

ORLANDO SPEAKS: HOW DOES A “CRUCIAL CONVERSATIONS” MODEL EMERGE?

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Orlando Speaks (OS) was born when, as a nation, we took notice that unarmed black men and women were being killed by police. For many decades, black communities had been cognizant of this sad fact. It took widespread media coverage and personal video, however, for these tragedies to be revealed to the nation at large.

The crisis in Ferguson, Missouri, in 2014 following the fatal shooting of unarmed teenager Michael Brown, prompted Rachel Allen, Director of Valencia College Peace and Justice Institute (PJI) to begin *Conversations on Race* for the College’s students. According to Allen, this was a model designed to provide a safe space for crucial conversations - one that required respect, decorum, civility, and deep listening and used the College’s 13 Principles for How We Treat Each Other as the foundation for authentic, respectful dialogue.¹

The mission was to form relationships, to open up dialogue, so that if and when a tragedy such as that in Ferguson happened, we would be able to move, as director Rachel Allen said, “from crisis to conversation” without the destructive unrest that often follows such a tragedy.

The City of Orlando had a relationship with PJI, with one of its staff being a member of the PJI Advisory Counsel. The following year, in May 2015, PJI invited the City of Orlando to participate alongside students at another *Conversations on Race* hosted at the College. Staff including Marcia Hope Goodwin (Chief Service Officer & Director of the Office of Community Affairs and Human Relations) and Reginald McGill (Constituent Relations) attended. Valencia College Academic

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¹ Please see the Appendix for the Principles for How We Treat Each Other: Our Practice of Respect and Community Building. Please also see <https://valenciacollege.edu/pji/principles.cfm>.

Dean, James McDonald, a 17-year veteran of the Orlando Police Department (OPD), invited officers to attend. His efforts were successful, with 10 OPD officers participating in the event. *Conversations on Race*, according to Goodwin, was “inspiring.” She thought the four PJI facilitators encouraged authentic communication and witnessed 50 participants at table groups of four sharing information around challenging topics in a safe space created by PJI.

At this same time, the City of Orlando and the Orlando Police Department were in the news concerning police conduct.² Byron Brooks, Chief Administrative Officer for the City of Orlando, together with Orlando Police Department’s Chief John Mina, were tasked by Mayor Buddy Dyer to do an assessment of community policing efforts.³

When Goodwin and McGill reported their positive experience with the PJI event to Dyer and Brooks, Brooks said he felt like it was a “godsend.” The City began to explore a possible application of this model for the police department.

During these discussions, OPD had a post-midnight call to a shopping center to investigate activity in the area. According to Deputy Chief Mark Canty, the officers, following protocol, went around back and encountered a person who then ran back inside. Officers drew their weapons not knowing what the situation was. Some of the officers, according to Canty, were “very proactive in trying to control the situation.” It turned out that the location was a church and those present were holding an all-night prayer vigil.

Fortunately, no one was hurt. However, the pastor of the church reached out to Brooks and requested a town hall meeting. This incident had prompted ill will between the parishioners and the police and the pastor wanted to help the groups better understand each other.

By this time, the Orlando Police Department had participated in many such forums and had held a couple of their own. Mina’s experience with these events was that while they were a good way to get information to the community, they didn’t promote dialogue. Someone in the audience would usually “talk at” the panel. Canty

² Please see <http://interactive.orlandosentinel.com/focus-on-force/main/index.html>.

³ The Orlando Police Department Community Policing Assessment and accompanying Memorandum were published in January of 2016 and are available at <https://moritzlaw.osu.edu/dividedcommunityproject/wp-content/uploads/sites/101/2018/07/DCP-Study-2-Orlando-Speaks-Appendix.pdf>.

noted their moderate efficacy, but thought that because everyone was trying to get their point across, no one really listened. Brooks concluded he didn’t find them productive. He felt the City needed a “true exchange, a real conversation” with the community.

Given past experience with town hall meetings, the City was ready for something different. And so officials met with PJI and decided to host what would be called “Orlando Speaks.”⁴

As is so often the case, questions and concerns accompany trying anything new. City of Orlando Chief of Staff, Frank Billingsley, said the group, composed of the Mayor’s staff, wanted to make sure this event would lead community/police relations in the right direction. They questioned whether the conversations would be productive, whether they would be well-accepted by the community, and if there would be subgroups that would try to dominate the event. Brooks felt a little trepidation and wondered if PJI would be able to provide an environment for thoughtful discourse. Canty was apprehensive as well. Hearing about the event he thought “there’s no way we are going to get officers . . . to come in and talk about bias.” When initially talking to his officers about the event, there were concerns about safety in the room. They were afraid the event would get out of control and questioned how Allen would take control of the room if such a thing happened.

Mayor Buddy Dyer wasn’t sure exactly how it was going to work, but was interested in seeing the model in action. As for Chief Mina, when he heard he was going to be sitting at the same table with residents, he felt “extreme relief.” Mina felt he would have the opportunity to “actually connect” with those at his table.

I. HOW ARE DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS CONVENED?

A. Creating a Safe Space to Enable Personal Agency

The first OS was set for August 25, 2015. It was to serve the residents of District 5 which included the area in which the incident at the church occurred. Commissioner Regina Hill of District 5 agreed with the City to hold the event at the Indoor Club at the Camping World Stadium because it was a neutral venue. It was a space that, as the

⁴ “Our Community Speaks” is now the generic title for the model crafted by Valencia College so as to be adaptable to other communities who would like to offer these events.

name implies, was indoors. Having the events indoors, says Allen, is necessary so that tables and chairs are available and to support the use of the program's multi-media elements. Furthermore, these events are held in Orlando, which is usually warm, if not hot, and air-conditioning is a must to ensure basic comfort.

Since the first OS, City Commissioners have recommended venues in their districts. They have selected schools and city facilities that are easily accessible to residents. In creating a safe space, one where participants feel encouraged to discuss difficult topics, it's important to be mindful of the physical space, according to Valencia Professor and PJI Facilitator Mollie McLaughlin. She recommends being sensitive to creating a space where the participants feel a sense of "personal agency" or control over their environment. Items such as clearly marked exits, drinking fountains, and clean and well-functioning bathrooms are all important in creating a sense of safety and ease.

The following were the dates and locations of the Orlando Speaks events. As previously mentioned, the location of the first event was chosen to address a particular incident involving the police and residents living in that District. Subsequent locations were chosen as the District Commissioners began to welcome the event to their communities.

Date	Location
08.25.15	Camping World Stadium Indoor Club
10.13.15	Edgewater High School
02.16.16	Howard Middle School
10.19.16	Englewood Neighborhood Center
04.12.17	Smith Community Center
06.04.18	Lake Nona High School

The number of participants in these events remained consistent with between 30 and 40 officers and 120 and 170 community members in attendance.

B. Community Engagement Efforts

The City offered online registration through the City website. If residents did not have access to the website, they could call the City to register. According to Goodwin, they sent out word of the event to neighborhood association leaders, the Council of Clergy, as well as other area Congregations.

The model was built for a maximum of 200 people. The registration therefore had to be capped with 30 officers and 170 community members. More people wanted to attend than the model could accommodate.

Lawanna Gelzer, the President of the Central Florida Chapter of the National Action Network, felt the right people were not going to be in the room to talk about the “hard stuff.” Gelzer received an invitation via e-mail, but felt that not everyone was invited. Therefore, she and her associates protested outside the venue the evening of the first OS event. Canty and his OPD officers, sensitive to First Amendment issues, respected their right to be there. Allen came to the realization that when people are “protesting an event meant for them, you invite them in.” She went outside, shook Gelzer’s hand, and told her they needed her inside to speak her truth. Most of the group, including Gelzer, picked up their signs and joined the event. Brooks felt that having that group join the event was the “value we hadn’t even planned.”

Goodwin said that for subsequent events, they cast a wider “net” with the help of City Commissioner contact lists. Although registration is still with the City (online or call-in), these Commissioners have a greater capacity than the City to reach residents within their Districts via newsletters and e-mail blasts. In addition to that effort, the City asks previous attendees to spread the word about upcoming OS events. Data gathered from each of the five events reveals that 98% of the attendees would recommend the event to others, so this strategy is supported by feedback. Prior attendees think so much of the event that at the last event over one-fifth of the participants had previously participated in OS.

The City now utilizes the media, ensuring multiple communications are sent out for dissemination. The City’s Families, Parks and Recreation division has been enlisted to spread the word to those who use its facilities. Goodwin said bringing people to an event is also based on “relationship building,” so she uses direct communication - phone and e-mail - to deepen the reach and to utilize “all potential contact points.”

The PJI facilitators also bring voices into the room. According to Michele Lima, PJI Academic Coordinator, they “research the community, talk to the community, and find people who can give testimony that represents the concerns and issues of that community.”

Because PJI knows that All Voices Have Value (Number 12 of the 13 Principles for How We Treat Each Other), it’s important to include

Gelzer's constructive suggestions for bringing who she feels are the right people into the room:

- Identify and invite “Keeshas.” These females between the ages of 18 and 35, according to Gelzer, are the young women who will be able to help the City locate those who have had problems with the police. When there is a problem, they go to social media. They are the activists.
- Locate and invite the people who just had negative encounters with the police.
- Identify and invite stakeholders in the community - the people who have been there for years and are trusted by other residents. They will be a “ground” for the vulnerable people at the event.
- Have attorneys in the room. People who could discuss constitutional rights.
- Focus invitations more on the community that is hurting.

C. Officer Engagement Efforts

Canty was tasked with bringing 30 officers into the room. He said that in the past the Department had made people go to classes. However, once the City and OPD decided to move forward, he didn't want to make the event mandatory. He, therefore, created an e-mail explaining the reason for the event which was to “strengthen relationships and trust between officers and residents.”⁵ He let officers know that not only was this *not* going to be another session of competing voices and people talking at them, but also that it would be an opportunity to tell people how they felt - to tell their stories. Mina felt that officer buy-in happened when they realized they would have a voice that evening.

Also included with this e-mail were the “Principles.” Officers saw the governing rules for behavior and felt assured that the evening would not degrade into, in Mina's words, a “yell-at-the-police” event.

Canty gave officers a week to respond thinking it would take that long for 30 to volunteer. But, within 24 hours, he had 40 people interested. By the end of the week, he had 70. Canty had more officers

⁵ An example of Deputy Chief Mark Canty's e-mail to OPD officers is *available at* <https://moritzlaw.osu.edu/dividedcommunityproject/wp-content/uploads/sites/101/2018/07/DCP-Study-2-Orlando-Speaks-Appendix.pdf>.

interested than the venue could accommodate. To date, many of the officers have attended more than one OS event.

According to Canty, the successful response was due to a combination of things. Mina and Canty are respected leaders who wholeheartedly believe in the power of fostering positive relationships with the community. When these types of leaders support an idea, an effort, and participants know they will be in an environment where their concerns will be heard, it makes for success.

Canty sought to bring a diverse mix of races, ranks, and jobs into the room. He wanted the bulk of the OPD attendees to be people who work patrol because those first responders would be the ones with whom the community would come in contact. In addition, he directed these officers to dress as they would for work (Canine, Tactical, Patrol, Motorcycle) so they could explain to those at the table what they did. It was a conversation piece and also served to expand attendee perception of what an officer looks like.

The e-mail was the first stage of preparation. When officers arrived at the event, Canty told them the “rule book”: First, you could sit anywhere you liked, but you couldn’t sit together. The limit was one officer per table. Second, there was a procedure for safety. If someone went off the tracks (deviated from the Principles and became uncivil), Allen and her PJI facilitation team would handle it. If they couldn’t defuse the situation, Canty would step in. And finally, if a person needed to be asked to leave, specific officers were employed for security and Canty would direct them.

Officers continue to voluntarily sign-up for these events and according to Dyer and Canty, the City and OPD encourage officers who may be hesitant to engage in the process.

Officers earn points for attending Orlando Speaks as part of the OPD Career Development Program which offers 4 Levels of achievement. Officers achieving Levels 1 through 3 are rewarded with a one-time monetary bonus and those earning a Level 4 are appointed as a Master Police Officer and receive an annual bonus.

In addition to these tangible offerings through the Career Development Program, Canty said officers are “encouraged by the Chief and his Staff to take an active role in building positive relationships” within the community.

II. WHAT DOES ORLANDO SPEAKS LOOK LIKE?

A. Facilitator Preparation

Preparation is essential for a smooth-running event. PJI facilitators ensure they are prepared by rehearsing, researching, and honoring the work the participants will be doing at the event.

Facilitators meet well before an event to prepare and to get to know their teammates. Lima said they develop an interpersonal commitment to each other. So, if a member of the team missteps during an event, the other teammates feel comfortable stepping in to help. Aida Diaz, Valencia College Professor and PJI facilitator, said that everyone knows what they are going to say and what they are going to do. Allen noted that nothing is left to chance and that the program moves at a well-designed pace with facilitators noting timing along the way. Practice is key. This is an intentional program and facilitators move it along in an intentional manner.

Facilitators get to know the community, Lima said, by engaging residents before an event. They find people to give testimony which speaks to the concerns and issues of that particular community. This includes locating both citizens and police to take on this task. When facilitators do this research, they get a better understanding of the predominant makeup of a community and can also ensure they have PJI facilitators representing the voice of the community.

Facilitators honor the sacredness of the space before an event. It's a place, Allen said, where people are willing to be vulnerable, tell their stories, and risk being seen by others. Before facilitating an event, facilitators join hands in a circle to honor the space, the courage of participants, and the truths about to be told. This practice brings unity to the team and honors the gravity of the event.

B. How the Evening Is Run

The events are held roughly at the same times: 5:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. on a weekday. A light dinner is first served with the formal program beginning at 6:00 p.m. Allen said that during this time of "breaking bread," a welcoming environment is established and conversations and relationships have the opportunity to form.

After the meal, participants are asked to sit with people they don't know at tables (preferably round, but not always available) of four to

five community members and one police officer. Participants are encouraged to find a seat at a table that is diverse – not only diverse by race, but also by age, religion, and ethnic background. Materials for each participant are located on the tables and include the Principles, pens, paper for group work, handouts, and assessments.

When participants are settled at their tables, the program is introduced by the facilitators with the first order of business being the Principles for How We Treat Each Other. These Principles serve as the ground rules for the event and are read aloud by individual participants who feel moved to offer their voices to this part of the program. These “voices” are not chosen beforehand. This role is available to any participant.

According to Allen, the “evening is highly structured in such a way that everyone in the room participates and has the chance to listen to others.” Scholar and activist Peggy McIntosh is an educational source for PJI. Her method called “serial testimony” is used in Orlando Speaks. In McIntosh’s words, it is an “autocratic administration of time in the service of democratic distribution of time.” Serial testimony is not about dialoguing. Instead, it’s a way a person can tell their story without interruption or comment. And the beauty of it is that each person is allotted the same amount of time. It ensures that voices are heard equally in the room. No one has to fight to be heard and no one has to worry about not getting as much “air time” as the person next to them. This is another way the safe space is created.

Lima and Allen agreed that participants sharing their stories is what makes for a successful program. That means participants are given the opportunity to speak at greater length than facilitators. Most of the facilitators are professors, so Lima joked that it does take some discipline on the part of the team to ensure this ratio is achieved.

Tablemates discuss prompts provided by facilitators. Video is used to inspire discussion around implicit bias and stereotyping. Individual testimony is given. An assessment of police and community needs is created by the group with a sampling of the tables sharing the information with the meeting participants.

At the close of the evening, community members are invited to commit to positive action in their community and are asked to offer written feedback on the assessment provided at the tables.

Timing is a big part of this program. Respecting people’s time is something PJI does particularly well. The event ends when it was

promised to end because that is part of building trust in a community. PJI seeks to deliver what was advertised to the community.

III. HOW ARE PARTICIPANTS ENCOURAGED TO SHARE?

“I have to give the PJI folks all the credit in the world for the facilitation and all they have done.”

Mayor Buddy Dyer, City of Orlando

Skillful facilitation is the reason Orlando Speaks works well. Without it, the desired results - participants feeling safe to open up and talk about challenging subjects - might not happen. PJI Facilitators are trained in racial identity development, dialogue, and creating a safe space for participants.⁶

The foundation of skillful PJI facilitation, according to Allen, is ongoing inner work. She offered that it’s “a community of practitioners doing the inner work of peace and justice. . . . So, when we invite citizens to do this work, we are telling personal stories that model vulnerability and honesty.” Allen added that facilitators examine their own implicit biases and have “done the work of facing their own identity” so they can give a testimony that is vulnerable. In disclosing that vulnerability, which takes an immense amount of personal courage and strength, they encourage others to do the same.

McLaughlin said she thinks back to a bit of wisdom from her days as a victim’s advocate and that is “you can only take someone down the road of healing as far as you’ve gone yourself.” She and the other facilitators stay engaged in the personal work because of this truth. Lima said facilitators “read a lot.” They are constantly learning and growing.

As part of this inner work, not only do the PJI Facilitators examine their own biases and educate themselves in an ongoing manner, but they also utilize the “Principles” in their daily lives. Allen said the Principles create a safe space and they become the tools for navigating conflict should challenging or potentially inflammatory ideas arise in the room. This is where the inner work comes into play, she noted.

⁶ Foundational sources for PJI facilitators include: Parker Palmer (inner work and community building); Peggy McIntosh (systems of privilege and oppression, educational equity and diversity); Beverly Tatum (racial identity development); John Paul Lederach (conflict transformation); Michael Nagler (Gandhian nonviolence); and Brené Brown (belonging and humanizing).

Because these Principles become part of who you are and how you navigate conflict, you are able to turn to them to assist you and the participants in moving through difficult conversations. As Allen said, “We guide people throughout the evening to continue turning to the Principles as they hear stories that might challenge their worldview.”

97% of participants in the five Orlando Speaks gatherings agreed or strongly agreed they felt engaged during the workshop.

“I have been surprised and also it’s been rewarding to see the communication methods they use and the way they get the communication between the people at the table as well as the people at different tables around the room. It’s very positive and it’s something you don’t see at a lot of gatherings.”

Marcia Hope Goodwin, City of Orlando Chief Service Officer & Director of the Office of Community Affairs and Human Relations

“Rachel and the Peace and Justice Institute did a really good job of setting the stage with the Principles for How We Treat Each Other. It was extremely well teed up.”

Frank Billingsley, City of Orlando Chief of Staff

“The facilitators basically guiding everyone through the discussion was extremely helpful and something I had never been involved in before Whatever we do moving forward, this is it. This has to be the model because we got rave reviews from the officers because they were able to actually tell their story without being interrupted . . .”

Chief John Mina, Orlando Police Department

“You give people a chance to express their concerns without sitting there waiting for ‘Well let me tell you where that’s wrong’ . . . and then you get your turn to talk and you get a chance to explain. And so I think that was very therapeutic.”

Deputy Chief Mark Canty, Orlando Police Department

“They were magnificent in ensuring that the environment was conducive for tough conversations - that it was considered a safe place The facilitators I think were masterful about showing vulnerability It really became a place where folks

said ‘Hey, I can share what’s on my mind’ and share it in the right manner . . .”

Byron Brooks, City of Orlando Chief Administrative Officer

IV. WHAT DO WE WANT TO ACHIEVE?

A. Goals

With most endeavors on a scale such as Orlando Speaks, the conveners have a goal in mind - something they want to achieve. The City’s ultimate goal of Orlando Speaks, said Billingsley, is to “enhance, improve, and solidify good working relationships between public safety folks and the general public.” PJI in partnership with the City of Orlando and OPD created the following goals for Orlando Speaks based on the Institute’s work around race, dialogue, and community building:

- Increase awareness and understanding of police practices
- Strengthen interpersonal relationships through the sharing of personal stories and experiences
- Develop trust and sensitivity to support interactions with one another
- Expand citizen engagement

Because this program is essentially in its infancy, Dyer said the goal of the City was to bring the event to all six Districts first and then keep it going on a regular basis. District 1 hosted an event in June 2018. According to Dyer, OPD thinks this model is so valuable that they want to work with “identifiable groups” - not just the neighborhoods. In the future, the City may possibly hold events for teens, seniors, and Latino or LGBTQ groups.

B. Data

While it’s difficult to say if the above goals have been met, the data from the five events as well as anecdotal stories indicate that if not all of the goals have been achieved, the efforts have made a difference. Of those responding, 82% replied that they were inspired to change a behavior or take action toward change. In regards to civic engagement, 98% would recommend the event to others and at the last event 21% of the participants had been to a prior Orlando Speaks. Participants agreeing that they felt engaged during the workshop made up 97% of

those attending and 95% agreed the information covered in the event was pertinent to the issues in their community. Throughout these sessions the words most frequently cited to describe the event included: Collaborative, Insightful, Engaging, Aware, Informative, Honest, Eye-opening, Understanding, and Enlightening.⁷

Brooks “marveled” at the exchanges happening in the room. He noted that “it was work to participate” and while doing so, he witnessed the connections made between officers and residents through them sharing their stories. He saw barriers being broken and didn’t think anyone could leave the event not being changed for the better.

C. Stories

1. *Officers*

Mina and Canty know the importance of good relationships between their officers and the community. And Orlando Speaks provides officers an opportunity to interact with residents. Mina encourages officers to get out of their cars to talk with people and says “you can always have an ‘Orlando Speaks’ out in front of the barber shop, but sometimes those opportunities aren’t always there. So this way, they’ll hear one of those stories at Orlando Speaks for themselves.”

Both tell stories about people at their tables - how they connected with them. Canty sat with a woman from the group of protestors and he said they “had a very good conversation” and he listened to her concerns. Canty noted that’s the “beauty of the program” - giving people a chance to express concerns without interruption.

Mina told a story about a woman at his table. She had an early-start job and was continually stopped by police on her way to work wanting to know where she was going, where she was coming from. According to Mina, “that really struck home” because he noted that he’s a very busy person and those stops would bother him. He was able to sense her frustration and really connect with her. It was empathy in action.

2. *Students*

Diaz told the story of her Valencia students who were attending an event that evening. Many of them were angry. So, Diaz made sure to

⁷ More Orlando Speaks participant feedback is *available at* <https://www.dropbox.com/s/cun718tifq67drp/Orlando%20Speaks%20Participant%20Comments.pdf?dl=0>.

coach them to participate in the discussion and hear the other side, that it was important to listen. One of the students came back to class and told Diaz she met a police officer and he was now her friend. The student had the ability to recognize she was going into the event with certain assumptions about the police. Being there helped change her mind.

3. Community

Then there were the two women who came to Orlando Speaks as strangers and left as friends. During the evening, one began to notice the other's passion for the community and she thought that "was somewhere she would like to be." So, she asked if she could attend a community meeting and the friendship continued after the OS event. The two continue finding more and more that they have in common. One of the women said she gives "all the credit to Orlando Speaks" for bringing her such a great friend. They agreed they have become "sisters of a different mom."⁸

V. WHAT COMES NEXT?

Because of the City's positive experience with Orlando Speaks, it negotiated with PJI to train all employees – City of Orlando and OPD - in a class called Conversations in Inclusiveness which uses the same methodologies employed in Orlando Speaks. These workshops continue monthly for all new employees. The 13 Principles have become part of the culture. According to Goodwin, this training goes beyond diversity training. Participants learn what inclusiveness means and learn how to exhibit the behaviors that support it. They learn "not just acceptance, but also appreciation."

VI. WHAT WOULD YOU ADVISE?

The interviewees in this story were asked, "What advice would you give to a person in your shoes in another city?" and these were the thoughtful responses received:

A. The Value of Leadership

We are social learners. And in order to learn well, we need good teachers. According to scholar and activist Parker Palmer, ". . . good

⁸ For the full interview, please visit https://youtu.be/8LgsFABoT_Q.

teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher.” It’s therefore necessary for leadership to teach by “walking the walk.”⁹

“It boils down to leadership . . . Mayor Dyer walks the walk. He doesn’t just talk the talk. And everybody that works with him, everybody that sees him in the community and on the staff know that he is encouraging inclusion, diversity.”

Marcia Hope Goodwin, City of Orlando Chief Service Officer & Director of the Office of Community Affairs and Human Relations

“There are always things that as leaders we need to be addressing and thinking about every single day . . . what we also need to think about is community engagement It has to start at the top . . . with the Chief and with all the assistant Chiefs and Commanders. There’s always that next opportunity out there. You have to try hard every day to work at it.”

Chief John Mina, Orlando Police Department

B. The Value of Communication

Everyone wants to be heard. And when people are given the opportunity to share in a safe environment where perspective-taking is encouraged, bridges are built. Authentic communication is the building block of relationship.

“Open honest communication is really the tonic for . . . any kind of problem or conflict. To me it’s a good investment of time to spend time in the community, allowing people to have a voice and allowing and enabling people to meet other people that they might not encounter in their day-to-day lives . . .”

Frank Billingsley, City of Orlando Chief of Staff

“Give everyone more credit in terms of their desire to really want to engage.”

Byron Brooks, City of Orlando Chief Administrative Officer

⁹ Parker J. Palmer Ph.D., *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Landscape of a Teacher’s Life*.

C. The Value of Relationships

Storyteller and researcher, Brené Brown, tells us “we are wired for connection.” And that these connections, these relationships are critical to satisfying our “basic need to feel accepted and to believe that we belong and are valued for who we are.”¹⁰ Relationships support us personally and as a community when we are faced with challenge.

“I think it’s all about the relationships because you don’t know when the crisis is going to come and you can’t build relationships or the resilience that day if you haven’t already laid the predicate for months and years in advance of that So making Orlando into a city that embraces diversity and equality, we have been working on that for years and years and years.”

Mayor Buddy Dyer, City of Orlando

“This type of interaction is important. Any positive interaction with the community is important but I think you really have to be proactive in what you do because the moment you have a bad situation, it’s too late for that period of time, it’s too late to go back You have to kind of build all your capital up before and let people know . . . this is what we’re all about . . . treating people with respect and dignity. You are building all this capital up so that when something bad happens, they are going to have that pause.”

Deputy Chief Mark Canty, Orlando Police Department

D. The Value of Inner Work

When we see another struggling with an idea or an emotion that we ourselves have struggled with and worked through, we can meet that person’s struggle with empathy, compassion, and wisdom. Without making the arduous journey through our own challenges, we cannot serve others effectively.

¹⁰ Brené Brown Ph.D., LMSW, *I Thought It Was Just Me (but it isn’t): Making the Journey from “What Will People Think?” to “I am enough.”*

“Do the inner work If we are not operating optimally in our own lives, building interracial relationships, doing the inner work of looking at our own biases, then it’s challenging to be effective role models and leaders”

Rachel Allen, Peace and Justice Institute Director

“Police like your mother is watching you.”

Deputy Chief Mark Canty, Orlando Police Department

