



*Deep Listening. Fostering Trust. Bridging Communities.*

## March on Milwaukee: 50 Years in the Making – Marching on Youth/Elder Recognition and Re-ignition Session

May 19, 2018

Thank you to North Division High School for hosting this event.

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## Executive Summary

The March on Milwaukee: 50 Years in the Making – Marching on Youth/Elder Recognition and Re-ignition Session facilitated listening circles took place on May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2018 at North Division Highschool. During the event, participants watched a video about the historic Open Housing Marches and were then asked to discuss the following two questions by Zeidler Center trained facilitators:

1. *“Tell your name and one thing you wish people knew about you and your generation, and the challenges you face?”*
2. *“What’s something you think needs to happen today in order to build relationships between youth and elders?”*

Participants were also asked to participate in the Connected Conversation, if time allowed. The Connected Conversation encouraged participants to have an open conversation, ask questions of peers, and discuss what was heard in the facilitated listening circles. The facilitator posed two questions to encourage discussion:

*“What does activism look like to you?”*

*“What issues matter to you?”*

During the first round, participants generally started their responses by contrasting elders with youth. Elders wanted recognition for their efforts during the Civil Rights Movement to ensure the freedoms that youth have today. The youth wanted others to know that they were not lazy and that they were being active change agents, but their approach is different than their elders. As the discussion continued, it became apparent that there were similarities in the injustices both generations faced. Racism and discrimination were injustices that both generations encountered. Youth maintained that they are engaging in activism and wanted support from elders.

During the second round, participants agreed that communication between elders and youth was essential to bridging the intergenerational gap. They explained that through communication, both generations could share stories, learn history, and grow to value and respect each other. Participants suggested that these discussions could be organized by local churches or organizations to help build relationships between elders and youth. Some participants thought that community service was an engaging way to build relationships between elders and youth in the community.

During the Connected Conversation, participants discussed what activism looked like. The majority of participants thought that activism meant action, awareness and connecting with others. When they talked about activism they also spoke about the issues that were important to them. Many of them mentioned that they had been, are or desired to be activist about racism, education, or gun violence. In their parting words, participants felt hopeful about what they could do as elders and youth to make a change on the issues important to them.

## Analysis

Question Round One: *“Tell your name and one thing you wish people knew about you and your generation, and the challenges you face?”*

Participant’s tried to juxtapose the older generation against the younger generation. The older generation wanted people to know what they did and how it benefited the youth, as can be seen in the following testimony:

*“We had to bow down to the white man to make sure ya’ll had a future. If we didn’t we’d die if we’d die ya’ll wouldn’t be here.”*

Oftentimes, the youth felt like the elders held negative views about them. Several of the youth participants wanted people to know that, “[w]e as a generation are not ALL bad or possess an overabundance of negative thinking and behavior.”

Conversations about injustices and activism seemed to be prompted by this question. In these conversations there is a struggle between the elders and the youth, but then similarities between the generations seem to emerge. The quotes below illustrate the contrasting views the elders had about the youth and the similarities of both generations.

### 1.1 Injustice

The issues that the elders and youth faced are similar, but the contexts varied. This quote implies this:

*“Today’s challenges are the same as 50 years ago - human rights. I see so much injustice I don’t know where to start. Things are so different for my grandchildren. Their schools are not so segregated and they have white friends.”*

A majority of participants spoke about injustices related to racism and discrimination. The following examples speak to the similarities in the issues each generation faced but also the subtle differences:

*“After the riots, we couldn’t even go to our jobs, when they had the curfew. We had to be in at night too. The government and police signaled us out. What we wanted was justice and equality. What we still want is justice and equality.”*

*“It isn’t easy for the younger generation - especially with all the black teen shootings. The challenges I face are being a black male in Milwaukee.”*

Some participants spoke about how injustices still exist and the complexities of injustices today. The following quotes elaborate this point:

*"White people think because slavery is over that racism is not a thing either, they believe we have the same opportunities that we share the same freedoms."*

*"It use to be racism was clear cut-we don't know where we will get hit with it now."*

## **1.2 Activism**

Many of the participants who were elders spoke about their desire to make difference in the world. The following are examples of such responses:

*"My generation wanted to change the world."*

*"We were a generation that wanted change."*

Elders felt that the youth were not involved in activism. The following quote illustrates the frustration that some elders felt about youth:

*"I get disgusted because they don't seem to be as interested in advocating as I think they should be."*

*"I have so many concerns about young people. You have to find your passion whatever it is, anti-smoking, anti-drug, injustice and just work on that. Mine is injustice."*

Some youth participants echoed these sentiments, by noting and appreciating the work of the elders that placed them in a better position, as explained by the following participant:

*"We're not as quick to rise to action. I think that's because of our elders-- we don't have too. People have fought the fight before me so I don't have too."*

However, many other youth said they wanted to be known for their activism. The following quotes illustrate how the youth advocated for important issues:

*"I am a D.A.C.A. child and was born here, and now in this politically charged climate around the issue of immigration.... I have been forced to become active and involved whether I would like to or not, I am literally, fighting for my life."*

Some youth felt unsupported by elders in the pursuits of justice. The following quotes describe these feelings:

*"Young people are judged when we want to make changes. During the school walkouts after the Florida school shootings we were told we didn't know what we were talking about and should leave it to the adults."*

*"There's a lot of pressure on us... our parents did so much. Maybe a little bit of judgement without understanding how hard it is for us. We're trying to continue our parents' legacy."*

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**Question Round Two:** *"What's something you think needs to happen today in order to build relationships between youth and elders?"*

Through their sharing, many of the participants realized that both generations could learn from each other. Participants stated:

*"I believe that there needs to be more of a connection between generations."*

*"We need to meet up with other generations, like this and really talk to each other. We lack understanding of each other. We need to connect more."*

Participants' mention that youth and elders had to be intentional and have a "spirit of genuine interest" about connecting can be seen in the following testimonies:

*"Being purposeful is important to building relationships between youth and elders."*

*"Be intentional about what we do."*

Then participants discussed suggestions to bridge the generational divide between youth and elders. The solutions were mainly about improving communication and working together.

## **2.1 Communication**

The majority of participants reported communication was the key to building relationships between elders and youth.

*"Without communication nothing can happen."*

*"I think communication and patience must become prevalent in building relationships between youth and elders with communication."*

Several participants believed that these conversations should be organized in workshops, focus groups, and events sponsored by churches and local organizations. The following quotes pinpoint some of the participants thoughts on how these conversations can be facilitated.

*"Focus groups are good. The NAACP Youth Council is a vehicle to bridge that gap."*

*"Offer a series of events...We need neighborhood-based opportunities and cross-neighborhood opportunities."*

Other participants thought that through mentorship, relationship building conversations between elders and youth could be sparked, as the following quote suggests:

*"Mentorship. When I don't have someone I can talk to I'm lost, so that's important for you people and for elders. I serve as a mentor. I'm both a mentor and a mentee."*

Communication between youth and elders was an avenue to share stories, learn history, and develop value and respect of each generation through mutual understanding.

### 2.1.1 Sharing stories

Many participants reported that sharing stories was an important way for elders and youth to learn from each other. The following quotes speak of the importance of sharing stories as a means to build relationships between elders and youth:

*"What we need to do to recover is to dialogue, talk about our differences and mend and help each other and learn from one another."*

*"I think it will take us sharing each other's stories to understand where each are coming from emotionally, experiences and backgrounds for that better understanding and building of relationships."*

*"Remember the passing of stories is important so that the youth and others can learn."*

Often when participants mentioned sharing stories, the act of sharing seemed unidirectional from elders to youth. This type of sharing seemed to be a learning opportunity for youth to take lessons from elders that could be applied to this generation. These quotes show the directionality involved with sharing stories and the intended outcome:

*"Young people need to hear stories and advice from elders."*

*"Reconnecting with our elders is essential to gain guidance and wisdom."*

*"I think it's important to do our jobs to learn the history and challenges and help translate the lessons from the past to solutions always communicating no matter color of skin or age."*



### 2.1.2 Learn history

Learning history was an important outcome of communication that would help to build relationships between youth and elders. Learning national and local history was an important aspect of communication between youth and elders to get advice on how to make an impact. Here are examples of how participants thought learning history through intergenerational conversations could make a difference:

*"We need to have more communication, workshops, listening to students talk, students asking a question or questions, not only about the history of Martin Luther King, Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, etc. I feel we need to learn more of our history here in Milwaukee."*

*"We need to look back more on our history. The youth and elders can have more in common and give more ideas to youth to make change."*

*"We have to understand history if we want to move forward. It's like a bike the elders are the little gears in the back and we are in the front saucing it up."*

### 2.1.3 Value and respect each other

Participants felt that preconceived notions each generation held about each other should be replaced with an open and receptive mind point of view. This seemed like the first step toward value and respect for each other. The following quotes exemplify this point:

*"We have to be open to each other's differences and build on them."*

*"Being understanding and opening up to different perspectives. Bring back value and respect."*

*"It's important to hold back from making assumptions and do more explaining why which makes it easier to get purpose across and begin to discuss moving forward to solutions and common ground."*

The participants seemed to think that intergenerational conversations could help both sides value the experiences and perspective of both generations. For example:

*"Respect on both sides. Youth need to recognize the elders have been here longer and have more experience. It means more to get information from the horse's mouth. Elders need to recognize that times are changing and our voices matter just as much as theirs."*

## 2.2 Working Together

A number of participants thought that youth and elders working together in service of the community could be one way to bridge the generational gap. Several participants remarked:

*"We can learn through community service."*

*"I think it's important to do things together."*

*"Service opportunities for people to work together towards a common cause. We need to opportunities for young people to understand elders. We need to have fun, good times, break bread, and build meaningful relationships with each other."*

Some participants mentioned community gardens as an activity that could bring youth and elders together in service of the community while building relationships, such as this participant:

*"If we build community gardens we talk about and bridge those things that divide us and learn [from each other]."*

**Connected Conversation:** What does activism look like to you? What issues matter to you?

During this unstructured phase of conversation, participants talked about what activism looks like and what issues matter to them.

### 3.1 Activism looks like...

Participants gave a variety of examples of what activism looked like. They thought that activism meant action, making connections, and becoming aware.

#### 3.1.1 Activism is action

Activism as action means doing something, even if it is small, to make an impact. Two participant's share more about how the magnitude of the action is less important than the impact of the action:

*"It doesn't have to be grandiose. It could be a block party. It could be big or small... it takes all of us."*

*"Helping one person at a time using small acts of kindness while living intentionally and living in service."*

Some actions that conveyed activism to the participants were protesting (e.g. marches and walk-outs), voting, and communicating concerns (e.g. writing letters).

*"At school we did the walk out. Our school planned the walk-out for gun violence for school unity."*

*"I have sons in college and I'm always asking them, 'Are you doing anything?' 'Are you marching?'... 'You've got to vote.'"*

*"Many are not willing be on the front lines and be arrested but could protest through art."*

*"When I think of activism I think it comes in many forms. It can be writing a letter."*

Other participants mentioned that activism was acting on the behalf or in support of other people. This participant talks about a time when she stood up for some students and what the consequences of her action were:

*"A man who was Polish walked by every day and asked [in his thick polish accent], 'Why you be with these bad kids?' and he'd spit on the ground [to exhibit disgust]. One day I walked over to him and said, 'I'm Carol, wouldn't you like to meet these kids?' I could tell he was embarrassed, but he did come over and meet the kids. He took a liking to them and came back every day and read to them! It took just that one interruption of his pattern to give him an opportunity to create a new pattern and learn something new."*

Overall, activism was acting on the behalf of yourself, people like you, or like this one participants says...

*"Activism for me is standing up for someone without a voice."*

### 3.1.2 Activism is awareness

Participants thought that it was necessary to be aware of issues that affect society. They believed awareness would propel action. Knowing history was an important part of awareness. The following examples communicate how awareness of history ignites action:

*"Old people are for counsel - young people are for war."*

*"Today was my first time hearing the story behind the 200 nights and marching 50 years ago. I am happy to now know something about what happened. I think activism is necessary for change and righting the wrongs in the society."*

### 3.1.3 Getting connected and being involved

The participants thought that an important component of activism was getting connected with others. This was important because connected people can learn from each other and work together towards a goal. This participant underscores this point:

*"I just think it is important that we keep meeting and learning from each other."*

Participants also mentioned how people can get connected and be involved in activism. Some of their thoughts are highlighted below:

*"I think if you aren't going to do something to help then you are the problem.  
Donate your time. "*

### **3.2 Important issues**

Several prominent issues that exist today according to the participants were related to racism, education, and gun violence. Other issues that were discussed included: environmental justice, food deserts, gender issues, health care, voting, and finances.

#### **3.2.1 Racism**

Participants talked about racism with employment and law enforcement. Most who wanted to see a decrease in violence spoke about gun violence or gang violence. Several also discussed problems with fighting. For the latter, some suggested that improving anger management skills would be helpful:

*"Racism 'It's still around' Qualifications being looked over because of race or gender".*

*"Police Brutality being racially motivated"*

Participants felt that systematic racism and discrimination, especially towards black people and people of Mexican decent, were being ignored by society at large. As these quotes show, these issues matter to the participants:

*"What matters to me is Black Lives Matter."*

*"People are blind to systematic racism. There's a certain level appreciation for the phrase 'ignorance is bliss.'"*

#### **3.2.2 Education**

A few participants explained that education was an important issues because of low literacy levels, limited resources, segregation, and respect for teachers. These participants explain in the following quotes why theses education-related issues are important, in the following quotes:

*"My focus is education. Making sure kids can read, speak well, and write. This is my focus for how I'm involved."*

*"My issue is seeing education being devalued, health care being an option of take away in the budget, not having enough books for students to learn and too large of class sizes with not enough resources available."*

*"I feel sorry for kids who go to segregated schools. They miss so much."*

*"Respect the teachers and the value of education in our society."*

### 3.2.3. Gun violence

Several participants remarked about the issue of gun violence. Their concerns ranged from mass school shootings, intra-racial group crimes, and police-involved shootings. The following quote references mass school shooting and beliefs about how this type of gun violence can be mitigated:

*"My issue is not being surprised by the mass school shootings and knowing that the NRA is in control and hinders the solution and prevention of the problem."*

## 4. Parting Words

Most participants left the discussion feeling hopeful with desires to get involved and make the world a better place by bridging the gap between generations.

## Annexes

**Question Round One:** *“Tell your name and one thing you wish people knew about you and your generation, and the challenges you face?”*

- As an Adult I wish people knew how hard I try to be a good mother to my daughter and how much I enjoy helping others. Challenge: I would like to learn more about the history and plans for the future but I am slowed down by my limited knowledge of social media and how everything moves so fast without any patience or trying to listen more to each other and communicating face to face.
- As a teacher I think it's complicated how difficult it is working with little or no resources while trying to teach the students about history and the importance of communication and planning. Challenge: One big challenge is “Social Media” we're challenged by the negative uses of it and challenged by the limitations/ability/knowledge of usage between younger and older generations. The young people see it right away and watch it as it happens which is not always the case for others and young people don't feel the need to discuss face to face.
- With me being the youngest one here, I am smart and I knew about this stuff. My dad grew up in Mississippi. He told me a lot about this stuff. Some from my generation strive to achieve our goals. My generation has a one in three chance to achieve our goals. I try my best to work hard to achieve my goals.
- I am not a bad teacher. As a matter of fact I am in the group of millennials, and I hear a lot of times that millennials are lazy. They don't want to do anything. They are always looking for a handout. [Conversely,] Millennials are able to connect with people, and stay in touch with reality, and really are able to get the jobs that they desire. We are not different. However, I hear a lot of racism amongst the [younger] group, and the 'n' word used a lot.
- My generation is more-so with [use of] social media. Social media has its positives and its negatives. I face a lot of problems in school because I am picked on because I am smart. I do my homework, and I do my best to listen because I want to succeed and move to the next level in my life.
- I remember our community being connected. Our neighbors looked out for each other. I lived in Sherman Park and one time when I walked to elementary school I picked someone's flowers and when I got home my mom already knew. Neighbors talked to each other and people held each other accountable. There was a sense of community and it felt like there was a village mentality. It's so different now. People don't speak to each other. We've lost genuine respect for each other. Regarding challenges, people have left the city. Milwaukee is a challenging place to live, especially for people of color. My peers left looking for better opportunities where there isn't constant discrimination against them. Here they weren't able to move from one position to another. I see it as my job to be positive and to bring attention to there being a job to do.

- I was caught off guard because I was supposed to be a facilitator. I'm a cross-generation person. I was born shortly after the marches. My generation... we have the values of our parents and neighbors. We were able to make it through the challenges. I work with youth, teaching, and I believe that there needs to be more of a connection between generations.
- We are told things through social media and the culture that aren't always true. We need to meet up with other generations, like this and really talk to each other. We lack understanding of each other. We need to connect more.
- One thing you find consistent in my era, we were able to play outside. We were raised by every adult in the neighborhood, as the old adage says, "It takes a village to raise a child." However, when nightfall came we had to be in the house or on the porch. In other words, when the street lights came on we had to be in the house or on the front porch. We were able to play with each other because we knew how to play games, and in school we listened and learned from our teachers. We did not go to school trying to teach the teachers.
- I like to go places with my friends, hang out, talk to each other about things. I like electronics and social media and to go to movies. We go to each other's houses and we go skating.
- There's a lot of pressure on us... our parents did so much. Maybe a little bit of judgement without understanding how hard it is for us. We're trying to continue our parents' legacy. It's hard because they did so much and did it so well. School is so important because if you don't go to school you can't be great. Our parents want us to be active in our communities, too. Where/how do you start with getting involved in the community? People in our generation don't think clearly. We take it for granted and aren't doing what we should. Our community is fighting and we should be coming together.
- My name is Miguel - he/him/his is fine. I'm the first generation of my family born in this country. My parents are from Mexico so there were Mexican values at home but I was raised in the US with US values. I already felt "us vs them" here in the US but not during visits to Mexico. But when I was there I didn't feel like I belonged because I was raised in the US. Immigration covers all cultures all over the world. I was born in the 90s so am a Millennial. We see what's wrong and we can speak out and reach more people because of technology. They could have reached more people 50 years ago with this technology. We can always find answers to our questions on our phones but knowledge is different.
- What I wish people knew about my generation I don't feel like a millennial. I'm old enough to not have been raised by social media so I pick and choose how I allow it into my life. I use it to keep up with what's going on in the world. Another thing I wish people took heed to is that people are coming into things with their own stuff their own baggage. People think because we live in America we have all these "freedoms" that's not true at all. I wish people had more respect for others, for each other's generation. There's no less value between generations, we need to value each other's stories and journey's.
- Something I'm passionate about with my generation is our creativity level it's flourishing abundantly. I'm an artist and I'm passionate about my art. Ignorant people automatically associate poetry with homosexuality. I wish people would understand the many changes in our generation. "Everybody is saucy" we need to own our sauce. My grandfather was not

actively in my life like I would have liked I wish it was not like that because I cling to the other generation.

## 1.1 Activism

- As a youth I wish people knew that we are very creative people and visionaries that make things happen. I wish they knew and respected us as activist. Challenge: As youth our challenge is our reach with social media to all generations and having face to face dialogue to further the purpose of our activism.
- As a youth I wish people knew we give into peer pressure a lot and many times we are not being true to ourselves. Challenge: (To be myself) I think we are afraid to be ourselves and speak our own minds because of the fear of being shut down.
- One thing people should know about me is that I am committed to doing my part in creating a more just world. The films show [footage from the 1967 march and resulting counter-protest activity] those from my generation are committed to doing their part. As Advisor of the newly active Youth Council [of the NAACP], my job is to get youth as equally interested as we were in the 50s and 60s in doing the work. I get disgusted because they don't seem to be as interested in advocating as I think they should be. I want a Youth Council that has a Junior, Intermediate, and Youth Council, and that is multi-racial and multi-ethnic.
- A life changing experience for me was to be on the original march to Selma [On March 25, 1965 civil rights demonstrators were led by the late Martin Luther King, Jr. on a 50-mile march from Montgomery, Alabama to Selma, Alabama to protest against deeply entrenched racist policies.]. It was the first time for me to see snarling, unabashed hate from White people. Everything I've done has been as a result of that experience. My generation has a lot of baggage. Young people don't have a lot of that. My generation wanted to change the world so that your generation [participant is speaking directly to the youth in our group] doesn't have that. I worked as the head of Dane County Human Services where I could effect changes. I was not a part of the Milwaukee march.
- Because our elders have achieved what they have – we operate differently. We're not as quick to rise to action. I think that's because of our elders-- we don't have too. People have fought the fight before me so I don't have too. We're an emotional generation because we don't have to do so much of the physical fight. It doesn't feel like our circumstances are being considered. I hope that our elders remember how their work impacted us.
- I have so many concerns about young people. You have to find your passion whatever it is, anti-smoking, anti-drug, injustice and just work on that. Mine is injustice
- I live on the South side and there is so much drunk driving, Texting while driving and police sirens all the time. I think we should make a march or something to work on this.
- We need civil dialogue and trust.



- I marched before the Open housing marches, I marched against the white's only Eagles club, that is when it started. And I marched all 201 times, there was another one after the two hundred.
- I was a member of NAACP. I joined in 1967 with a friend (who later became my husband). We were both freshmen at Marquette University. A friend wanted me to meet Father Grappi so we went to a meeting and we were the only White people in the room. Father Grappi came in the room with kids literally hanging on him... they were on his back and he was holding their hands. They adored him and he didn't want to shoo them away. The way he spoke, it was so impressive. He talked about concepts and what we could do about the situation. After the meeting we decided to join the NAACP. It was just \$5. So we just started going to meetings. We joined marches in August. We got married two days before 8/26.
- My name is Lyneria - my nickname is Nibby - I'd like to be called Miss Nibby. I was a participant in the Marches when I was 13. So many of us were children and what we accomplished was a great feat. Today's challenges are the same as 50 years ago - human rights. I see so much injustice I don't know where to start. Things are so different for my grandchildren. Their schools are not so segregated and they have white friends.
- I am Alayna. I don't know what group I'm in because I'm young but am told I have an old soul with values of an older generation. Sometimes I'm told I'm lazy because I rely on technology. Young people are judged when we want to make changes. During the school walkouts after the Florida school shootings we were told we didn't know what we were talking about and should leave it to the adults.
- I am a leader of the NAACP counsel. When MLK Jr. was assassinated we tried to pick up after. I remember splashing around in the reflection pool. We learned a lot about the movement around this time we met a lot of celebrities. One thing that made us different from other groups is that we were an interracial bunch.

## 1.2 Injustice

- A person's mindset has a lot to do with how they can spring forward in life. I came from a town called Springback, Missouri. I had an opportunity to see an all-Black police force, all-Black doctors, and all-Black businesses. This town was ran by Ferguson [Missouri]. I knew if I crossed the line the police would pick me up and put me right back on the Black side of town. ...Every challenge was an opportunity to me. I had a high self-esteem. Milwaukee looked inviting, but I knew how to carry myself. I had a good training [in Missouri]. People looked up at us in disparaging glances. I had an opportunity to go up the ladder from protesting to involvement [in Milwaukee].
- Sitting on a porch-it was loud out there. We were just sitting on the porch with a bunch of other youth. The march came right by our house. It was so exciting, something to be involved in. We didn't know anything about it until that march came by. There were lots of obstacles, racism. I never realized that the North was like the south. My brother, Eugen was killed. We couldn't buy houses outside our neighborhood.

- We were a generation that wanted change. Our neighborhood was only 1 ½ mile square, we couldn't leave except for our jobs. After the riots, we couldn't even go to our jobs, when they had the curfew. We had to be in at night too. The government and police signaled us out. What we wanted was justice and equality. What we still want is justice and equality. Police burned down the freedom house.
  - There are gaps in the culture. I try to close those gaps. We get push back from elders. It use to be racism was clear cut-we don't know where we will get hit with it now.
  - I was born in Mexico, and I hate when people of all nationalities say that all Mexican people are drug dealers, prostitutes, and rapists. And for some reason because I am Mexican I seem to get a bad rap. However, that is not true about me or my family. I am a responsible young lady. As a matter of fact, I have become a mentor and a tutor.
  - I had a hard time at Marquette to get an education. There is a lot of racism that goes on at Marquette University. I was sitting in the student Union, being the only Black in the Union at that time. I stepped out to use the restroom, and [upon my return] on my desk was a racial slur and a hangman's noose. There is a lot of racism that goes on and we go to our counselors and nothing gets done, and it seems to get swept under the rug, so that pushed me into becoming an activist. It is a great challenge in such a large school where a majority of the students that go are White.
  - My name is Matthew but everyone calls me Matt. It isn't easy for the younger generation - especially with all the black teen shootings. The challenges I face are being a black male in Milwaukee. It has its ups and downs.
  - I am a student at Alverno College. I wish people understood racism and the granting of freedom didn't start in 1968. People didn't just start fighting against these things during that time. White people think because slavery is over that racism is not a thing either, they believe we have the same opportunities that we share the same freedoms. Another thing is that we need to celebrate authentic history.
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**Question Round Two:** *"I'd you to think about the character of Lenny from the play who tried to help his friends and his community by taking a risk and standing up for what's right. When have you seen someone do that or when have you done that with your friends or community?"*

## 2.1 Communication

- I think communication and patience must become prevalent in building relationships between youth and elders with communication and understanding of the purpose it could happen.

- One thing that sticks in my mind is communication. Without communication nothing can happen, and you must be willing to keep it real. Keep it respectful, but keep it real and be willing to discuss issues of elders and youth. Focus groups are good. The NAACP Youth Council is a vehicle to bridge that gap.
- Everything is moving faster. No one wants to take the time to really connect.
- Putting our phones down. Turning them off, making more connections by talking. Being more personable, making more eye contact. Listening to each other.
- We need to have more communication, workshops, listening to students talk, students asking a question or questions, not only about the history of Martin Luther King, Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, etc. I feel we need to learn more of our history here in Milwaukee.
- More dialogue. I don't know, but church, for me, has been the key. Church is lacking in interacting with youth. I go to a church where there is 90% adults and 5% youth. I don't know what it's going to take to get them back. That is my prayer.
- I am an elder. I'm 71. I think we should start where we are and focus on what's important to you and work from there. You don't have to be great. I've struggled with being a better person. Be yourself, who you are. I think that's what's important. Share/have food together. This builds trust. I think it's important to do things together. Do meals and other things.
- Create opportunity for more meaningful dialog. Offer a series of events and be intentional about what we do. We need neighborhood-based opportunities and cross-neighborhood opportunities. Service opportunities for people to work together towards a common cause. We need to opportunities for young people to understand elders. We need to have fun, good times, break bread, build meaningful relationships with each other.
- Communication and patience. Young people could put down the technology and listen to elders.

### 2.1.1 Sharing stories

- I think it will take us sharing each other's stories to understand where each are coming from emotionally, experiences and backgrounds for that better understanding and building of relationships.
- Communication and getting to know each other more. Young people need to hear stories and advice from elders. We can learn through community service.
- Reconnecting with our elders is essential to gain guidance and wisdom
- We need more intergenerational conversations like this. As we don't even know our trail that brought us here.
- There needs to be more intergenerational talks. I go to nursing homes, a lot of those people have no one to talk to them. You can learn a lot from them.

### 2.1.2 Learning history

- As an adult (parent) I feel there needs to be more talking one on one and groups like this where we share ideas from both sides. I think it's important to do our jobs to learn the history and challenges and help translate the lessons from the past to solutions always communicating no matter color of skin or age.
- The study of generations is interesting. What we know about generations is that following generations react to what has been done. We didn't create thousands of dollars for going to school. If I'm painting side-by-side beside XXX [the name of a young participant in our group was stated] we'll get to talk. If we build community gardens we talk about and bridge those things that divide us, and learn [from each other].
- We need to look back more on our history. The youth and elders can have more in common and give more ideas to youth to make change.
- We need more History. Yes, we are all moving too fast. I work in MPS. Kids don't even have enough time to eat their lunch
- We have to find a common ground, I have found a relationship with my elders. We have to be open to each other's differences and build on them. We have to understand history if we want to move forward. It's like a bike the elders are the little gears in the back and we are in the front saucing it up.
- If and when effective communication is established within our community and the communities at large, we as a society will always return to the status quo and not move the meter toward progress and harmony.

### 2.1.3 Value and respect for each other

- I think in order to build relationships we must try to understand each other better, come to a middle ground and have a common compromise. Example: Older people think phones are bad so right away the communication starts negative. Young people would like to hear something positive. It's important to hold back from making assumptions and do more explaining why which makes it easier to get purpose across and begin to discuss moving forward to solutions and common ground.
- I have a list: there's not a spirit of genuine interest and valuing of each other's perspective. Youth need more interest to lead and dominate these discussions. Youth should be encouraged in ways that they will feel encouraged. Give the right words necessary. Remember the passing of stories is important so that the youth and others can learn.
- I think we need to understand our elders more, and they us. We need to talk more and not just to our grandparents. This generation needs more guidance. We're straying off our path.
- I think two main things that need to happen is for elders to give young people the knowledge that they have so we can use that and do better for ourselves in this generation because we'd know what worked and what didn't. It's like if young people try to do things the elders look down on them because it's different. Elders need to recognize that politics has changed so our needs have changed as well. Getting guidance would be great.

- Mentorship. When I don't have someone I can talk to I'm lost, so that's important for you people and for elders. I serve as a mentor. I'm both a mentor and a mentee. Andre Lee Ellis should be a model for young people around healthy gardening and the beautification of neighborhoods. Also, literacy and financial literacy to help kids. Being purposeful is important to building relationships between youth and elders.
- Respect on both sides. Youth need to recognize the elders have been here longer and have more experience. It means more to get information from the horse's mouth. Elders need to recognize that times are changing and our voices matter just as much as theirs.
- I admire elders - especially my grandparents and teachers. Communication and respect are most important. Asking questions and telling stories help me to understand. I love to sit with my grandpa and hear his stories.
- We are now hearing millennials are taking over the work force older age groups are becoming isolated. What we need to do to recover is to dialogue, talk about our differences and mend and help each other and learn from one another. Being understanding and opening up to different perspectives. Bring back value and respect.
- Violence, race, and separation are the some to the things that are impediments to a "inter-generational" coming together seemingly not possible, I hold out hope that with truth being spoken and demonstrated that the youth and ELDERS will be able to take advantage of the ELDERS wisdom and YOUTH's energy to bring change to all these societal problems.
- My Grandmother was an educator and her mother was a slave. I speak, each and every Wednesday to young students at a local high school about both our generations, learning from each other. One thing I do attempt to convey to folks is that many have sacrificed so that future generations would not be required to experience the some, if not all the challenges faced and overcome, by former generations.

## 2.2 Working together

- We have to consider the environment that we're interacting in. It's polluted. The more engaged in the environment like this that we can create, the better off we'll be. If a kid can be established in a controlled environment he'll bring in and educate others youths.
- We have to look at how racism is coded. It's not that we don't want to hear each other, we just don't have time for conversations like these.
- As the elderly I think what I want from the young is to realize is that things were a lot different in the past. 50 years ago the water bubblers and bathrooms were labeled black or white. "Take It little brother take it further" we had to bow down to the white man to make sure ya'll had a future. If we didn't we'd die if we'd die ya'll wouldn't be here.
- I would like for the public, in particular the younger generations behind me, you live in your own "SPIRIT OF YOUR TIME" your challenges, obstacles, and success will be unique to the time you live in and through.

- I am a D.A.C.A. child and was born here, and now in this politically charged climate around the issue of immigration.... I have been forced to become active and involved whether I would like to or not, I am literally, fighting for my life.

**Connected Conversation:** *What does activism look like to you? What issues matter to you?*

### 3.1 Activism is like

#### 3.1.1 Activism is action

- I used to think a big part of activism was protesting but then I learned about Mother Teresa and her explanation was helping one person at a time using small acts of kindness while living intentionally and living in service.
- I think it is about fighting for equal rights but finding the right way to protest peacefully. Today was my first time hearing the story behind the 200 nights and marching 50 years ago. I am happy to now know something about what happened. I think activism is necessary for change and righting the wrongs in the society.
- I also used to think it was about protesting as well but now I see it more as taking action, drawing attention to the problem, working to solve the problem through organizing and planning as we saw them do in the film from 50 years ago.
- I lived in Detroit in 1964-65. I worked with young children at a youth facility during summer. We were out in front of the building in a formerly German and Polish neighborhood. A man who was Polish walked by every day and asked [in his thick polish accent], "Why you be with these bad kids?" and he'd spit on the ground [to exhibit disgust]. One day I walked over to him and said, "I'm Carol, wouldn't you like to meet these kids?" I could tell he was embarrassed, but he did come over and meet the kids. He took a liking to them and came back every day and read to them! It took just that one interruption of his pattern to give him an opportunity to create a new pattern and learn something new.
- [We see this] Across age, race, attitude. You don't get away with that [disrespecting others because they are different from you]. Your actions [speaking directly to the previous circle speaker] brought people together. It is spiritual [learning about others, and to coexist]. It matters.
- It brings lots of memories and I wonder what I can do... The two [generations]--- younger folks and older folks have to bring a mind and willingness to change.
- Be mindful of how you speak to people and how you can make a change.
- How do you keep a peace of mind [with all of that impacting your daily life through the phone calls]?
- You have to have self-control. There is no quick fix to this, and pray. Maintain your mind and do better. During the civil disobedience [of 1967 due to the housing march] Milwaukee had a peaceful protest to honor Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

- Going to all generations teaching them and taking them to polls, teach them how to get a job or get the job done.
- You have [a] voice whether right or wrong. Doing something about it and staying true to yourself [will make an impact].
- I think there's a resurgence of getting young people involved. Current events are getting young people involved. You are at the mic and we can't discount them.
- I have sons in college and I'm always asking them, "Are you doing anything?" "Are you marching?" How can a generation be so laid back? You've got to vote.
- Activism is getting involved. Listening to talk radio, people like to call in and complain. I think if you aren't going to do something to help then you are the problem. Donate your time. My focus is education. Making sure kids can read, speak well, and write. This is my focus for how I'm involved.
- The open marches were scary. The second night was scarier. I was pregnant at the time and it was a warm, beautiful summer evening. The Commandos came along and were saying women and children needed to move to the middle of the group of marchers. We kept watching. On the other side of the bridge people were screaming and were red in the face. There was an explosion of hatred, ugliness, racial slurs. I kept my head down. It was so loud we couldn't hear each other. It was deafening. We could hardly hear Father Grappi. We went to the South side before I think we took a bus to the natatorium. Protestors followed us as we marched. I thought, "Oh My God, we're going to have to go back through the crowd." I don't know if we ran but it got close. There were thousands of people chasing us. It was so ugly. By the time we got back over the bridge we were quiet, shell-shocked, shaking. The big decision for us was should we march a second night because of my pregnancy. We decided to march and not be intimidated. We didn't tell our parents, though, because they would have prevented us from going. There were twice as many people who met us on the other side of the bridge on the second night. We were scared. It's a blur to me. I couldn't believe we were being subjected to what we'd had the night before. We got back alive. We marched on the North Side after that, Shorewood, Wauwatosa.... It was the first time I'd be to either place.

When I think of activism I think it comes in many forms. It can be writing a letter. It doesn't have to be grandiose. It could be a block party. It could be big or small... it takes all of us. Figure out what your niche of activist interest is and do something about it.

- Activism for me is standing up for someone without a voice. The 50 nights of marches... I marched for the people who died from general violence (police brutality) and to support their families. I went to help those in need because it's the right thing to do. Peoples who do it for publicity only or to be acknowledged, for an ego boost bother me.
- At school we did the walk out. Our school planned the walk-out for gun violence for school unity. I didn't do it because I was in New York at the time. What matters to me is Black Lives Matter and gun violence.
- My school put on a play 20 years ago called In White America. We did an exchange between Kaukauna and King - including staying in each other's' cities. JoAnne Williams who does Black Nouveau now was in this play 50 years ago and asked us to do it again.

- Children today are much smarter and more involved. Young people deserve respect. My grandchildren have very diverse friends. There's an old saying - Old people are for counsel - young people are for war.
- There are so many ways to be an activist it's hard to decide how. Many are not willing be on the front lines and be arrested but could protest through art, networking, attending these events, getting involved through Urban Underground.
- Use our voices
- Take time to share ideas
- Activism is or equal to "Action"
- For every action there will be a re-action
- Use your mind and your body

### 3.1.2 Activism is awareness

- Today's students need to look beyond the norm of history and look at what's right here in their faces in the City of Milwaukee.
- Look into your family's history. Communicate with your elders, your parents, and look into your own family history.
- History is so important to learn from
- The ability to overcome fear and being apathetic
- Self-Respect
- Self-Definition

### 3.1.3 Getting connected and being involved

- The news media is controlled, we have to talk to each other.
- I just think it is important that we keep meeting and learning from each other.
- You gotta have a passion, and just follow that and just know that there will be others that follow it with you
- The role of the church is a new space or place for youth to be engaged. How do we draw them back?
- Being in the church was a huge part of my childhood growing up. When I grew up I HAD to go to church. Children are not made to go to church because the parents don't go themselves.
- Teaching our young to become future activists – they don't teach this in school dealing with racial issue and going to jail for someone else. They don't teach that in school. Getting connected and finding more information about your community and your state and your city.

## **3.2 Issues**

### 3.2.1 Discrimination

- Feminism and not being taken seriously as women



- Racism “It’s still around” Qualifications being looked over because of race or gender
- Police Brutality being racially motivated
- I take phone calls from people, and I am often traumatized by what people were telling me – about strip searches, police breaking into their home and beating them. Native Americans are calling and other groups report incidents to us, too.
- We have preconceived notions about people. It’s the most damaging thing we can do to people. Don’t force your will-- your values on people. The change begins with us and spreads like wildfire.
- I bought a house in Wauwatosa and we were having a neighborhood picnic. I told my story to a neighbor’s husband and he started laughing and said he was one of the people on the other side of the bridge. My neighbor’s wife apologized but it ended the BBQ. How much has changed? His attitude was scary. The violence and hatred we faced on the other side of the bridge was not a joke but he was laughing. Equality is still an issue. I was glad when my neighbor moved.
- People are blind to systematic racism. There’s a certain level appreciation for the phrase “ignorance is bliss”.
- In the 50s the black people were part of keeping Milwaukee thriving. Mortgage lending was a lot more systematically oppressive than red lining. If you are from a certain zip code and of a certain race. You are significantly oppressed.

### 3.2.2 Education

- My issue is getting the support of the president to support and respect the teachers and the value of education in our society. Also, the MPS Budget Strikes and Protest.
- My issue is seeing education being devalued, health care being an option of take away in the budget, not having enough books for students to learn and too large of class sizes with not enough resources available.
- My friends are from everywhere. I feel sorry for kids who go to segregated schools. They miss so much. My dad is from up North and has different ideas that I try to challenge. He said a neighborhood was bad because there were shootings and I said but there was a shooting in our neighborhood too and you don’t think it’s “bad”.
- I work in schools. I worked at James Madison and now Bayview. JMAC is 97% African American and 99% low poverty. Food deserts are real. Our schools are filled with all types of oppression. Oppressive mindsets that someone gave you.
- We are failing our kids but it comes down to who’s the best of the worst.
- It’s important to have people who don’t give up on us that want to give us better and want more for us.
- They didn’t want us to graduate in 1968 we got arrested for protesting, eventually we caused so much havoc that they allowed us to walk.
- The torch must be passed

### 3.2.3 Gun violence

- Black on Black Crime
- My issue is not being surprised by the mass school shootings and knowing that the NRA is in control and hinders the solution and prevention of the problem.
- We didn't have guns back then, just knives, razors. The FBI had a sting operation in our neighborhood to get guns off the street, but then those guns all got stolen and now they are in our neighborhoods. Blacks aren't going to Mexico to get drugs, drugs just showed up in our neighborhoods, like guns.

### **Parting Words**

- I feel educated every time I come I learn more and more
- I feel hopeful that society can change
- I have been helped and educated by conversation today
- I am leaving wondering how to get more young people to come and participate
- I am leaving wondering why more people didn't come and share in this excellent experience
- Pleased
- Community
- Self-control
- Persistence
- Hope
- Introspection
- We need more of these conversations
- Choose an issue and do something about it
- Work for justice
- I appreciate knowing this history
- Education on gun control
- Bringing youth and elders together to make something happen in our city
- More assisting and crossing the bridge to generate starting new conversations with the old and young
- I am always wondering how I can bring the two generations together.
- The family unit is not the same. The family structure – where has it gone?
- Talking to our young about the negatives can bridge the gap generations-to-generations.
- Reconnect. For everyone. People my generation and those before me and those now in the trenches. Connecting is a lost art. This is a time it would make a difference for people to connect.
- I'm pleased to have met all of you. Youth, be yourselves. No action is too small. Just do something to get involved.
- Notice. Notice our elders.
- I'm inspired to keep trying to make this world better and to continue the legacy.

- I am thankful to Diane for sharing her story. Her courage. Being in the same space with you all is a treat. So humble to hear these incredible stories.
- I see that people young and old are willing to listen. It's just beginning.
- I have admiration for elders and their knowledge. We always had Black History at my school but it's better to hear it this way.
- It's an honor to meet Miss Nibby. Being in the same room is a connect for me. It's like a push forward.
- This was a new opportunity to know others. Meeting new people has been hard for me.