have shown that government with more women are popular media sexualizes women too much.
- What can we achieve--anything we want. I always think of Iceland when I hear questions like that. And the women kicked all the men out of government and they saved the country. We girls never get to see feminist artists. My sister was raised with Disney movies unlike myself.
- There are more women than men. The more women in power the more successful that org tends to be. I don't know why women have been conditioned to be weak and allow men to do whatever they want. It erodes the sense of sense respect.

Question 3: What inspires you to build coalitions and connections between women? And what holds you back?

What Inspires You:

- We need each other. My experience is unique and people need to be visible. It takes all of us to make change.
- Environments like this. Art.
- I see the need. When I see how I can support someone.
- I've seen a lot of negativity, how women can be so ugly to each other, and I think, "That's so stupid! I wanna change that." It's a misunderstanding. I'm not going to get involved in that drama.
- Being there for others helps them to grow and me to grow. I'm inspired to get through my struggles by hearing that others have made it through far worse. I'm not so positive but others are and they make me feel positive.
- My vision + your vision = our vision. I've felt so creative by being put in this role.
- Dialogues like this are inspirational. not wanting to be alone.
- lack of self-esteem, tending to stay in her own thoughts—"stinking thinking"
- being with like-minded people, hearing other people's voices, enjoying camaraderie, the energy of so many ideas shared.
- a past marked by good experiences in organizations that had women in leadership. had enjoyed helping women and girls, and the flow of stories.
- seeing the impact of church involvement (no hold back)
- connections, interconnectedness, sharing survival tactics.
- willing to shelve that because mission is more important, love and connection can be created, and there is a sense of more momentum moving forward.
- What inspires me is my three sisters. we are always different but also the same.
- I'm also inspired by volunteering
- There's the chance of vulnerability of openness but there's a chance you can make a difference for someone else and they can make a difference for you.
- putting my honest thoughts and feelings out there.
- I've had the experience of connecting with and working with other women, and it's been positive.
- having loving support laughing, genuinely happy with other people.
- taking care of business with other women is a lot of fun
- what inspires me I didn't have friends until I was 11 and up until that time my mom and her best friend were great role models of how to act together. When I switched schools I met a bunch of weirdos who are like me. My friends are emo punk hipsters.

- a young woman just getting started...she'll figure it out. it won't be crap forever.
- One of my favorite things to do is to connect cool people with cool people so that some day all cool people will know each other. Launch info campaigns.
- but I have to be careful, I'm always open for people to pick my brain and leverage my network but I have to be careful not taking over...to get in there and tell everyone what to do...and not give myself away...give and give and give and there's nothing left over for me and my needs. It feels so good for people to succeed because of what I did...it's like a drug.
- it's fun to meet new people and do fun things...you never know where things will lead.
- what motivates me is my 4 daughters. I want to make a better life for them.
- to get to know different people.
- Women's thoughtfulness and interest in putting in the time and effort to cultivate deeper relationships
- Women's creativity and brilliance!
- Women's ability to support and connect
- Opportunities for my own personal growth
- Opportunities to get to know yourself and others better
- Safe spaces to share personal experiences and challenges
- The knowledge that I can be a good friend to someone else
- I wanted to show my daughter how to build relationships outside of the family, so I had to build them for myself first.
- Recognizing that art is important leads me to connect with other women
- The website MeetUp.com brings people together. I started an online book club through it. I've been thinking about starting a women's group to talk to each other in more depth but something is holding me back and I don't know what it is. I'm hoping that the more I think about it, the time will come.
- This type of situation inspires me. I'm in a group of 15 to 20 women who get together and socialize. It's really important to me.
- I've always had a passion for helping young women. But there's a difference in how we communicated and how we listen. I like to talk to 12 and 13 year olds but I don't seem to be making the connection that I would like. I'm trying to encourage them with stories.
- I was raised to make connections with other women. I grew up with a lot of strong women. I've always felt confident in my sense of womanhood. Building connections is innate.
- Watching my godmother build bridges in her community. Recognizing I need to support the community and do what I was put on this planet to do.

- Examples of Malala Yousafzai today and Harriet Tubman in history. Harriet helped lay the foundation of this country.
- Learning from my community wherever I am
- Envisioning Milwaukee applied understanding of what needs to be done by young women, the journey to discovery.
- Understanding my own journey.
- My friends' work with sexual abuse survivors. Seeing that if you put the work into it. It will help. We think we're alone but we're not.

What Holds You Back:

- Fear
- Insecurity
- Competing priorities
- Past bad experiences
- Fatigue
- Cliques
- someone – another black woman – told me I wasn't black enough. I was invited to a group and I found out they had a big conversation about me before I was there. It was disrespectful.
- feeling like I'm not on the same level as others (background, experience)
- when people act superior, like I'm not good enough, like I don't belong.
- fear of being pegged as the negative feminist.
- Life. Everyone is busy. We need to make time but people have endless excuses: work, family... We need to find ways to support people so we can all participate: you can bring your kids, we'll work around your schedule.
- I've been rejected in the past. It created a block for me with that other person. I don't want to be perceived as in competition with the other.
- trust issues, esteem issues, need to get self out of the way.
- being picked on by girls in middle and high school; still holding the pain of that. fear of rejection. women can be quick to point out what's wrong with her.
- fear of being part of a game.
- being afraid to expose ourselves, needing to be vulnerable.
- fear of when I get scared and want to hold back, and don't want to be vulnerable.
- My mom didn't really help because she really wants to be a doctor or scientist. wants me to be...and she complains about me and she doesn't really appreciate. She was my best friend when I was little ...and as I grow up she wants me to act

like ...and I didn't get to act like a kid ...and she thinks anything creative is stupid and so when I meet a person I'm calculated.

- what holds me back is judgment.
- money getting spent on nothing.
- my age, I'm not as young as I used to be. A lifetime of obligation. Your network is dense. And it's hard to respond.
- our community and the work of women that's acceptable...and other women will come and talk to my husband and ask why are you letting her do these things. people will go to my family and talk about me ... I'm a bad person because I'm a feminist.
- working 28 hours of overtime. I'm exhausted and it's hard to reach out and have coffee. I need to have a work life balance. It doesn't allow me to branch out as much as I'd like. We can be our best support and worst enemy.
- competing for resources is really challenging. I find a push and pull between what I want to do and other people's requests for funding.
- What's blocking it is some women are afraid of the word feminism or the stigma of women getting together with other women only.
- Women who have been indoctrinated into the patriarchal system can be superficial.
- Self-doubt and fear of rejection.
- Fear that because of my privilege I will speak over someone who needs to be heard more than I do.
- I am my own worst critic. I tackle too much. Time constraints.
- Time, energy, my own issues, the need to be needed.
- My story wasn't good enough. My own worst critic.
- Rumination.

Connected Conversation:

- Women have a lot of strength.
- Not wanting to fall into expected girls' behavior in high school and not fitting in.
- The need to deconstruct the patriarchal system. People are so much more than money-makers. Women can change this about society. Women are bigger than that.
- Labels, where we went to school whether we're female, black, or whatever doesn't matter.
- This was harder for me than I thought it would be. Even though I've studied feminism and sexism there is a lot more to it.
- Women are good organizers but might not be collaborating on issues. Hence Milwaukee has the largest number of nonprofits per capita.
- Urbanized apartheid is real.
- Hopeful that it will get better.
- Appreciation for a space where I am not the only person listening.
- We all have our own voice
- Traumatic things that happened to me later happened to my daughter. My daughter thought that those things would never happen to her.
- It's great to be able to be honest with each other and feel heard.
- I feel the same way.
- It's so great to hear your story and how you talk!
- You think you're not good at _____ but I think you are! (MM: multiple comments like this)
- whole round of people complimenting the visual artists on the art.
- Trust is crucial
- I was thinking 'I'm not gonna say anything' and here I am telling my life story. I didn't expect this! It's nice to almost be forced to talk!
- I've learned new things about each of you (that I already know) today and I feel more connected.
- We want more of this
- I want to be in this creative space more often, doing projects like this, in places like this.
- The need for healing is huge – for us and for younger girls
- It's important to honor each other's stories. It's therapeutic.
- I look forward to more connection.
- There was a shared experience of bullying, and shared opinions that generational differences are having a big impact throughout society now.

Participant Feedback Form Responses

Of the 40+ participants, 22 submitted post-dialogue feedback forms. Their responses are below.

What was most satisfying, enriching, or valuable about your experience in this dialogue?

- First question of the dialogue is the most valuable.
- It was nice hearing people's thoughts of the fact that they were so similar to my own, but these are things that are generally not talked about- they need to be talked about. I feel energized, empowered and inspired.
- Listening to each other stories. Take away- Listening to how younger people have self esteem challenges.
- I met a woman who is a mother who had some really powerful messages. She had to tell herself to have a healthier relationship with her daughter. The messages were some I've been trying to give my own mother out of a need for boundaries, and the woman gave me language for it.
- Met like minded individuals, everyone was very sincere. I am very encouraged to continue my journey.
- The connection with other women and their positive outlooks on life. Enforcing that communication in any medium is the way to change negativity into positive energy.
- Dialogue will bring a better change to make the city a better city.
- the chance to take in people's authentic experience. Noticing everyone's, including my own- appreciation of a place to be vulnerable.
- I enjoyed the experience.
- Hearing from older women- knowing they support all women, like I do, and are raising children who do the same. Power of Listening.
- My greatest take away is that there are spaces where women can gather. I would like to seek out more of these spaces.
- Breaking down barriers of perceived difference- generational, racial, etc. When we allow ourselves to be vulnerable, we find the immense power of one human connection.
- Breaking the cycle
- Most satisfying-connecting with other women who are seeking to connect with others. Being heard and listening without judgment.
- My therapist has been encouraging me to indulge in conversations between my 9-year old self and my adult self. A pre-teen joined my circle today and said so

many things that struck my core. It was like my higher power had set the whole experience up. What a gift!

- Coalition, key part of a group.
- Connecting with women
- Always enjoy meeting new people, learning from others.
- Energy from group members. Group dynamics was good.
- Participants being open and honest; providing a safe place to share personal stories.

What questions and concerns are you leaving with?

- N/a
- How do I do more of this in my life.
- I'm leaving with positive energy.
- When's the next one? (In August)
- I wish I could have heard everybody's story.
- All concerns met.
- None
- None.
- Wish the world was a better place.
- Concerns of how I can better listen and communicate with other women.
- How/when will this dialogue continue?
- How to stay connected with others that were in group participation?
- Stay open! Alive!
- How to let go of our feelings and priorities.
- It was hard to hear in the large room so I asked my facilitator if we could move to the hallway. I was hearing painful stories from nearby groups that were distracting. Once we moved it was better. Another concern is not being able to build on the 3 questions, one being they don't build on what was said during the first round. Also to find a way to go deeper with each question and taking the same question further.
- None really. Enjoyed their group.
- I feel triggered that at so many events for women, women are referred to as "beautiful." Why are we commenting on our appearances? Even though it's true we are beautiful women, we don't have to talk like we've internalized that we are only as valuable as we are beautiful. Men don't get together to talk about issues and introduce each other as the "handsome Mr. blah blah blah---." Also, event NEEDS to also be intersectional. Where are the trans-women?
- What will this work actually lead to? Anything?

Would you be interested in attending a follow up dialogue in August? If so, what specific questions or issues would you like to discuss? What resources would you like to have available?

- Yes. Please. Resources- Life Coaching Services and Healing Art Forums.
- Yes very interested. Would like to perform my poetry.
- yes; can't think of any at present time.
- I don't know.
- I would be interested. I would like to talk more about women's relationships and what specific things we can do to bring there discussions into our lives.
- Yes! Can we start talking tactics? Real things we can and will do to "move the needle" for one another? Make sure there is plenty of kleenex.
- Sure
- Black women storytelling. Have we been left out of the storytelling.
- Maybe.
- Yes!
- Yes, Creating actionable solutions. People there to connect, like minded people, and plan!
- Yes, women equality issues and expert panel.
- Yes
- Yes. Creative exercises- poetry, art.
- Happy with Life!
- Yes. Prioritize Queer/ Trans women of color, voices, experiences and resources. Talk about how we excavate internalized sexism while being intersectional. Check our Black Girl Dangerous blog.
- I would attend a follow up dialogue.
- Perhaps, depends on my schedule.

What are some reactions you had to the artwork in the My Sister's Story exhibition?

- I enjoyed it.
- Beautiful, raw storytelling. Peaceful. Enlightening-Empowering.
- Phenomenal. Unique. Groundbreaking.
- Awesome!
- I appreciate it very much. Very nice space to have this discussion. I didn't know this was here.
- Awesome, dynamic, thought provoking.
- It was simply a very emotional experience that inspired vulnerability.

- All good reactions.
- Love it!
- Beautiful! Inspiring! Disturbing! Amazing.
- It's great, keep it going.
- I enjoyed some of the artwork.
- So real and relatable.
- Stunning, breath-taking, important. I wish more people could see it. So glad to know it started with women helping women.
- I will never forget my life after today, God is life!
- Being one of the artist this whole experience was so special and meaningful. In awe of the talent and emotions in every piece. It has been wonderful being a part of it all.
- They are unique, eye opening and beautiful. Everybody's story needs to be told AND accepted.
- Love it
- Diverse art that gives a voice to a woman who may not have a voice to express themselves.
- Beautiful work. Beauty comes in all sizes.

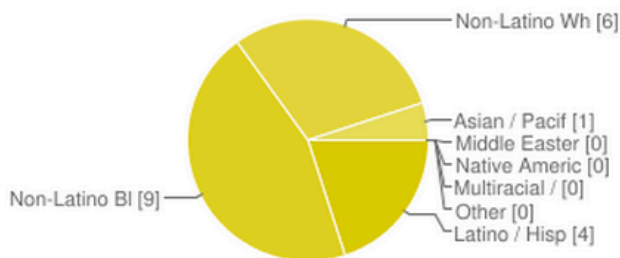
Participant Demographic information

Of the 40+ participants, 22 submitted post-dialogue feedback forms. The anonymous demographic information they voluntarily shared is below. The age range of participants spanned from teenagers to women over 70 years of age.

Zip Code of Residence

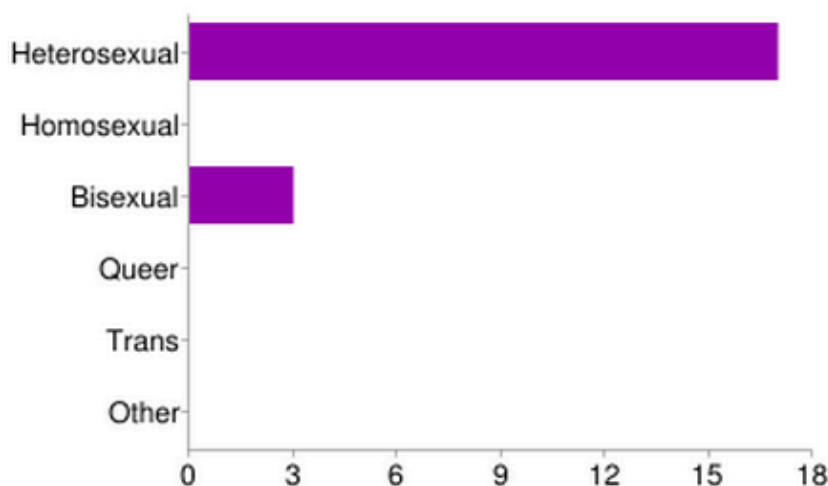
53204	1	5%	53211	1	5%	53224	1	5%
53205	1	5%	53212	3	15%	53225	1	5%
53207	4	20%	53221	2	10%	53235	1	5%
53210	2	10%	53223	1	5%	Other	2	10%

Race and Ethnicity



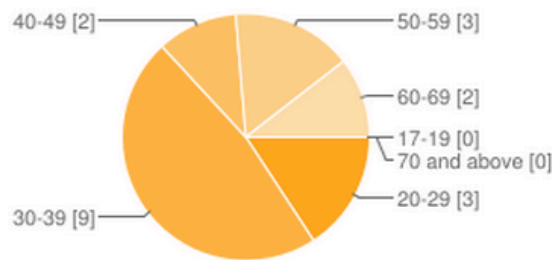
Latino / Hispanic / Latin American, of any race	4	20%
Non-Latino Black / African-American / Afro-Caribbean	9	45%
Non-Latino White / Caucasian / European American	6	30%
Asian / Pacific Islander / South Asian / Southeast Asian	1	5%
Middle Eastern / Arab, of any race	0	0%
Native American / First Nation Person	0	0%
Multiracial / Multiethnic	0	0%
Other	0	0%

Sexual Orientation



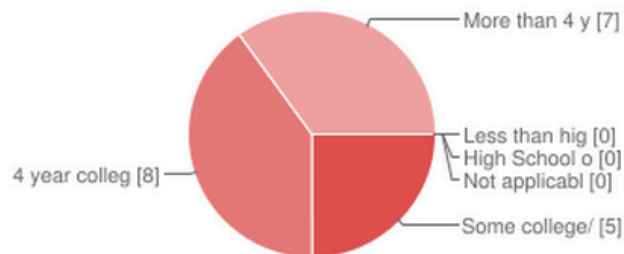
Heterosexual	17	85%
Homosexual	0	0%
Bisexual	3	15%
Queer	0	0%
Trans	0	0%
Other	0	0%

Age range



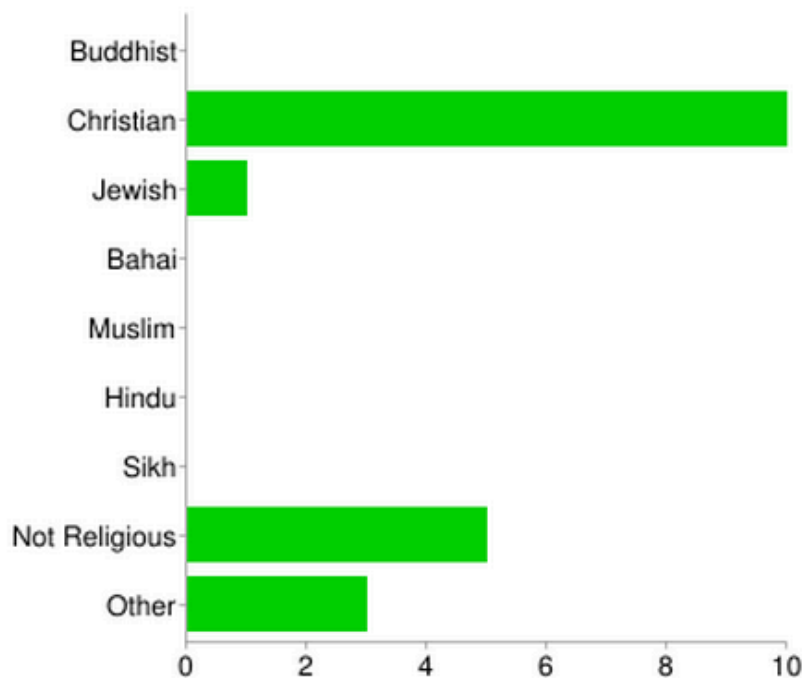
17-19	0	0%
20-29	3	15.8%
30-39	9	47.4%
40-49	2	10.5%
50-59	3	15.8%
60-69	2	10.5%
70 and above	0	0%

Education



Less than high school	0	0%
High School or GED	0	0%
Some college/ 2 year degree/ vocational	5	25%
4 year college degree	8	40%
More than 4 years/ Graduate degree	7	35%
Not applicable/ Do not know	0	0%

Religious Tradition



Buddhist	0	0%
Christian	10	52.6%
Jewish	1	5.3%
Bahai	0	0%
Muslim	0	0%
Hindu	0	0%
Sikh	0	0%
Not Religious	5	26.3%
Other	3	15.8%