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MKE Monumental Storytelling & Dialogue

May 31, 2018

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Executive Summary

The MKE Monumental Session was hosted at the Wisconsin Black Historical Society on May 31, 2018. Six listening circles engaged in an hour-long dialogue led by a trained facilitator from Ziedler Center. During this event, participants responded to two questions:

1. *What do you know about your history, and what's one thing you wish you knew? If you don't know anything about your history, why might that be?*
2. *"What are the Milwaukee stories that you remember, or you've been told that shape your understanding of the city?*

Following this structured portion of the session, participants were then invited to participate in the Connected Conversation. The Connected Conversation is an open conversation format designed to encourage participants to engage each other in conversation by asking each other follow-up questions and discussing what was heard during the facilitated dialogue. To initiate the discussion, the facilitator asked two questions:

What do you feel is missing from our public narrative? What kinds of things do you want to see represented in Milwaukee?

"How have you seen history commemorated well?

For the first question, participant responses revealed a diverse range of family origins and ethnic identities. Participants generally fell into two groups: those who described immigrant origins outside of the United States, and those who identified their origins within the United States. Those who traced their family origins outside of the United States also tended to express a yearning to uncover more about their family history. Although almost all of the participants expressed some knowledge of their family history, there were a few that did not answer the question directly. Instead, their responses tended to focus on their own upbringing and their current family situation. These same participants tended to not express a strong desire to learn more about their family history.

For the second question, participants responded with a variety of stories and perspectives; however, the majority of participants described their memories and stories through the lens of race relations and segregation. Although most participants expressed negative sentiment about the challenges of racism and segregation in Milwaukee, many also shared positive stories about their experiences in the city. Participants generally expressed ambivalence towards the history and future direction of Milwaukee with regards to race relations and segregation.

For the Connected Conversation discussion questions, participants shared a myriad of comments. Participants mentioned both negative and positive aspects of Milwaukee which they felt were missing from public discourse. While some participants highlighted the lack of discussion about segregation, others suggested a need for more positive representation of African Americans in the media. Some participants also suggested ways to commemorate events that have been ignored by mainstream discourse in Milwaukee. Parting words from participants suggested participants had a positive experience engaging each other in discussion.

Analysis

Question Round One: *"What do you know about your history, and what's one thing you wish you knew? If you don't know anything about your history, why might that be?"*

The vast majority of the participants confidently expressed some knowledge of their family origins, by describing either a specific country or an ethnic identity. Most of these participants traced their family origins to immigrant grandparents or parents. These same participants often expressed a desire to learn more about their family and ancestry. Only a few participants expressed a vague idea of their family origins. Some participants also traced their family origins to various parts of the United States. Among these participants, a few described themselves as originally from Milwaukee but did not delve deeper into their family origins. These participants also did not express a desire to learn about their family history.

1.1 Immigrant origins and identity

A majority of the participants traced their family history to a country outside of the United States. Some of them described their parents' origins as immigrants.

"My father is from Italy and my mother is from Germany."

"My mom is from Chile and my dad is Irish which I don't know much about."

"Dad was Irish, and Mom was Chinese."

Others described their grandparents' origins as immigrants; however, none of the participants specified the origins of their ancestors beyond their grandparents' generation.

"My grandparents were immigrants. I don't know any history other than my grandparents. They took on the Viking way of life because they were living in Iceland."

"On both sides of my family my grandparents were married over 65 years. They came from the Netherlands, Scotland and France."

About half of these participants explicitly stated their desire to learn more about their family history, even though some of them demonstrated extensive knowledge of their family origins.

"My ancestry comes from the Netherlands, Scotland, England, and France. Our family has a tartan, or a plaid pattern that signifies our Scottish lineage. I've heard that my last name has something to do with horse thieves. I wonder if this story is true, and in general wish I knew more."

"Chile is a socialist kind of communist country and my mom lived under a dictatorship. My brother's father was murdered, and people just disappeared there. My mom and family experience and lived under a lot of trauma and fear along with distrust. I want to research my family, but I don't know what's an appropriate."

This last quote exemplifies the sentiment expressed by a few other participants who described a reluctance among their family members to share their family history. These participants also expressed feelings of frustration or disappointment with themselves for not knowing more about their family history.

"I do love history and I think a lot about what my family did at important moments in history, such as the Civil Rights Movement. I asked my mom, and she said that she was distant and concerned with her own family... I found this frustrating. I feel like that is exemplary of white privilege, to have the freedom to not be concerned."

Such feelings were also expressed by some of the participants who identified their origins within the United States; however, as seen in the following section, these participants did not express a desire to learn more about their family history.

1.2 United States origins

A few of the participants traced their family origins to places within the United States and its territories, including indigenous First Nations and Puerto Rico.

"All I know so far is that both sides are from Macon, Georgia."

"I am aware of my family's genealogy which includes five indigenous First Nation tribes."

"On my mom's side, she had two parents and they were Puerto Rican."

Of the participants who traced their family origins to places within the United States, four reported they were from Milwaukee, emphasizing it is where they were born and raised.

"I am a military child originally from Milwaukee."

"I was born and raised close to here (the Wisconsin Black Historical Society)."

"I am a "born and bred" Milwaukee resident..."

"I was born and raised here in Milwaukee on 21st and Center just across from what used to be 21st Street School."

These participants also tended to focus on their own upbringing and person history rather than their family history. Whereas most of the other participants described some of their family members, these Milwaukeean participants did not. Unlike the majority of the participants, these Milwaukeean participants did not identify their family origins based on country or ethnicity. They also tended not to express a desire to learn about their family history. Only one of them mentioned a desire to learn more about their family, but not about their family origins per se.

"There are deep, deep, and dark family secrets that are still being kept by some of the more seniors in my family. It is my wish and desire to learn how these and other aspects of secrecy have affected and continue to impact my family."

Question Round Two: *“What are the Milwaukee stories that you remember, or you’ve been told that shape your understanding of the city?”*

While participants answered this question from multiple angles, at least half of the participants described their perception of Milwaukee from the lens of race relations. Related topics included Milwaukee’s history of segregation, the city’s response to the Civil Rights movement and Fair Housing Act, and current challenges for Milwaukee’s communities of color. Participants whose stories did not pertain to race relations shared a variety of stories, from childhood memories of family to their current experiences living in Milwaukee.

2.1 Race relations and segregation in Milwaukee’s history

Responses from participants indicated a variety of attitudes towards Milwaukee’s history of race relations. Participants not from Milwaukee described their view of the city through race relations both implicitly and explicitly. For example, some participants alluded to the legacy of segregation by describing their perception of certain areas as unsafe.

“Before I moved to Milwaukee I got told the city before I came, and one of the comments were not to live north of North Avenue; [it’s] dangerous. That was reinforced when I came.”

“Since then I’ve met other people who have shared Milwaukee’s history with me, such as the 16th Street Bridge hosted the fair housing marches. As a student my roommate was told not to go to Aurora Sinai because it was not safe for white woman to go there.”

The speaker of this last quote transitioned from how they learned about the fair housing marches in Milwaukee’s history, to their perception of safety in an area of the city specifically based on race. This tendency to allude to racial tension and segregation in Milwaukee was echoed by other participants as well. One participant alluded to segregation by describing the neighborhoods as ethnically distinct:

“At that particular time Milwaukee was in sections. The Germans lived in the little section between Melvina and Capitol in that surrounding area, and across the viaduct was Polish immigrants. Being a German during that time, I didn’t get to meet a lot of Blacks because all of the Black families were in a certain section of town and I never got a chance to get down there in that area.”

However, some participants were more explicit about their impression of segregation in Milwaukee. In the following quote, the participant observes the impacts of segregation on students in Milwaukee’s public schools.

“I came here in 2014 with a national teaching program. The training in this program warned me that Milwaukee was hyper-segregated, but I took that for granted. It is really baffling, and I felt like there was something more to it that I didn’t know. In my

first year, I noticed how my students succeed or fail in geometry reflects a lot of the opportunity or hardships they have, which comes from segregation."

This perception of ongoing segregation in Milwaukee may be attributed to the what many participants perceived as a lack of discussion about race relations and Milwaukee's history during the Civil Rights era. Several participants expressed this concern:

"There's so much history that is suppressed because it's messy and ugly and we don't want to talk about it."

"The stories that I remember are our history of race relations or lack thereof and that the city is segregated."

"I moved to California, then back to Milwaukee, then I understood the history of the fair housing was really never talked about."

A couple of participants described very negative experiences in Milwaukee where they dealt with racism. One participant described the trauma of discovering racism in their own family.

"As I reflect on my life I realize how much "race" has impacted my world. When I was a child my father worked for both the streetcar line and the bus line. At the age of five years, I would daily take my father his hot lunch prepared by my mother. One incident stands out for me very vividly. One day my father was scream racial slurs at people gathered on a streetcar stop and that left me, well, traumatized, because I was unaware that my father harbored these thoughts and sentiments."

Another participant expressed frustration about living in Milwaukee, but indirectly attributes this negative feeling to their experience of racism.

"Growing up here, I never realized how bad it was until we would take trips, or I went to college. In the city, we don't make eye contact. It's not a friendly place like other cities. There's so much history that is suppressed because it's messy and ugly and we don't want to talk about it. There are two positions and it seems like the void between them is growing wider. When I have family and friends visit, they pick up on it immediately and I don't feel that this is a healthy place. I want to leave as soon as I can, but I stay to take care of my mother."

Though the experiences of these two participants may not have reflected that of the majority, they illustrate the impact of racial tensions and segregation echoed by other participants.

2.2 Other stories of Milwaukee

Participants who did not allude to race relations shared a wide variety of stories and experiences, with some more positive than others. Several participants shared joyful memories and a positive outlook on Milwaukee. One was particularly nostalgic and optimistic about Milwaukee's race relations:

"I recall with fondness the winter of 1947 and how all the neighborhoods both Black and White got together to dig out cars, trucks, streetcars from the snow, and how those same efforts were applied to rescue people that were forced to spend the night in a cold streetcar."

This unique example did not reflect the attitude of most participants. Instead, participants tended to express some criticism of Milwaukee in spite of their positive experiences, whether directly or indirectly.

"There's a lot of great organizing from young people. It's very vibrant in spite of all the issues and the government. Milwaukee overlooked a lot of the facts of the disparities of lead pipes, Milwaukee Public Schools, black incarceration, and the fact that Milwaukee is very segregated."

"My personal experience walking the Hank Aaron Trail was amazing—I met so many important people along the way. I-94 construction destroyed so many neighborhoods. What stories might those streets have told?"

Whereas the first speaker points out the problems in Milwaukee, the second speaker hints at the source of some of these problems by mentioning the destruction of neighborhoods. This mix of criticism and optimism was also expressed by a few participants who identified themselves as educators in Milwaukee.

"I'm trying to dig deep and remember what I knew of Milwaukee before moving here, which was pretty much just beer and Happy Days. I have students in Racine who haven't been here because they say they are scared and that shocks me. I love reading articles and watching recent documentaries about the history of Milwaukee, especially through Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service and The Milwaukee Courier. The history of the Civil Rights Movement isn't a part of our everyday conversation, so I want to learn from people who participated."

This comment reflects the optimistic sentiment expressed by many of the participants, which will be highlighted in the following section.

2.3 Looking forward

Despite the varied responses, most participants expressed a desire to look forward by raising questions that are missing in Milwaukee's public dialogue. Some of these questions are listed below.

"How can we change? How can we undo history?"

"What does this mean being a first-year teacher? How did segregation play a role? The dismantling of Bronzeville? What can I do? Is what I am doing enough?"

"At the Founder's Day event, the story of Joshua Glover was highlighted. There was a story of another man who was lynched—Joshua will get a monument but what about the others?"

At the same time, some of these participants expressed anxiety and concern over the trajectory of Milwaukee's narrative in the future.

"I'm overwhelmed by all the things I want to do but scared that what I want to do won't change the powerful patterns of injustice here."

"The tragedy of the last fifty years is that kids cannot tell the stories. I don't want to be the bottleneck of the stories."

Yet despite these concerns, some participants highlighted the need for more recognition of the positive things in Milwaukee.

"[...] there's a lot of positive things that are going on that are not celebrated as much."

This desire is echoed again later in the Connected Conversation session, which will be described in the following section.

Connected Conversation: *What do you feel is missing from our public narrative? What kinds of things do you want to see represented in Milwaukee? How have you seen history commemorated well?*

During this unstructured part of the session, participants discussed a variety of points related to what they felt was missing in Milwaukee's public discourse. Participants highlighted both positive and negative aspects of representation in Milwaukee's public narrative. Some participants also discussed various monuments and ways of commemorating history in Milwaukee.

3.1 Changing the public narrative

Most participants repeated the problems they mentioned in the previous question to reiterate the need for more public discussion about race relations and segregation.

"I feel like there is still a lot that's not talked about. The divide in the city is physical and also present in our communication."

"People are disconnected because of segregation."

This emphasis on the lack of communication and connection among people in Milwaukee was echoed by another participant who highlighted the challenge of moving conversations forward and expanding them to include more people in the community.

"It's a struggle because when you come to different events like this and then return to the community in which you live, everyone's hard to be complacent. How can we bridge the conversation? And how do we get people here that don't know that they need to be here?"

Participants also mentioned issues related to segregation such as “systemic racism” and “police brutality” as topics that are missing from the public narrative.

3.2 Positive representation

Several participants expressed a desire for more positive representation and news in the media, as exemplified by the following quotes.

“I know there are good things happening, but they never seem to garner media attention.”

“I feel that good things never get the media attention they deserve.”

These participants specifically mentioned the importance of increasing positive media coverage of African Americans to counter negative stereotypes.

“There was a group of African-American graduates talking about their future plans and celebrating, and I wondered, where is the media? They need to be here to tell this story. You’ve got to combat the negatives stories that are pushing one stereotype.”

“I would like to see the African-American community positively represented, the powerful flourishing of the community commemorated well.”

This desire for more positive stories in the public narrative emerged frequently in discussions about commemorations and monuments, which will be discussed in the following section.

3.3 Commemorating history

Some participants shared their ideas about ways to commemorate history in Milwaukee—history which has previously been overlooked for monuments and public spaces. Some participants offered positive examples of commemorations.

“I’m fascinated by the different monuments and markers throughout Milwaukee such as the statue dedicated to Labor Relations.”

“The Black Holocaust Museum did a good job ten years ago. It was like the encyclopedias from long ago had come to life.”

Other participants suggested other ways of commemorating forgotten history.

“With so much negative news, I would love to see the power of the African-American community come together for a commemoration of Bronzeville.”

“Maybe schools could have students apprentice at the Wisconsin Black Historical Society so they can carry on the work.”

However, participants generally did not focus too much on physical monuments and ways of commemorating important history in Milwaukee. Instead, most of them focused on the challenges and issues facing Milwaukee, particularly with regards to the negative impacts of racism and segregation on the communities of Milwaukee. This focus on people rather than monuments is summed up succinctly by one of the participants:

"The most significant monuments are silent—what isn't said, what is omitted from the story. Monuments are not what we need. We need acknowledgement of groups of people. It is not about hero-worship. Not about the individual but the collective."

4 Parting Words

The majority of participants provided positive feedback about their experience in their discussion groups. Participants described their conversations as "valuable," "useful," "good," and "important." A few of the participants explicitly stated that they enjoyed the format of the discussion. Overall, participant responses indicated that they enjoyed connecting with one another, and emphasized the importance of listening to one another.

Annexes

Question Round One: *What do you know about your history, and what's one thing you wish you knew? If you don't know anything about your history, why might that be?*

1.1. Immigrant origins and identity

- I know of the men in my nuclear and extended family; however, it never occurred to me to investigate the history of the women. Later in life, we as a family, we traveled to Germany and visited the village where my ancestors originated. There was a schism within my family. (I still do not know exactly what it is.) I am curious to interact with almost fifty of my cousins and others—there are adoptive siblings with in our family structure—to be more enlightened.
- My history is one of extremes: between tiny towns and cities. I'm the daughter of a country pastor, my father, who is from Brazil. My mother is from small town Indiana. My grandparents are both still alive and just celebrated their 65th anniversary. My ancestry comes from the Netherlands, Scotland, England, and France. Our family has a tartan, or a plaid pattern that signifies our Scottish lineage. I've heard that my last name has something to do with horse thieves. I wonder if this story is true, and in general wish I knew more.
- I live in 53215, but I'm not from Milwaukee. I work with Black and Latino kids in present day civil rights issues. I'm a curriculum writer, and my work comes from the racial and ethnic tension I felt growing up. It was easy for me to be triggered, partly because I wished I was white. I didn't embrace my Mexican and Indigenous identity. My brother once said to me that we are Chicano, and proud of it, and I didn't feel the same. I'm thankful for a community college textbook I came across that didn't describe Columbus as a hero; it shifted my thinking. I'm still coming to terms with the truth, but I wonder what is too radical.
- I have lived in Greendale and Racine, but I'm from a small farming town in Iowa that is conservative. I wanted to care about my German and Lutheran heritage. Maybe I should take a trip to find family or visit the places I'm from. I do love history and I think a lot about what my family did at important moments in history, such as the Civil Rights Movement. I asked my mom, and she said that she was distant and concerned with her own family...I found this frustrating. I feel like that is exemplary of white privilege, to have the freedom to not be concerned.
- I grew up in small town Indiana, and I have traveled a lot around the world and the country, but Milwaukee is where I've truly learned about cities and history. I think about my ancestry, because my great-grandmother was part of a genealogical society who mapped our heritage back to 1302. But I feel that ancestry in general is a kind of origin story that is interesting. But the way I think of it as a European-American as a nifty story doesn't really explain the imprints of power that it's left on the world.

- I have some family members that went to Africa and our lineage, and found out that our last name is our original last name from Africa. My mother adopted another child and she's half Puerto Rican, so I don't know that side of my family.
- My father is from Italy and my mother is from Germany. My mother's family, I know well because they tracked their family. When they came to the States, they're short in their last name because if you go back to Germany our last name is spelled differently. It's always interesting to me that in the past, we were called WOP, that's without papers. It's interesting how people are labeled.
- My mom is from Chile and my dad is Irish, which I don't know much about. He doesn't have as much as I can see because they have been here so long. Chile is a socialist kind of communist country and my mom lived under a dictatorship. My brother's father was murdered, and people just disappeared there. My mom and family experienced and lived under a lot of trauma and fear along with distrust. I want to research my family, but I don't know what's an appropriate.
- My mom is Croatian and German. She celebrates and follows the Croatian traditions. My parents don't talk about politics, but I want to know where they stand, because I want to see our civil rights and social justice stories with them.
- I made it the project of my life to learn about my history. In school, we learned about the history of other countries, but we were not given the whole picture of what happened in our own. Dad was Irish, and mom was Chinese. Both parents were reluctant to talk about tough issues. Mom would get angry if I asked. So, I tried to talk with my cousins. I'm the youngest so maybe they got tired of telling the stories of our history. I felt poor not knowing some of that stuff.
- I grew up not knowing much about my family or my father. My father was Mexican, and he moved from Texas to Milwaukee, and I see where my passion comes from. It comes from my father, although I didn't know much about him. I was told about him by my mom. I am not claimed by my father's side of the family, and believe it or not, my aunt, my dad's sister, only lives four blocks away from me. I'm really unhappy that I am not able to pass on my family history.
- My family were immigrants. My family were fur traders. I do know some things about my father. He was a World War II veteran. However, a lot of documents were destroyed. I would like to have more proof of those stories that I heard about. My mom's family was from Europe. However, it is interesting to have the two sides of the family's stories.
- My grandparents were immigrants. I don't know any history other than my grandparents. They took on the Viking way of life because they were living in Iceland. I wish I could find more out about my parents and their stories. This is not easy for me, not knowing the real history, only bits and pieces.
- I don't know my mother's history beyond her parents. I know my grandmother had nine children. My father had to leave, and he had an additional family outside of the family, and I came to find out my real name was Henderson. But one of the most important things that I would love to find out is my African heritage.
- I grew up in a very rural area of Wisconsin, but I was born in Chicago. I am the daughter of a pastor. He grew up in Brazil. My mom grew up in a small town in Indiana. On both

sides of my family, my grandparents were married for over sixty-five years. They came from the Netherlands, Scotland and France. I still have distant relatives living in Scotland. Our family's last name is Wilson. I am told it comes from horse thieves. I wish I knew more.

- I work in the Department of Black and Latino Male Curriculum of Milwaukee Public Schools. A white man contacted me to let me know that he is offended because the curriculum doesn't include Whites. Growing up, I wished I was white. I didn't embrace that I am Mexican. Indigenous. My brother would say to me, "Yo bro, we're Chicano." I was offended. I changed my name to a French-sounding name. I thought that was indicative of success. My uncle shared family history with me, so he understood the value of his name. I wish I had known that sooner.
- My history is very much bound in Iowa. I wanted to care about my background, but I didn't. I went to Germany and saw where my family is from. I love history. I don't know anything about my dad's side of the family. I know the German history of my mom's side. I asked my mom about the March on Milwaukee. I said, "You were twenty-two and in Iowa. What did you do?" She was raising kids. She has a complete history of White privilege, so she didn't have to do anything.

1.2 United States origins

- I am a military child originally from Milwaukee. My relatives resided here, however; being a military brat our nuclear family traveled the US and throughout the world. I went on to college and returned to Milwaukee. I at first felt like a tourist in my own hometown. Soon though, I felt it was home again. With the things that I do (community, the arts etc.) I am feeling really, really at home.
- I am a "born and bred" Milwaukee resident and when I investigated my family tree, it was apparent that class was an integral aspect of how we interacted with each other. There are deep, deep, and dark family secrets that are still being kept by some of the more senior in my family. It is my wish and desire to learn how these and other aspects of secrecy have affected and continue to impact my family.
- I am aware of my family's genealogy which includes five indigenous first nation tribes. I grew up in the heyday of Bronzeville and have fond childhood memories of the people, business, and resources that were available during that time. I am keenly aware of how my childhood—one filled with love and safety—helped me develop a sense of justice. That is the primary reason that I participated in The Open Housing Marches as a youth.
- I was born and raised close to here (the Wisconsin Black Historical Society). I live in Sherman Park now on Grant Boulevard, a street with beautiful homes. I went to an elementary school in the late 60's, which was diverse in the student population, but there was only one black teacher. Still, it was a loving and nurturing school. Unfortunately, I found high school to be racist and painful, with a much less diverse student body. I wanted to go back to MPS, and when it came time for college, I chose to go to UWM and found some of that diversity again. I'm a mother with two sons and

I worry about the environment they're growing up in. It's hard because I think the positives outweigh the negatives.

- I know a great deal about where my people come from but what I want to know is how it branched off. I have the first census with family names. My grandfather was a sharecropper. When slaves were freed, he didn't go far. He decided to work with a former owner of slaves. I wondered why he did that and where the rest of the family went. I try not to overwhelm my daughter, but it is important for her to know so I dragged her here.
- I am also the youngest. The next older sibling is seven years older and he knows all of the stories. I would ask mom and dad questions, but they would ask, "Why look back?" Mom is an only child and she is in her seventies, so now is the time to find out our history. Dad is also in his seventies. His side of the family would have cookouts but would send the kids away, so they could not overhear the adults talking. Five years ago, I took a genealogy workshop—it is a lot of work! All I know so far is that both sides are from Macon, Georgia. The movie, Black Panther, prompted some family members to want to know more about our history.
- I am the older of two, and she looks up to me. I know that my grandfather was a hard worker. On my mom's side, she had two parents, and they were Puerto Rican. I just wish I knew more about what they did. Dad tells lots of stories—and he's better at it than mom.
- I was born and raised here in Milwaukee on 21st and Center just across from what used to be 21st Street School. My mother found Emmaus Lutheran School. It was incredibly diverse. We had a nice combination of Black, White, Blasian—biracial—Black and Asian, and Colombian. It was nurturing. I went to one of the Lutheran high schools. It was painful. Racism was rampant. I told my parents I wanted to go to public school, but my parents said no. They saw [negative] stories on the news about public schools and were opposed to me attending public school. I was accepted into UWM. Now I work in diversity for the university. I wish I could return to my K8 experience. I have now become concerned for my sons.

Question Round Two: *"What are the Milwaukee stories that you remember, or you've been told that shape your understanding of the city?"*

2.1 Race relations and segregation in Milwaukee's history

- For me, "it is a mindset" that shaped and continues to shape who and what I am today. At an early age I was aware that being a leader as opposed to follower would benefit me, e.g. once my peers asked me to join them in what turned out to be a robbery. The following day I read in the morning paper (The Milwaukee Sentinel) that all four of them were captured and being prosecuted. I recall with fondness the winter of 1947 and how all the neighborhoods both Black and White got together to dig out cars, trucks, streetcars from the snow, and how those same efforts were applied to rescue people that were forced to spend the night in a cold streetcar. There are indeed some aspects

of my family that are still today, "family secrets," which I feel hinders the path to a true healing for some members of my nuclear and extended family.

- I'm not from Milwaukee, I came here for grad school. Before, I studied genocide and studies in the international realm. I feel like there's a hole in my knowledge of the history of Milwaukee. I became more aware of it through my work, and as I learned more about the Civil Rights Movement in Milwaukee and the conditions leading up to it, I saw so many parallels to current stories of the city. The 200 Nights of Freedom program has been profound, and the anger of the white counter protesters is often left out of other histories of Milwaukee. The general history I'd heard started with the three founders of the city and then moved into the immigration of the German, Irish, and Polish. The last migrants to the city, African-Americans, got nothing but the story of segregation and then deindustrialization. The freeway going through Bronzeville is one of the heaviest parts of our history, especially when you think about how much history and many homes were demolished.
- I'm also not from Milwaukee. I came here in 2014 with a national teaching program. The training in this program warned me that Milwaukee was hyper-segregated, but I took that for granted. It is really baffling, and I felt like there was something more to it that I didn't know. In my first year, I noticed how my students succeed or fail in geometry reflects a lot of the opportunity or hardships they have, which comes from segregation. I felt like I was part of the problem for living where I did. I wondered what I could do. When I'm back home, my sister complains about struggle and I want to tell her it's not nearly as tough in California as it is in Wisconsin. This has given me perspective on place privilege. How can we change? How can we undo history?
- I met a seventy-year-old Milwaukeean who told me years ago Milwaukee was very clean, and the zoo was excellent, and I must go. Since then I've met other people who have shared Milwaukee's history with me, such as the 16th Street Bridge hosted the fair housing marches. As a student my roommate was told not to go to Aurora Sinai because it was not safe for white woman to go there.
- The stories that I remember are our history of race relations or lack thereof and that the city is segregated. My grandparents are older, and they told of the Civil Rights area and how white flight took place and it used to be more diverse in a past now it's predominantly black. The inner city used to be very diverse. My grandmother told me that because my grandfather was half white, they walked him through the city.
- Before I moved to Milwaukee I got told the city before I came, and one of the comments were not to live north of North Avenue; [it's] dangerous. That was reinforced when I came. My boss told me that it was segregated and then the Dontre Hamilton and the Sherman Park incident happened. I have a classmate [who] was Native American, [who] reiterated how this area used to be when it was inhabited by Native Americans. I heard a lot of good things, part of it being history about the open housing marches.
- Before I moved here I had fond memories of my older brother's love and care. When I moved here, my family was concerned and said some terrible things to me about moving here. I feel like there's a lot of socialism here. There's a lot of great organizing

from young people. It's very vibrant in spite of all the issues and the government. Milwaukee overlooked a lot of the facts of the disparities of lead pipes, Milwaukee Public Schools, black incarceration, and the fact that Milwaukee is very segregated. Also, there's a lot of positive things that are going on that are not celebrated as much.

- I remember working in Waukesha and living on the south side. People asked why I was living on the south side and explained how the city was divided. Betty Martin told me the stories shared with her by Richard Pryor, Dick Gregory and others about the bombings in Birmingham. I couldn't believe that some of the same things that were happening there were happening here. I love history, so when I get a piece, I have to search for more. When I see a monument, I want to know its origin, [and] what was happening during that time. The city is so underrated by not sharing the history.
- I got to grow up in an important time. I got to go to school all over because of bussing. The city was so segregated in other ways, but I was able to experience diversity in friends. In school, my fourth-grade teacher took us to ethnic restaurants. I remember seeing A.O. Smith in its last days. I didn't understand the devastating impact at that time. At the Founder's Day event, the story of Joshua Glover was highlighted. There was a story of another man who was lynched—Joshua will get a monument but what about the others? The tragedy of the last fifty years is that kids cannot tell the stories. I don't want to be the bottleneck of the stories.
- I was fifteen when I moved to Milwaukee. I lived at 3560 North 16th Street. At that particular time Milwaukee was in sections. The Germans lived in the little section between Melvina and Capitol in that surrounding area, and across the viaduct was Polish immigrants. Being a German during that time, I didn't get to meet a lot of Blacks because all of the Black families were in a certain section of town and I never got a chance to get down there in that area. I was a graduate of Milwaukee State Normal School, formerly UWM. In college, I learned to be more diverse. That's why I learned about the different cultures. My parents didn't grow up in Milwaukee. They came to Milwaukee around the same time. What I knew about Milwaukee was that it was the Brew City or the Brew capitol of the world. The first area that I lived in was the 53206 zip code.
- I didn't come to Milwaukee until I was fifteen, and I've done the Milwaukee tour. Most of my knowledge was people burning down Milwaukee in 1968. This was during the time of Pfister and Vogel, the tannery and the owners went to bring Mexicans back and move them into the area which used to be called the Polish flats. No one talked about the history of the tannery eras because Milwaukee was filled with tanneries and breweries.
- I came to Milwaukee for grad school and I studied genocide. I still feel a huge hole in my knowledge of Milwaukee because of academia and many years of writing my dissertation. A lot of what I hear is current day expression of Milwaukee and how it relates to racism. I still think a lot of history is missing from my understanding of the city. I heard John Gurda talk about invisible lines in the city. The magnificence of Bronzeville is now gone. The houses that were torn down for the highway—that is fascinating to me.

- I moved here in 2014. I was hired to work for Teach for America. I was told that Milwaukee is hyper-segregated. I took it for granted. It's segregated in Los Angeles, too, I thought. Once I got here I said to myself, "Man, it IS segregated here. There's gotta be something more to this." What does this mean being a first-year teacher? How did segregation play a role? The dismantling of Bronzeville? What can I do? Is what I am doing enough? Being here has given me a different perspective to realize the privilege I have being a person of color growing up in LA. How will we change and undo that history?
- Growing up here I didn't realize how bad it was until I got in college and started to travel. People [in other places] would speak and look at me in my eyes. For people of color, I may be described as being of color. People not of color ask, "What are they talking about?" White people often say, "This [Milwaukee] is a nice place to raise kids."
- As I reflect on my life I realize how much "race" has impacted my world. When I was a child my father worked for both the streetcar line and the bus line. At the age of five years, I would daily take my father his hot lunch prepared by my mother. One incident stands out for me very vividly. One day my father was scream racial slurs at people gathered on a streetcar stop and that left me, well, traumatized, because I was unaware that my father harbored these thoughts and sentiments.

2.2 Other stories of Milwaukee

- My maternal grandmother was originally from Louisiana and her father was a Barber by trade. In addition, he would drive a truck down south to retrieve produce and bring it back to Milwaukee for resale. That enterprise eventually turned into a green grocery. I have wonderful memories of me sitting on the counter of the store and partaking in free items and sharing "Penny Candy" with my neighborhood peers. My Grandmother was known for a "Hog Head Cheese" recipe. Eventually this business went from small and local to huge. My family was prepared to move the enterprise to Brookfield, but the city literally begged them to keep the business near what is now Martin Luther King Drive. Many of my childhood recollections are pleasant; however, as with any family, there are some dark secrets that I am still unaware of.
- Well my SJW sojourn began with my early life and in particular my education. I attended a "220 Program" during the school year and participated in various summer educational opportunity programs, particularly on the campus of UW-Milwaukee. I recall being with my mother in The Alverno Library as a youngster which is where my love of books and scholarship really began. Other memories that shaped my vocation (Public Health Policy Advocate) was the Cryptosporidium outbreak in 1992 (I experienced a full-blown case) and on the flip side, The Frank Jude incident truly saddened me. Again, the family secrets and little dark corners of memory still do not allow me to know my place in the world.
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- I got to grow up in an important time. I got to go to school all over because of bussing. The city was so segregated in other ways, but I was able to experience diversity in friends. In school, my fourth-grade teacher took us to ethnic restaurants. I remember seeing A.O. Smith in its last days. I didn't understand the devastating impact at that time. At the Founder's Day event, the story of Joshua Glover was highlighted. There was a story of another man who was lynched—Joshua will get a monument but what about the others? The tragedy of the last fifty years is that kids cannot tell the stories. I don't want to be the bottleneck of the stories.
- What gripped me when I moved here was the story told by the streets: 27th from North to South, Center to the lake. Capitol is an interesting point. My personal experience walking the Hank Aaron Trail was amazing—I met so many important people along the way. I-94 construction destroyed so many neighborhoods. What stories might those streets have told?
- My mom knows about Milwaukee, and my grandparents couldn't tell me much. I didn't know much about Milwaukee because I grew up in Kenosha and my dad was from Belzoni, Mississippi. I am a graduate of Rufus King and my mother came [to Milwaukee], and she was telling me about how Milwaukee used to have streetcars.
- I didn't come to Milwaukee until I was fifteen, and I've done the Milwaukee tour. Most of my knowledge was people burning down Milwaukee in 1968. This was during the time of Pfister and Vogel, the tannery and the owners went to bring Mexicans back and move them into the area which used to be called the Polish flats. No one talked about the history of the tannery eras because Milwaukee was filled with tanneries and breweries.
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2.3 Looking forward

- I'm also not from Milwaukee. I came here in 2014 with a national teaching program. The training in this program warned me that Milwaukee was hyper-segregated, but I took that for granted. It is really baffling, and I felt like there was something more to it that I didn't know. In my first year, I noticed how my students succeed or fail in geometry reflects a lot of the opportunity or hardships they have, which comes from segregation. I felt like I was part of the problem for living where I did. I wondered what I could do. When I'm back home, my sister complains about struggle and I want to tell her it's not nearly as tough in California as it is in Wisconsin. This has given me perspective on place privilege. How can we change? How can we undo history?
- I'm trying to dig deep and remember what I knew of Milwaukee before moving here, which was pretty much just beer and Happy Days. I have students in Racine who haven't been here because they say they are scared and that shocks me. I love reading articles and watching recent documentaries about the history of Milwaukee, especially through Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service and The Milwaukee Courier. The history of the Civil Rights Movement isn't a part of our everyday conversation, so I want to learn from people who participated.
- I teach a class that includes a two-week curriculum on the March on Milwaukee (the archive at UWM about the Civil Rights Movement in Milwaukee), and my students often say this was one of the most meaningful parts of the course because they had no idea, and because it relates so much to present day issues at not only the city level, but as a state and nation. I barely knew anything about Milwaukee before I moved here from Indiana, but I've spent the last six summers doing local history projects, and I've got a relationship with this city that is unlike any other city I know. I'm overwhelmed by all the things I want to do but scared that what I want to do won't change the powerful patterns of injustice here.
- I remember working in Waukesha and living on the south side. People asked why I was living on the south side and explained how the city was divided. Betty Martin told me the stories shared with her by Richard Pryor, Dick Gregory and others about the bombings in Birmingham. I couldn't believe that some of the same things that were happening there were happening here. I love history, so when I get a piece, I have to search for more. When I see a monument, I want to know its origin, [and] what was happening during that time. The city is so underrated by not sharing the history.
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- One, “Happy Days”. Two, beer. I taught in Racine and was shocked to learn that my students had never been to Milwaukee. We are a pocket. I teach social studies. I want my students to be proud of the history of the area. I am glad to see the history brought to the forefront so that I can learn.

Connected Conversation

3.1 Changing the public narrative

- I feel like there is still a lot that’s not talked about. The divide in the city is physical and also present in our communication. We get stiff, our body language changes along the invisible lines. It’s not friendly, and difficult to talk to each other. My connection to my family keeps me here, but I don’t think this place is welcoming.
- I didn’t think much about segregation, but my girlfriend looks black and her experiences are really different than mine. Even at the airport, just after she came here, she told me she does not want to settle down here. She was frazzled. She was stared at all the time, and really uncomfortable. She said we should just do our work here and move on. She doesn’t want to start a family here. I wish the black and brown communities would come together. Some of my friends cut me off when they found out I was in a multiracial relationship and said things that were really hurtful.
- When people found out I was with a Spanish man, some people asked if his whole family was going to move in. It was rude and a ridiculous assumption. I think about standards of whiteness and what it would have meant to give my daughter a white name or not.
- It’s a struggle because when you come to different events like this and then return to the community in which you live everyone’s hard to be complacent. How can we bridge the conversation. And how do we get people here that don’t know that they need to be here?
- Since I have moved here, I have met people who don’t feel connected to Milwaukee which I understand. People are disconnected because of segregation. I have met people who have never ventured outside of their neighboring community.
- How to build relationship with people with different background without it being...
- I do tours and talk about indigenous history, about what has been lost, not gone, but where there is not as much detail.
- Someone was just saying how we forget the people, like Vel Phillips, who made a difference in the past. A lot of young people may not even know who she was and what she did.

- This is a perfect place to be passionate about social justice. My girlfriend came to visit. She said, “We can’t live here. Everywhere we went people were looking at us.” A lot of our students say Black and brown [people] need to come together.
- 50 years of political machinations and still “Nothing has changed”
- Police brutality still a major challenge
- Systemic racism
- Not that eyes need to be held open and people pushed into it, but those who suffer deserve to have their suffering seen and those viewing need to see it.

3.2 Positive representation

- The winter of 1947 and other incidents where unity of the races overshadowed their prejudices against each other.
- I forgot to mention that there’s a historical figure that is really important to me and my work: the socialist mayor, Frank Zeidler, whose name is everywhere. My hope is that with conversations like this, we can create physical memorials to things that Milwaukee doesn’t know or talk about. With so much negative news, I would love to see the power of the African-American community come together for a commemoration of Bronzeville. The Fair Housing marches were such an angry part of history; we should remember the times that communities flourished in addition to the tough times.
- I feel that good things never get the media attention they deserve. There was a group of African-American graduates talking about their future plans and celebrating, and I wondered, where is the media? They need to be here to tell this story. You’ve got to combat the negatives stories that are pushing one stereotype.
- Frank Zeidler’s name, socialist of the city—his name is everywhere. We have so many negative media statistics about Milwaukee. I would like to see the African-American community positively represented, the powerful flourishing of the community commemorated well.
- I know there are good things happening, but they never seem to garner media attention.
- There are a lot of people building the Milwaukee we need.

3.3 Commemorating history

- I’m fascinated by the different monuments and markers throughout Milwaukee such as the statue dedicated to Labor Relations. And it represents the eight-hour work day movement and the chains linked together at the very United.
- Bronzeville in New York was commemorated well.
- The Black Holocaust Museum did a good job ten years ago. It was like the encyclopedias from long ago had come to life.
- Thirty Americans was here and included local artists. I would like to see more of the art on exhibit.
- There will be another version of the Fair Housing March photos and they will travel around.

- Maybe schools could have students apprentice at the Wisconsin Black Historical Society so they can carry on the work.
- Where are those people in the pictures today? Those signs are still in garages—maybe in your neighborhood.
- I am inspired by the tours of Milwaukee. Teachers don't know how powerful it would be to share this history about the city of Milwaukee and have their students take these tours. This will open doors for the doors of education. This can also be very informative to teachers that teach social studies to speak on or to teach this history of Milwaukee. And I believe even the teachers don't know the history.
- The most significant monuments are silent - what isn't said, what is omitted from the story. Monuments are not what we need. We need acknowledgement of groups of people. It is not about hero-worship. Not about the individual but the collective.

Other comments

- There were not any riots during 1968. This was pushed by media and they only showed one section all the time on TV that was burning. There were really no riots.
- We don't have space. I don't feel safe. I didn't I.D. myself, but a woman after fifty years made myself be tough in school. I learned the hard way, but I overcame my shortcomings and I became a graduate of Alverno.
- Where are those people in the pictures today? Those signs are still in garages—maybe in your neighborhood.
- What needs to be told that isn't?
- This is a perfect place to be passionate about social justice. My girlfriend came to visit. She said, "We can't live here. Everywhere we went people were looking at us." A lot of our students say Black and brown [people] need to come together.
- I'm SO excited to be here with my daughter. She is getting a wealth of knowledge. I remember hearing of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, but I didn't really know the stories. This is an opportunity for my daughter to learn the stories.
- I signed my mom up for the Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service because she always only saw the negative. My hopes are to see that improvement go forward.
- The students of Pulaski should know the story of Pulaski.
- Love of community space is like this, the Wisconsin Historical Society. Ex Fabula exposed me to areas like this. Before I was living in a university bubble. This experience is very valuable to me.
- I signed my mom up for emails from an African-American newspaper so that she'd have another perspective because it's so important to hear the alternative stories. I hope a monument would shift everyday conversations and start a groundswell.
- Public narrative... "How do we change it"?
- Young people are willing, are we?
- The importance of have recreational outlets
- Streetcars "then and now," what a difference in more ways than one

Parting Words

- Quenched
- Inspirational
- Stimulating
- I liked the format. I find it useful for my work in a sociocultural planning office. It generates good conversation and is useful for diversity training. It lets you know that there are people here looking for change.
- Hearing new perspectives is so valuable.
- I liked the structure, how it scaffolded from storytelling to small group sharing.
- I found myself wanting to change others' stories, but I know it's not my responsibility to fix the city. I'm not a savior.
- People are people. We learn so much in our formative years. It is so important to have many friends that we learn from.
- I noticed that everyone in the group who shared mentioned the resistance in their families when discussing history. I thought I might be alone in that regard and I was embarrassed.
- I am excited to see this go further. I feel affirmed. I feel fulfilled. This helps reveal that I am not alone.
- At first, I didn't want to come but I listened to the stories and they were really good.
- People from Milwaukee lose their curiosity about Milwaukee.
- I enjoyed and appreciated the conversation. The prison population needs to be reintegrated back into the community. Parole Museum, more resources, education, jobs, and mental health help versus stereotyping.
- I was struck by the banners hanging here and around the city. I love phrases like "self-determination" and "collective work."
- How do you talk about the different facets of life and how they are interconnected?
- Trying to pursue and foster listening; it's very important. I listen to Fred who was a Commando for the housing marches—he was very powerful. I feel that everyone should hear his story.
- Create a new narrative, listen first!
- Monuments
- Hope
- Personalities
- Diversity
- Keep sharing with those who you will gravitate to [toward].
- Communication. Communication. Communication.
- I liked the format. I'll be starting in a new position at UWM in multicultural programming. It's been great to have a conversation, start dialoging and make things better. Creating their own effect wherever they are.
- To hear the perspectives were so valuable.
- How can we all work together to make yours a story of not wanting to leave [relocate to another state based on the racism you have endured here]?