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Annual Report

From the Executive Director

Dear friends and supporters,

As 2015 winds to a close, I want to express my gratitude for the community members, organizations, Zeidler board, and facilitators who have supported our work. With new partnerships, the launch of police/resident listening sessions, and our largest grant to date, we've had an incredible year!

I often hear calls for less talk and more action. I get it. We've all been a part of conversations that go nowhere or worse, end in bitter arguments.

Drawing a sharp divide between

talk and action, however, can cause us to miss the powerful actions inherent in the kind of dialogue we practice at the Zeidler Center, actions that include *deep listening* and *speaking from the heart*.

In a time of increasing tension and polarization, your investment in the Zeidler Center enables us to continue to offer spaces for courageous, civil, vulnerable dialogue that reaches across boundaries and toward greater trust and humanization. Thank you.

Katherine Wilson, PhD
Executive Director

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OUR MISSION

To foster civil dialogue & invite trust in the midst of differences.

WHO WE ARE

Founded in 2006, the Zeidler Center for Public Discussion is an organization dedicated to creating a safe place for people of sharply different perspectives to discuss timely issues. We provide structured and facilitated community dialogues that bring together people with different beliefs and backgrounds in a safe atmosphere to increase mutual understanding about the core values that guide each other's lives. We also work privately with organizations, neighborhoods, and congregations, to offer strategic planning and facilitated discussions.

We believe that effective dialogue transforms communication and relationships in ways that make other kinds of change possible in hurting communities. Candid conversations lay the groundwork for sustainable change, and the Zeidler Center is committed to ensuring diverse community members have access to the tools to build a stronger, healthier and more vibrant community. As we enter our 10th year as an organization, we are excited to celebrate the achievements of 2015.

“ I appreciated the opportunity to have open and honest discussion without the fear of retaliation or offending someone ”

-dialogue participant

BY THE NUMBERS

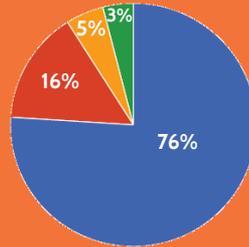
2015
in review

1432 dialogue participants

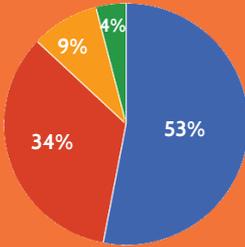
FINANCIALS

EXPENSES

- dialogues: \$23,630
- grants: 15,000
- donations: 4,049
- trainings: 1,740



INCOME



- salaries: \$19,310
- stipends: 4,005
- operations: 1,151
- materials: 928

44 facilitators trained

112 total facilitators

3 countries we work in



Creative Industry Brainstorms

Partnering with Greater Together, we led input sessions with designers and other creative professionals to develop programs aimed at fair and just inclusion into Greater Milwaukee's Creative Industries.



Employers & Reformed Citizens

To end the stigma of ex-offenders seeking jobs, we partnered with 9to5.org and Pro Trade Job Development to give employers and returning citizens an opportunity to share deeply.



A ZEIDLER COMMUNITY CONVERSATION ON WHITENESS & privilege

TUES. NOV. 24, 2015 * 7PM-8:30PM
STORYTELLING BY EXFABULA FELLOWS &
FACILITATED DIALOGUE

Zeidler Community Conversations Series

Throughout 2015, we hosted hundreds of community members in bi-monthly public conversations on a variety of issues including: Immigration, Segregation, Supporting Prisoner Re-entry, Violence Prevention, Downtown Redevelopment & the Bucks Arena, and Whiteness & Privilege.



Join us on January 26, 2016 for our next Community Conversation: "The Welcoming Church: A Listening Session on Race in our Faith Communities"

Police and Community Listening Sessions

With generous funding through the Greater Milwaukee Foundation's Racial Equity and Inclusion Grant, the Zeidler Center will facilitate listening sessions in Amani, Harambee, & Metcalfe Park through 2016. Police and resident planning committees in each neighborhood are currently working with Zeidler facilitators to design sessions for this coming year.

Interfaith Dialogue

We were asked by visiting students of the Mar Elias HS of Ibillin Israel to host an interfaith dialogue with MKE's Christian, Jewish & Muslim communities.



Intergenerational Women's Dialogue

Partnering with From Here to Her Women's Artist Collective, teens through +70-age women used Reflective Structured Dialogue to discover ways to offer each other support.

Milwaukee Film Festival Conversations

The Zeidler Center trained facilitators to lead 116 post-film conversations during the festival!



Photo credit: Art Montes

2015 PROGRAMS





The Conversation's the Thing

“The play's the thing...” says Shakespeare's Hamlet. Hamlet thinks that by performing a ‘play’, the king and others will come to a new awareness of their complicity in Denmark's dark situation. His play is a tool for waking up, for a paradigm shift.

Year after year, we at the Zeidler Center grow stronger in our belief that “The conversation's the thing.” Many from all walks of life are discovering a similar paradigm shift, where the value and rich resources of those around them become more evident in the midst of mutual caring dialogue. When this re-evaluation happens in organizations, in families, and in our own lives, we position ourselves to be more active and responsive citizens.

‘The conversation's the thing’ is a recognition that literally every kind of contact we have with one another on a regular basis is an opportunity to experience others with fresh eyes.

In a season marked by family gatherings, we may find ourselves in discussions about everything from the Packers to how to raise the grandchildren to the reality of ISIS. Yet the power of any con-

versation to transform us relies on our ability to pay attention not only on ‘what’ we discuss, but ‘how’ we communicate.

Following Hamlet, two values to keep in mind when suggesting a new way to talk to each other—subtlety and timing. Hamlet used his ‘play’ as a method of misdirection. Meaning sneaks up on you. In a conversation, it's as simple as choosing to be the ‘curious’ one. “That's interesting?” “Tell me more.” “How did you come to see things that way?”

We have each been caught off guard by conversations that became surprisingly meaningful. With some intention and attention, those experiences can multiply. As the Zeidler Center moves into another year of providing a necessary tool for civil conversation, we will continue to pay attention to how this new awareness of being human is taking hold in us through the method that we practice and teach.

Where civility is practiced lives are altered. May we all look for places in our lives where we can practice civil conversation. —Rick Deines

PARTNERS

Greater Milwaukee Foundation
9to5.org
America's Black Holocaust Museum
Beepods
Bucketworks
Building Neighborhood Capacity
Program
Clean Slate
ELCA
Ex Fabula
From Here to Her
Greater Together
Interfaith Conference
of Greater Milwaukee
Iniciativa Pastoral por la Vida y
la Paz (IPAZ - El Salvador)
Marquette University

MKE District Attorney's Office
Milwaukee Film Festival
Milwaukee Police Department
Milwaukee Repertory Theater
Petit Coop
Pro Trade Job Development
Project for Community
Transformation
Public Conversations Project
(Boston)
Redeemer Lutheran Church
Safe & Sound
Showing Up for Racial Justice
University Club
Urban Underground
Workshop Architects
YWCA

Most Dedicated Facilitator 2015

Oliver Johnson receiving an award for facilitating the most dialogues this year, even after emergency brain surgery!



OUR FACILITATORS



CONTRIBUTION

One of the missions of the Zeidler Center is to train facilitators who are ready to lead productive and powerful conversations using Reflective Structured Dialogue. This year, we trained 44 people in basic facilitation. Those facilitators were invited to shadow our senior facilitators in a mentorship program we are developing. Our facilitators, with their poise, discipline, and dedication, are the foundation of our work.

TRAININGS

Join our team & learn to lead civil conversations on challenging issues! Register at www.zeidlercenter.org for one of our Spring trainings:

Thursday, January 14
Monday, February 15
Monday, March 14

All trainings 5:30pm-8:30pm

631 N. 19th St.
Milwaukee, WI 53233
(414) 446-1502
info@zeidlercenter.org
www.zeidlercenter.org

BOARD

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ZEIDLER CENTER