

Reflections and Lessons Learned

Welcoming Kirkland Initiative

November 3, 2020

In the spring of 2019, the City of Kirkland contracted with Leadership Eastside (LE) to design, coordinate, and implement a comprehensive community engagement project, Welcoming Kirkland, to engage Kirkland residents, businesses, nonprofits, and the city - including police – on how we function together for the health of the overall community.

The initiative was launched to respond to expressed concerns that People of Color in general, and Black people, in particular, have lived experiences of an unwelcoming and inequitable community, in contrast to the City’s stated goal to be safe, inclusive, and welcoming for all.

This report documents the core activities, lessons learned and commitments that followed the Welcoming Kirkland Initiative.

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- *Business & Police Protocols*
- *Community Learning about racism and equity*

Welcoming Kirkland Initiative
Reflections and Lessons Learned
James Whitfield, Lead Facilitator
October 15, 2020

Opening Reflection and Overview

As a Black man in America, my daily existence requires me to navigate the paradox of race. Biologically, there is nothing that categorizes me distinctly from any other group of Homos Sapiens on this planet. Yet, the laws of the country I live in created and reinforced a skin-deep hierarchy for centuries that affect the way people see me today. As an African American, the most distinctive aspects of my culture were birthed on U.S. soil. Yet “normal” Americans judge the clothes I wear, the music I listen to, my walk, my hairstyle, and any number of other cultural characteristics to determine whether or not I belong in whatever slice of our country they may be occupying. My Constitution tells me I am equal – as created. Yet people around me make implicit and explicit associations with the color of my God-given skin, undermining the aspiration of a just and even playing field.

The final paradox, though, is likely the most painful to face. I am Black, but I am one of the lucky ones. Lucky that my access to education, experiences, skills, and relationships provide me privileges and opportunities my cousins and the friends of my youth never received. Lucky to have had enough financial success to be, at least in this moment, “comfortable.” Also, and this is not trivial, I am lucky enough to live in Kirkland.

It was these and other paradoxes related to being a Black man living in Kirkland that compelled me to play the role of Lead Facilitator for the Welcoming Kirkland Initiative. I was, at the time, President and CEO of Leadership Eastside, a leadership development and community development organization based in East King County.

In organizing and building the effort with relevant stakeholders, including the City of Kirkland who agreed to fund it, we landed on the following statement of purpose:

The City of Kirkland has contracted with Leadership Eastside (LE) to design, coordinate, and implement a comprehensive community engagement project, Welcoming Kirkland, to engage Kirkland residents, businesses, nonprofits, and the city - including police – on how we function together for the health of the overall community.

The initiative was launched to respond to expressed concerns that People of Color in general, and Black people, in particular, have lived experiences of an unwelcoming and inequitable community, in contrast to the City’s stated goal to be safe, inclusive, and welcoming for all.

This purpose was consistent with the City’s formal declaration proclaiming Kirkland as a safe, inclusive, and welcoming city for all people.

The City of Kirkland is deeply committed to a just society that respects and welcomes all people, direct(s) staff to assist the City Council in developing and implementing a program to communicate the City’s values, and invite(s) the community to come together to discuss and support the shared values of diversity and inclusion.

-From the City of Kirkland Proclamation

What the statement of purpose didn't say is that the most immediate impetus for this effort was news media coverage of a Black man who had the police called on him as he sat in a yogurt shop – known colloquially as the “Menchie's Incident” in Kirkland lore - had triggered a significant community reaction.

Paradox: Kirkland sees itself as a bastion of good intentions and inclusivity (i.e, the proclamation referenced above.) Kirkland is also a product of a country that is still reckoning with the long-term effects of slavery, Jim Crow, and systemic racism. It is also in the Pacific Northwest which has its own unique history of removing indigenous peoples, excluding Black people, and hosting White Supremacists.

After co-facilitating a community town hall discussion about the incident with the indomitable Debbie Lacy, then with the Eastside Refugee and Immigrant Coalition, I leaned into a set of personal and Leadership Eastside relationships to engage stakeholders (including Kirkland City Manager's Office, Kirkland Safe, Eastside Race and Leadership Coalition, Kirkland Chamber of Commerce, Kirkland Police Department) to draft and ultimately deploy the initiative in pursuit of the Purpose Statement above. The main operational elements of the initiative were:

- Convene and equip a Planning Group for
 - Ongoing guidance and feedback to me and the LE Project Team
 - Outreach to Stakeholders and Working Group members
 - Initial agreements regarding a productive, inclusive operating environment for all the work.
 - Participation
 - Membership: City staff, City commission (i.e. Human Services Commission or Planning Commission), business, non-profit, and community group representatives including multiple people of color.
 - Up to 16 meetings between April 2019 and April 2020.
- Convene and Equip Working Groups on Race and Equity Community Learning as well as Business and Police Protocols
 - Develop and deliver a series of Community Learning Sessions focused on race and equity from a historical context, relevant to the needs and desires of the people of Kirkland.
 - Collectively review and recommend updates to business and police policies and protocols (taking into account the City's recently updated protocols) related to removal of people from a business location.
 - Minimum of two Community Learning Sessions open to the public. The nature of the sessions - including duration, number of convenings per session, etc. – to be determined by the Working Group.
 - Four Town Hall Meetings open to the public. The nature of the Town Halls to be determined
 - Participation
 - Membership: Planning Group Members plus additional community stakeholders, including additional People of Color.
 - Up to 15 Working Group meetings between April 2019 and April 2020
- The team from Leadership Eastside who were supporting this effort were:
 - James Whitfield, President/CEO
 - Holly Koelling, Facilitator, LE Community of Practice
 - Melia LaCour, Facilitator, Founder/CEO Becoming Justice
 - Pat Hughes, Facilitator, Trillium Leadership Consulting
 - Jen Mayo, Community Development Coordinator

Key Observations, and Learnings

- Given the intention to ensure institutional-level change, the initial Planning Group was populated by people in key positions of recognized authority in Kirkland. It was also predominantly White. This group quickly determined to center the voices and needs of People of Color for the duration of the work – adopting specific working agreements and protocols to actively support participants who are most adversely affected by racial inequities.
- Lesson: In my experience, it is rare for a group of people with this level of formal authority to make and follow through on this way of prioritizing People of Color. This made a tremendous difference in People of Color’s willingness to participate on the Planning Group, Working Group, and community meetings. The take-aways from those processes were also, to my observation, more closely aligned with the needs and desires of People of Color as a result of this decision. Given these benefits, community processes in the future would likely benefit from taking the time to train early participants in the importance and ability to center People of Color, if those processes intend to include People of Color in meaningful ways.
- The Planning Group was expanded to include people with additional key relationships throughout the region, also expanding the participation of People of Color. In addition to the time invested in the learning process that led to this decision, identifying and onboarding the additional participants slowed the process down, requiring an adjustment to the project timeline - to which the City agreed. The final Planning Group included an amazing group of community leaders:
 - Diane Bell, Kirkland Human Services Commission
 - Debbie Lacy, Eastside for All, ERIC
 - Kalika Curry, Community Impact Manager at Eastside Pathways
 - Kathy Feek, Kirkland Chamber of Commerce, Kirkland Downtown Association
 - Tali Hairston, Director of Community Organizing, Advocacy, and Development at Seattle Presbytery
 - Cherie Harris, Chief of Police, City of Kirkland
 - Lynn Juniel, Director of Development at Friends of Youth
 - Mohamed Jawad Khaki, President, Ithna-asheri Muslim Association of NW (IMAN)
 - Jim Lopez, Assistant City Manager, City of Kirkland
 - Amy Morrison, President, Lake Washington Institute of Technology
 - Jonathan Rainey, Antioch Bible Church, Chaplain to UW Football & Seattle Seahawks
 - Kimberly Scott, President & CEO of WA Society of CPAs, Kirkland Human Services Commission (former)
- Paradox: Because there are so (relatively) few People of Color in Kirkland, the people who are available and willing to participate in these processes tend to be oversubscribed in processes like this one. Ultimately, their commitment to engaging in multiple processes like these decreases their availability to participate in any one process like this.
- Rather than split Planning Group members’ time among multiple Working Groups, the Planning Group itself provided input and guidance to help Debbie Lacy develop the Race and Equity Community Learning Sessions.
- The Planning Group helped identify additional people to meet with them as a Working Group on Business and Police Protocols. This was also a remarkable group of community leaders who provided meaningful insight and perspective. The Final Working Group included:
 - Antione Jackson, KTUB/YMCA
 - Ali Ghambari, Owner Cherry Street Coffee house (Seattle), founder of IACA (Iranian American Community Alliance)

- Sheila Stanton, St John Church
 - Trevor Jones, participated in Kirkland Community Meeting about the Menchie's Incident
 - Deanna Lansing, Neighborhood Resource Officer, Kirkland Police Department
 - Eric Karp, Community Officer, Kirkland Police Department
 - Paula White, Kirkland Resident, Kirkland Safe
 - MJ Carlson, Indivisible Kirkland Steering Committee Member
 - Walt Krueger, Kirkland Chamber of Commerce member. Convener of Kirkland Promise
- Due to a convergence of schedules, including ensuring People of Color were involved with decision-making and implementation, the Community Learning Sessions on Race and Equity occurred within close proximity to the initial Town Hall meetings on Business and Police Protocols. Each of these have separate, specific reports and/or Lessons Learned, however following are some observations about the overall, overlapping community-facing events at this stage of the project.
 - While the original plan was to spread these activities out over a longer period of time, it is likely that the convergence of events helped draw attention and momentum to the overall effort.
 - Learning: The commitment to centering People of Color contributed to the decision to include race-based discussion groups in the large-scale Community Learning Sessions. This provided an invaluable opportunity for connection and healing among People of Color who attended. My understanding is the White group benefitted from having a space to explore questions that can be uncomfortable to do in front of People of Color. The community would likely benefit from additional opportunities to have these kinds of discussions in the future.
 - Learning: There was feedback to the City (and to a lesser extent, to me and Leadership Eastside) wanting the process to move more quickly. This sense of urgency is understandable. By setting the clear priority that People of Color were going to be centered in the initiative's processes, the decision-making was clear when faced with a choice regarding whether to move forward before the People of Color involved had ample opportunity to weigh in. The community would likely benefit from this kind of clarity of prioritization in the future.
 - Note: Among members of the community, Black people tend to have a longer-term perspective regarding issues of race. Racism was installed in the country hundreds of years ago. Taking extra time to make sure Black people are listened to as efforts are made to address racism is worth it.
 - Paradox: The success of clearly prioritizing centering People of Color means the issue of anti-Black systemic racism was, though included, not itself centered. The City and Police Department investigation of the Menchie's Incident reported the officers responded satisfactorily (though the Department did change some of its protocols as a result). While engaging Black people in the initiative, this fact was cited in disappointment, and not centering the initiative on the specific experiences of Black people was described by some as an additional harm.
 - Learning: The concept of "Welcoming" was used to frame the initiative because it was a value articulated and adopted in the City's proclamation. While engaging People of Color in the effort, it became clear that this framing is not satisfactory. The framing seems to indicate some people – presumably the White majority - have a recognized right and/or expectation to be in Kirkland and therefore get to take credit for the magnanimity of welcoming others who don't otherwise belong.

The initiative did not finish its final planned Community Learning Session nor final two Town Halls due to restrictions and disruptions due to Covid 19. The murder of George Floyd and subsequent protests and increased attention on eliminating anti-Black systemic racism in policing has shined a particularly bright light on the work of the Welcoming Kirkland Initiative. And appropriately so.

The initiative was designed for learning. Community members who participated in the Community Learning Sessions indicated they learned valuable things. This letter and other notes and reports will capture additional learning for City and Community leadership moving forward. How that learning will be used remains to be seen.

The initiative was also designed for action. Rather than making a series of recommendations to City Council, members of the Working Group were incited to think about ways they can individually and collectively make meaningful changes to the ways our government, police department, and local businesses operate relative to race and racism. Each has been given an opportunity to communicate their commitments publicly through a separate section in this overall final report.

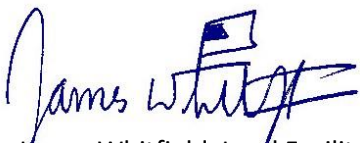
Final Reflection

I am sure, as its lead facilitator, there were good intentions at each step of the Welcoming Kirkland Initiative. Stakeholders and engaged community members sought to demonstrate their commitment to not being racist (if not anti-racist) at every step of the way. People in authority took active steps to center People of Color. Facilitators applied their expertise with compassion and grace. Some Kirklanders have a new or renewed sense of solidarity and allyship with one another and People of Color in our community.

And yet, racism – specifically its anti-Black systemic form – still persists. And it will continue until people in our community commit to structural change ensuring equity in meaningful ways. This is, as I understand it, the City’s intention behind Resolution 5434. Regardless of how satisfied our community may be about what has transpired in the Welcoming Kirkland Initiative, true shared belonging remains a goal that has eluded our grasp. I, like many others who have come before and fellow sojourners today, am still reaching.

Others who participated in this process will undoubtedly work to advance the overall cause of creating more belonging for People of Color in Kirkland and I commit to supporting them as opportunities arise to do so. However, my personal take away from this initiative is that the gap between what the community espouses and Black peoples’ lived experience, is wider than I had originally believed. As a result, my commitment is to intentionally and unapologetically work to center the needs and voices of Black people in order to ensure their safety and respect - seeking meaningful structural and policy change as a member of the Right to Breathe Committee.

Paradox: Is it possible the true pathway to success is by admitting the failures that brought us to where we currently are?

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "James Whitfield". The signature is stylized and includes a small graphic element resembling a flag or a crest above the name.

James Whitfield, Lead Facilitator
Welcoming Kirkland Initiative
Black Kirkland Resident

Lessons Learned: Community Learning

Debbie Lacy, Kirkland Talks and founder, Eastside for All

The Welcoming Kirkland Initiative included a community learning component with presentations and dialogues, which reflected input from community members at the end of 2018. The goal was to increase understanding about racism, offer skills to support ongoing learning, and to give community members the opportunity to engage in conversations with each other about racism.



KIRKLAND TALKS

ABOUT RACISM

- **Color Conscious/Color Brave**
- **Driving While Black**
Wed 2/19, 6:30-8:00pm
@LWTech
- **Shopping While Black**
Wed 3/18, 6:30-8:00pm
@LWTech



The people of color on the WKI planning group reviewed topic proposals and decided on three topics for the series.

Leadership Eastside and Eastside for All partnered to create the content and the presentations that preceded each set of dialogues. The community presentations were larger events; the dialogues had a maximum of 24 participants each.

Debbie Lacy, Founder of Eastside for All, had previously created Kirkland Talks, an inclusive dialogue project, for the City of Kirkland. The same format was used for the Welcoming Kirkland Initiative. The following events took place in January and February of 2020:

- [Preparing to Be Color Conscious and Color Brave](#): January 21st (Facilitator: Debbie Lacy); 77 registered in advance, approximately 95-100 attended
- Community Dialogues - “Being Color Brave” - February 1st and 3rd (Facilitator: Debbie Lacy); 40 participants over the 2 dates
- [Kirkland Talks About Race: Driving While Black](#): February 19th (Facilitator: James Whitfield); 46 registered in advance, approximately 75-80 attended.
- Community Dialogues – “Driving While Black” - February 22nd and 27th (Facilitator: Debbie Lacy); 33 participants over the 2 dates.

“Shopping While Black” was the topic planned for March which had to be canceled due to COVID. People were appreciative of the opportunity to learn and to have structured, facilitated conversations with fellow community members from different racial and cultural backgrounds. We heard repeatedly that people really appreciated education, skill-building, and the opportunity to practice in a supportive environment.

The following comments were typical of feedback during the community learning series:

- I am looking forward to more opportunities like this. I am eager to learn more and be more comfortable in these spaces.
- I hope these opportunities continue and that racism is called out.
- I appreciate opportunities like this (free) to practice the skills I need to have courageous conversation. My biggest need for me is to continue to practice these skills.

Community members shared what they appreciated the most about the events:

- The diverse group of people.
- Having conversations with others. Great facilitation. Thank you.
- I appreciate the guided activities and the safe space that was created so I can lean into the discomfort.
- Conversation with my neighbors.
- Learning new approach to racism.
- Structured dialogue with guidance as to how to participate, listen, engage.
- Hearing experiences from my neighbors.
- Meeting others in my community who care about the topic.

Lessons Learned:

Our ability to engage in meaningful conversations about race is essential to dismantling racism. The challenge is that because of the inevitable (and necessary) discomfort that comes with talking about racism, most people avoid the topic. Community members frequently share that they don't know how to have meaningful, productive conversations about race.



Multiple Realities

Who is experiencing a fight or flight response?

We're more familiar with discussions characterized by debate and persuasion, but not the kind of conversation that's required where we listen to understand and grow. Kirkland Talks offers a model and a format that's meant to be used throughout the community, hosted by work teams and social groups. What's important to remember is that dialogue is a tool that moves us from awareness to action. Dialogues cannot be the *only* thing we're doing, but they should be integrated as a regular part of our equity practices and anti-racism efforts.

Having structured, inclusive dialogues with others who are working together will build the kind of relationships we need to navigate tension and barriers that show up along the way. The Kirkland Talks model is effective because it's designed to include all voices, and it provides people with the skills to manage triggers - the common emotional reactions that can shut down conversation at the very moment when breakthroughs are possible. We have to find a way to meet each other as human beings if we are to eradicate racism. Dialogues invite us to bring our complex, human selves into connection with others. No book or workshop can accomplish the felt sense of bearing witness to others, holding curiosity and compassion, being fully heard, and allowing what we learn to guide our choices and behaviors.

[Eastside For All](#) provides inclusive dialogue training for those who want to host their own events.

By Debbie Lacy, Founder, Eastside for All

Committee Member Lessons Learned and Commitments

The Welcoming Kirkland initiative was designed for learning and for action. This section represents the learnings of members of the Planning Group and Business and Police Protocols Working Group, as well as ways they can individually and collectively make meaningful changes to the ways our government, police department, and local businesses operate relative to race and racism. Each has been given an opportunity to communicate their commitments publicly in this section, by responding to two prompts: What are your top three lessons learned from this process? What is your commitment moving forward?

Responses from Planning Group Members:

1. Kalika Curry, Community Impact Manager, Eastside Pathways
2. Kathy Feek, Kirkland Chamber of Commerce, Kirkland Downtown Association
3. Cherie Harris, Chief of Police, Kirkland Police Department
4. Debbie Lacy, Co-Founder & Executive Director, Eastside for All, Eastside Refugee & Immigrant Coalition (ERIC)
5. Jim Lopez, Assistant City Manager, City of Kirkland
6. Mohamed Jawad Khaki, President, Ithna-asheri Muslim Association of the NW (IMAN)
7. Amy Morrison, President, Lake Washington Institute of Technology

Kalika Curry

Our time together has been powerful and rooted in healing. My key takeaways are:

- **Be mindful of pacing.** Understand the speed and volume in which individuals and the collective can move through a set of memories, emotions, and experiences.
- **Time and consistency** play a huge role in the outcomes of our time together; especially as we are trying to create space for perspectives so far from our own.
- Lastly, such a powerful reminder to **speak our truth and be rooted in** our values/source/power/that which gives you hope. In the words of James Baldwin "Not everything that is faced can be changed. But nothing can be changed until it is faced."

While I have moved my life and family out of Kirkland, my work and many people I care for dearly are still in the city. Because of this I am still committed to working to creating a more welcoming Kirkland. As for the group it would be my honor to spend time with you and continue to deepen our relationships.

Kathy Feek

I feel very proud of my city for stepping up and responding to the initial cries of racial injustice, for involving our KPD, for creating this task force, and for being open and involved in implementing incremental change.

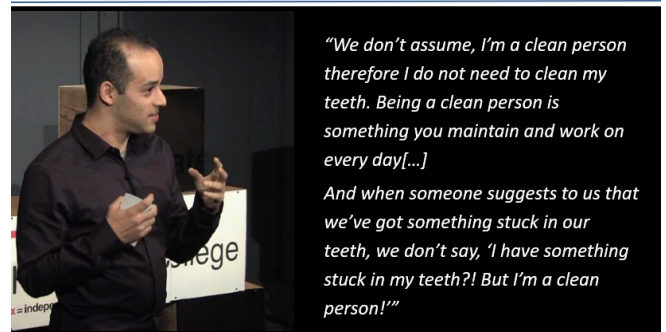
Lessons Learned:

I came to realize my personal level of cluelessness about the extent of hidden injustice in our culture, and the relentless damaging effect on my fellow human beings. I have never seen myself as an overt racist but that also means that I have been covertly complicit by staying silent. Listening to the life experiences of the incredible people in our WKI group has forever changed my perceptions of myself, and of my culture.

We have together learned the historical and institutional blockages that have prevented Black people and People of Color from achieving at levels enjoyed by me and other cultural groups. This is taught sometimes by brave teachers, but I have managed to earn a doctoral degree without being taught for example, that Black people were at one time barred from living in WA state. What a basic fact!

My third area of learning is more obscure. It is not a fact but an inference on my part that we have in our culture a basic lack of blameless language about racial issues. We think of someone as either racist or not racist. The truth is that we are all on some continuum of race beliefs. People are not bad for expressing themselves. I loved the metaphor of brushing and flossing our teeth. Healthy attitudes about race are something we should practice often, like flossing, to keep ourselves healthy and emotionally stable. We need stories, and metaphors, and role models and for these to be visible on our airwaves, in our airports, everywhere in our culture.....and in a common language for all of us to share.

JAY SMOOTH DENTAL HYGIENE MODEL



Commitments Going Forward:

Because I was selected to participate in WKI because of my involvement in the Kirkland Chamber and the Kirkland Downtown Association, I feel honor-bound to contribute in some way to these groups, and perhaps other Boards in my sphere.

Walt Krueger and I have discussed partnering with a Black task force member and a POC from our group to suggest readings, invite conversation, disseminate information and otherwise elevate learnings about racial issues under the surface in Kirkland. We have not yet finalized or formalized anything, nor invited anyone to join us. We are not ready to proceed without the blessing of the City, the participation of others and a plan that honors our purpose.

Going forward on a personal level, I intend to keep conversations going with friends and neighbors. So far, these are not going “well”. People seem highly defensive, and in the past, I have tended to feel like a “failure.” I have come to realize that failing is O.K. if this is what it takes to open an honest dialogue with my friends, my neighbors, my book clubs, etc. These are good people and their intentions are positive. I intend to reassess and believe that increased learning and closeness can result from these interactions.

Cherie Harris

As the Chief of the Kirkland Police Department, the Welcoming Kirkland Initiative was an opportunity to build authentic relationships with community members of color, who shared their experience with Police Officers and businesses in Kirkland. WKI conducted community learning sessions that a number of Police Officers attended as well as small group community dialogues. Both formats provided significant insight into the concerns of community members of color. Feedback from Officer's who participated was positive, especially as to the format that provided “learning” and small group dialogue. Speaking for myself, I found the format to be extremely beneficial, even when there were conversations taking place that were uncomfortable to hear as black community members shared their distrust of the police. The Department is committed to continuing to build relationships that foster trust, respect and improve the safety of the Kirkland community for people of color by collaborating with the Right to Breathe Committee and through the City of Kirkland Resolution 5434.

Debbie Lacy

The WKI journey was a mixed experience for me, which was expected. I held frustration, impatience, hope, and gratitude - sometimes all within one meeting. I got to strengthen my skills and learn new ones. I got to meet incredible people and work together on a shared vision. There were many takeaways, but here are the most important ones:

- The change that we desire cannot happen unless we invest in the connecting spaces - between individuals from different racial backgrounds, between communities, and between sectors. We have to reach out and build bridges even when it's the hardest thing to do.
- There are so many people who care deeply about dismantling racism in our community. I saw people struggle with wanting to do better, but not always knowing how, and in part that's because we have a lot to unlearn. Anti-Black racism undergirds every part of this country. We may want to do better as soon as we know better, but the reality is that it will take attempts, failures, and more attempts and failures before we're living the new reality we strive for. We owe it to the next generation to walk the imperfect and painful steps forward. It's the only way.
- It's time for the City of Kirkland, the Kirkland Police Department, business community, and neighbors to walk the talk. Those who were involved in planning and leading the WKI effort are committed to showing up and taking action. Our communities of color don't need any more words, resolutions, or promises. We need - and deserve - real change. We need to see our leaders and fellow community members follow through consistently on their commitments.

This brings me to my personal commitment. In my role leading Eastside For All, I will continue to listen and learn from other people of color who are most impacted by racism and white supremacy, particularly Black community members. I'll use whatever resources and influence I have to support Black-led advocacy efforts. I'll continue to provide tools, learning opportunities, and dialogue spaces for allies and all community members interested in knowing better and doing better.



Jim Lopez

The Welcoming Kirkland Initiative started out like something akin to graduate school. We studied how systems work in our society and the underlying principles of the *adaptive leadership* model. As our time together increased, the experience intentionally evolved into something much more relational. We read books on racism and shared relevant personal stories and experiences, all the while building trust, rapport and deep mutual respect inside our group. I've learned a great deal from this experience and have been applying my learnings for some time now, so it's difficult to call out just a few key insights.

- Centering: My first insight, as highlighted by Melia LaCour in one of her communications to our group, is the importance of directly centering the “perspectives, lived experiences and well-being” of the people most impacted by the problems being addressed. I’m proud to say that the WKI experience was a positive influence in the City of Kirkland’s recent decision to create legislation based on a “[c]ommunity engagement process centered around Black people.” This is a formal and powerful recognition of the value of this principle.

- Bridging the Gap between Ideas and Action: My second insight is that the WKI model of community engagement is designed to bridge the gap between ideas and action. It is specifically *not* our task to write a report with recommendations about “what to do next.” Rather we are all tasked with applying the knowledge and experience we shared over the last year toward a personal commitment to create positive change. It might seem like a contradiction to say that a process that took over a year to complete is rooted in action. But everything we learned and experienced together is now channeled toward *one single mandate*: to act. And I believe taking action, right now, is what is needed most.
- WKI is now a Community Resource: Finally, the WKI group is positioned to be a critical resource in our community. WKI is made up of a wide diversity of community leaders that could play a critical, constructive role should our city face future racial conflict. Building on our work together and leveraging our collective local constituencies, we can help design interventions that promote empathy, accountability, transparency and inclusion. If we are needed, I hope that we do.

My personal call to action moving forward is to engage the WKI group to play an important role in shaping the policies, funding priorities and additional opportunities associated with Resolution 5434, the City’s recent legislative effort to improve the safety and respect of Black people.

Amy Morrison

As a white leader it can be tempting to let perfect be the enemy of the good when engaging in DEI and anti-racist work. While LWTech has been intentionally striving to be an inclusive and anti-racist college for over seven years, we are not perfect and have remaining work to do as a college confronting structural racism and closing equity gaps for students and employees. When asked to serve on the Planning Council, I had many conversations with LWTech’s Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Council about engaging as a college in this work within our community, while we are still striving to truly create a community of belonging on our own campus. I am so grateful for the opportunity to serve on the planning group as I believe it ultimately helped to strengthen LWTech’s connection to our city and our shared goals and values of inclusion and equity.

As a resident of Kirkland, I was grateful that the City chose to learn from the Menchie’s incident and try to begin the work of DEI in earnest within our City. As a member of the planning group, I had the privilege of learning from my friends and neighbors and their experiences. Some experiences were incredibly hard to hear and process, and I was humbled and privileged to be in the room where such courage was shown.

I also want my fellow residents and business owners to know that I saw first-hand the incredible behind-the-scenes work it took to bring the planning group together, center people of color, lead us through a process of learning, and then in a thoughtful and organized way educate and engage our city. We are incredibly fortunate to have James Whitfield, Melia LaCour, Debbie Lacy, and Patricia Hughes crafting and organizing learnings and proactive conversations. One of the many losses from COVID was the abrupt ending to the WKI efforts.

My commitments going forward are to continue to lead LWTech, Kirkland’s only public institution of higher learning, as a college striving to become anti-racist, grounded in our values of inclusion, respect, collaboration, and innovation.

I will commit to ensuring that our students and employees as well as college leadership are connected to community efforts to center people of color and strive to dismantle structural racism, root out anti-blackness, and create a true community of belonging.

Finally, I personally commit to continue to do the work daily to confront my own internalized racism and bias as a white woman growing up in Western Washington and learn daily how to better support and center BIPOC students, employees, and neighbors and their needs.

Mohamed Jawad Khaki

Over the last 35 years living in the United States of America, I have felt unease when I witness the systemic injustice and prejudice that prevails in the USA against the Black community and other people of color. I am a person of South Asian ancestry, born in Tanzania who immigrated to the USA from the United Kingdom in 1985.

My success as an immigrant to the USA would not have been possible without the contributions and sacrifice of civil rights leaders and community servants. Many of these leaders are from the Black community who have struggled over decades and centuries and paved the way for a more just nation.

I am encouraged that we have around us people of goodwill, and from diverse backgrounds, who are motivated to improve our neighborhoods, our city and our country as we continue to march towards our ideals **“One nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.”** . It is my wish that we bring about these reforms at an accelerated pace and in our lifetime.

I am hoping that the network and the momentum we have established helps us dedicate ourselves to raise awareness in our respective circles of influence. An awareness that results in a widespread resolve to eradicate systemic injustice wherever it may exist, and especially against the Black community here in our neighborhoods, in our city and in our nation.

On a personal level I have reaffirmed the need to prioritize and to devote resources to initiatives that strive to achieve fairness and equity. For example, by supporting programs that improve standards and quality of education in low income neighborhoods.

I pray that the issue of eradicating systemic injustice is not misused as a weapon to politicize and/or radicalize extremism that can lead to social unrest. Instead we can devise energized reformative agenda to build compassionate neighborhoods, a progressive city, and a model nation as we pursue the dream so eloquently expressed by Martin Luther King Jr.

"I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character."



Reflections from Business and Police Protocols Working Group Members

1. Ali Ghambari, Owner Cherry Street Coffee house (Seattle), founder of IACA (Iranian American Community Alliance)
2. Sheila Stanton, St John Church
3. Paula White, Kirkland Resident, Kirkland Safe
4. MJ Carlson, Indivisible Kirkland Steering Committee Member
5. Walt Krueger, Kirkland Ch of Commerce member. Convener of Kirkland Promise
6. Jen Mayo, Leadership Eastside Coordinator
7. Holly Koelling, Leadership Eastside Facilitator



Ali Ghambari

All of your attributes and passion is what I needed to push myself to next steps for our community, our country and world positive trajectory. My responsibility is my community, starting with my family.

I will continually work on me to be part of the solution to elevate celebrations of diversity and love by eliminating implicit biased and build equitable community. Injustice is been around from beginning of time but from where I stand the sphere that I am responsible for we write new narrative to see real change.

Sheila Stanton

My summation from the opportunity to work as one of the participants for WKI was rewarding and disappointing. I thought that we would get some real tangibles in the Kirkland area addresses and or change. I do not believe that we actually did the type of work needed because of the COVID 19 virus changing how we did our meetings. I also believe that COVID19 caused us to lose enthusiasm in what we were aiming. The virus opened to the door for other factions to come in unchecked and look normal while never addressing issues of Racism, White Supremacy in our community. Although, I did make new relationships, I believe the work was more important for the community as a whole in the long run to keep those relationships. Finally, I think we should have chosen a natural closure for the WKI group, participants in a real meeting, not Zoom.

Paula White:

I had the honor of being part of the Police and Business Protocol group. These are some of my learnings.

- Relationships that value trust and courageous conversations are at the heart of change. I could not have sustained the self-reflective work I did without the modeling of this from the leaders and participants of our group.
- The Hebrew phrase "Tikkun Olam" is a Jewish saying or concept that can roughly be translated as "repair" as in repairing the world. Or it can be applied on a more personal level, repairing the self. My time in the WKI group was often spent in self-reflection on the deep racial biases I hold. As an older,

white woman who grew up in North Seattle, I was raised in a racist culture, specifically towards our African American community. I am the first to wave my hand and say, “I am not racist” but have come to learn through the courageous conversations and sharing of history and wisdom, from our group, that when one is brought up in a racist culture, it is almost impossible to not hold deep unconscious racial bias.

- I have a deeper understanding (and got to actually put into practice) what true “centering” of others is. Specifically, we centered BIPOC folks in our group. It was a humbling and oftentimes difficult practice for me, as I have never looked at how often I center myself in a group.

Going forward, I am inspired from a Talmudic saying; *You are not obligated to complete the work, but neither are you free to abandon it.* Often, the enormity of racial justice work is overwhelming. Where do we find the sustained energy to continue the work? My commitment and hope is to not get overwhelmed personally but to connect and amplify the voices of BIPOC groups and community on the Eastside. I commit to look at my deeply held racial biases and continue the practice of de-centering myself. I commit to having courageous conversations with those that think differently from myself and to do it with some grace. (not complete grace, but some)!

MJ Carlson (Indivisible Kirkland)

Participating in the Business and Police Protocols working group, and attending the WPI public workshops and dialogues, has been a really fruitful experience for me. Here are three of my biggest take-aways:

1. The people most impacted by a policy must be *explicitly* included and centered in discussions of fixing the policy, because they are the ones with the relevant expertise. And, good intentions aren't enough to make that happen — you need intentional strategies, e.g., routinely opening the floor for Black members before letting others speak.
2. As a relative newcomer to Washington, I didn't know much about Washington and Oregon's shameful anti-Black history, or how racism continues to affect our Black neighbors. Many of our neighbors have experienced really shocking levels of explicit racism here. Hearing about those experiences from them, and learning statistics about discrimination in policing here locally, has really transformed the way I understand our community.
3. On the more positive side, this process has introduced me to a lot of great people (of all backgrounds) who are working to make the Eastside more inclusive and antiracist. I'm thankful for everyone who participated in the process.



WKI has strengthened my commitment to combating implicit and explicit racism in our community. I have stepped up my involvement in local politics, and want to continue doing so. I also want to create more opportunities for white Kirklanders to learn about race and learn to combat white supremacy — possibly focusing on how to raise antiracist children. I hope my WKI colleagues, and anyone else reading this, will feel free to hold me to this commitment.

Walt Kreuger

First lesson, how little I understood what a black person or person of color experiences in our society. I understood the concept of driving while black and being targeted by the police because I had a client experience it in Bellevue when I first became an attorney. At Kirkland Conversations, Karina O'Malley related a story of a black man wearing a pack sack walking in Kirkland being stopped by police because a woman saw him in her neighborhood and called the police. Having served in the Army in Alabama I understood the lengths that people would go to avoid integration of their schools and restaurants with their proliferation of private schools and private dinner clubs. But I did not understand, if I were black, of shopping while black and being under inspection as a likely shoplifter, or the reaction of whites on the street to my threatening presence, or the psychological impact of the accumulation of daily slights from whites.

Second lesson, I did not understand white privilege. I received the benefit of the GI Bill which paid me to finish my undergraduate education and law school, with benefits to spare, and which helped us purchase our first house when interest rates were 12%. I realized those same benefits existed for black servicemen after WWII, but I did not realize they did not receive them as I did, because racism limited which schools they could attend and racism limited how much they could borrow and where they could purchase a home. A community that was integrating was considered a bad loan risk; it was redlined. Debby Irving in *Growing Up White and Finding Myself in the Story of Race* poignantly pointed out her privilege of growing up in the white suburbs, in a nice home purchased with a GI loan, with a father whose GI Bill permitted him to graduate from a prestigious law school and join a prosperous law firm. But like me she was oblivious to the denial of these benefits to blacks. If every black serviceman from WWII had received the same benefits, think how much more prosperous their children and grandchildren would be now.

Third lesson, I now better understand what an unfair society we have created or permitted to exist. Covid-19 and the death of George Floyd and voter suppression reveal the warts in our society and body politic. As all of my doctor friends acknowledge we need a medical plan for all regardless of ability to pay. We are all at risk if any one person is sick, regardless of party, papers, or poverty. There is bias in policing which reflects bias in our society which must be mitigated. We need the police but we would need them less if we provided a guaranteed minimum income (GMI) to all in the United States. GMI is a crime reduction action and a fairness action. Voter suppression is, sadly, a part of the American experience; it used to be a tactic of the Democratic party before the Voting Rights Act of 1965 but, thereafter, Nixon and the Republican party tactically embraced racism and voter suppression of blacks and, now, of all Democrats. Unfortunately, the Republican win-at-all-costs suppression threatens the survival of the United States as a republican form of government. Good government people must step up like never before and support efforts in all states to adopt commissions to draw legislative boundaries, to permit early voting and voting by mail, reasonable hours for polls to be open and a reasonable number of drop boxes and polling places, acceptance of reasonable proof of identity, and the passage of a new Voting Rights Act. Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg said that you don't fold your umbrella in the middle of a storm because you are not getting wet. That is what the reactionary Supreme Court did to the country by gutting the Voting Rights Act in *Shelby v. Holder*. Please read "Give Us the Ballot" by Ari Berman for the history of the Voting Rights Act.

My commitment going forward is, with leadership from people of color, to support them and to work with Kathy Feek and the Chamber of Commerce to improve our understanding of white privilege and strive for greater diversity in the makeup of our board and committees. To work for greater diversity of the Kirkland Chamber of Commerce, the Lake Washington Tech foundation board, and the board of Lake Washington Institute of Technology. To locate existing people of color led groups dedicated to creating a fairer society for all and give them my support.

Ben Franklin was asked after the Constitution was adopted what kind of government did we have. He replied, “A republic, if you can keep it.” My wife, Kathy, and I will continue to work with David Domke’s Common Power to improve voting rights and effective representation in all states to keep the republic.

Facilitators

Jen Mayo

Lessons I learned in the WKI process....

1. Building a strong foundation of relationships based on trust is a vital part of this work and is a wonderful opportunity to meet new people and make wonderful new friends.
2. *I have so much to learn.* The history I learned growing up and which is still taught in our schools is taught from the white perspective is incomplete and perpetuates inequality and racist beliefs and practices. Understanding the racist parts of our history is an important part of understanding the systematic racism that is often invisible to those who are not overtly affected by it.
3. As Kirkland has grown and changed, it seems that a lot of the new construction, especially in the downtown & Urban area, has not been created for all residents, but for a certain group of people. If we want all people to feel welcome, we need restaurants, cafes, coffee shops, and community gathering spaces that are created with the interests and needs of all residents in mind. In saying this, I know there are some spaces that are welcoming or possibly want to be welcoming, but not that many or not in all areas, but in more out of the way areas.

Going forward, I commit to continuing this work in a variety of ways...

1. I will continue my own learning as well as regularly discussing race & racism with my children and extended family and friends, even when it is not comfortable.
2. I will speak up and speak out in effort to disrupt both outright and hidden racism and policies or practices that uphold our racist system. In conversation with others, I will own my own racist thoughts and behaviors so that when I see opportunities to speak up about racist practices or policies, it is not just about how others need to change, but how I am constantly needing to check my assumptions and change my own behavior.
3. I will support organizations that are working to end racism with both my time and money, especially those organizations that are run by People of Color.

Holly Koelling

Our nation's governing systems are predominantly in the hands of white people, and Kirkland is no exception. Although those in positions of political authority and community leadership in Kirkland believe deeply in racial equity and are committed to a racially equitable city, they are mostly people who have lived experiences of white privilege. A strong lesson from this work for me was the immediate threshold issue that compelled us to move from an initial planning group made up of mostly white city and community leadership to a planning group with a greater balance of people of color, especially black people. The original intention to have the planning group be comprised primarily of those holding leadership positions authorized to make real change made sense on its face, and yet was in a very real way a perpetuation of exclusion of those most expert in and impacted by racial inequity. I am pleased that the planning group leadership, facilitators and participants were able to see this rapidly when it was called out and make necessary changes.

While building a more racially diverse and perspective planning group, our facilitators – both black community members with lived experiences of racism in Kirkland over the years – created a learning container for the initial white participants to more fully understand their white privilege, bias, and complicit thoughts and behaviors in perpetuating a racist society. Among many purposes, this was to then be able to center the people of color who were being sought out and asked to participate in the work.

Many, many lessons were learned from this work, including the very clear fact that until white people see to whatever degree they possibly can the pervasive, corrosive and profound impacts of racism on people of color, it can only be a tremendous and exhausting effort for people of color to work in the same space. It is essential that white people become aware of and educated in the nature of white privilege, supremacy, and not only own their own behaviors, but recognize the policies, practices and systems that are created from this deep and immoral imbalance. Until aware and educated, it would be nearly impossible to see why and how to step away from the center, stand back from being in charge, in power, and become partners with people of color in real change rather than perpetrators of white supremacy clothed in good intentions.

Early and frequent communication both internal to a process like this and with the larger Kirkland community is essential. I believe there is real room for growth here moving forward, as communication suffered at varying stages of this work. Clear roles and responsibilities for communication within the planning and working groups is extremely important. Even more so is clarity regarding who, how and when communication with the Kirkland community is meaningful. I found that there was a gap in both, especially in creating a strong and ongoing presence for the work with the community. I feel there needs to be someone(s) who can coordinate how Kirkland communicates this work, and reaches the city's many communities. This work needs to be out there, strongly communicated, frequently communicated. It should be through no fault of the city that anyone who resides or works in Kirkland isn't aware of this key priority. Regarding any community events, doing something right for the public takes a great deal of coordinated effort and strong marketing/communication, and should not be rushed or condensed. I feel we experienced some adverse impacts of a lack of strong planning for some of this work, even before the pandemic impacted it, and there's a wonderful opportunity to improve on it going forward.

Commitment moving forward:

I would very much like to be a part of the work that stands before the city to achieve a more equitable Kirkland. I also understand that mine is a life of white privilege and perspective. I would like to be an ally to and partner with people of color toward this end. I would struggle to be in an environment predominantly of white authority enacting change without the leadership of people of color in and/or beyond the community.

Welcoming Kirkland Initiative Report: Business and Police Protocols Town Halls

8.17.2020 (J. Whitfield)

Welcoming Kirkland Initiative (WKI) conducted a series of Business and Police Protocol (BPP) Town Halls and outreach discussions in early in 2020. Each Town Hall presented a “Straw Man,” or an example intended to spark discussion, rather than represent an attempt to fully address the issues.

The intent was to bring the feedback from these sessions to WKI BPP Working Group for further discussion and, ultimately, to help frame action steps the Working Group members were willing to undertake collectively and individually.

The results of the Town Halls are placed in three categories:

1. Redirection of WKI’s implicit paradigm,
2. Observations about community needs/desires, and
3. Areas of exploration that are likely outside of WKI’s mandate.

Further background information and notes collected at the Town Halls are available. It is very possible that another report writer would come up with different conclusions, especially if limited to the specific notes herein. This writer is including the experience having attended the Town Halls as well as prior/subsequent conversations with attendees and Working Group members, and other outreach to draw the conclusions here.

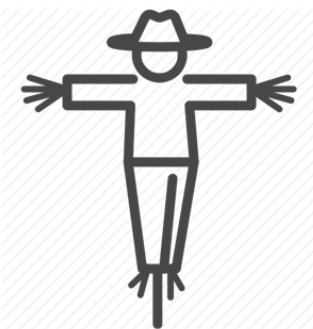
1) Redirection of Welcoming Kirkland Initiative’s Implicit Paradigm

I believe the most relevant feedback from the Town Halls is in illuminating and redirecting the paradigm implicitly undergirding WKI. In casting WKI as an initiative about how the Kirkland community can be more welcoming for all people, with an emphasis on People of Color, the Initiative implicitly positions White people as the people who are doing the welcoming and People of Color are outsiders who need to be welcomed.

Further, because the effort was generated, at least in large part, due to an incident that was specifically related to anti-black systemic racism - rather than generalized racism or bigotry - the feedback suggests the Initiative’s centering of People of Color was progressive, yet off the mark.

The feedback indicates WKI’s solutions should seek to create a community of “belonging,” or some similar value repositioning the work as a “we” initiative, rather than an “us and them” effort. It also would suggest that even among People of Color, the needs of Black people should be clearly identified and addressed, in order for the initiative to be deemed successful. Again, this redirection doesn’t eliminate the need to address other racialized/marginalized communities, it indicates that these communities should also “belong” and that Black People’s needs are unique enough that they require clarification and to be specifically addressed as a part of the process.

WE NEED YOUR VOICE



“Straw Man”
Example



“Perfect Man”
Proposal

2) Observations About Community Needs and Desires

Below is a list of ideas generated by participants that warrant particular attention by the Working Group. These should be considered in addition to, rather than instead of, the Straw Man ideas. Again, the available verbatim is included at the end of the report for any Working Group member to draw upon for potential direction. Participants tended to want to include a very broad cross-section of the community in the solution-making and ongoing activities, including,

<i>Schools</i>	<i>Neighborhood Associations</i>	<i>Homeless</i>
<i>Libraries</i>	<i>Hospitals and medical organizations</i>	<i>Property Managers</i>
<i>Military Veterans</i>	<i>LGBTQ</i>	<i>Real Estate</i>
<i>Churches and faith-based organizations</i>	<i>Seniors</i>	<i>Service clubs</i>
<i>Shelters</i>	<i>Youth</i>	<i>Working population</i>
		<i>Visiting population</i>

- Some participants reinforced an observation that was made by some members of the Working Group prior to the Town Halls. Kirkland does not have many locations that are natural gathering sites for People of Color, especially Black people. Whether “Welcoming” or “Belonging” is the goal, having supportive, affinity spaces for People of Color could be beneficial. And developing appropriate cross-cultural spaces could also be helpful.
- Beyond physical locations. Some participants encouraged cross-cultural relationship-building activities, including story-telling, structured conversations, festivals and arts activities.
- Some specific desired activities were attributed to City Government include hiring DE&I expertise, a board or commission related to race, and listening sessions by City leaders.
- In addition to related concepts in the Straw Man, participants encouraged expanded efforts to identify businesses that are functioning in ways that are consistent with the outcomes of the initiatives, intensive efforts to educate the broader community, and adopting specific “Welcoming/Belonging” behaviors withing multiple community domains to provide clarity of expectations.
- Broaden participation of People of Color so that it isn’t the same few who tend to be engaged.

3) Areas of Exploration That Are Likely Outside of WKI’s Mandate

During the Town Halls, some participants proposed ideas that seem to fall outside of the expected bounds of the initiative. If the Working Group and/or the City itself has the ability, they may want to consider the following.

- The City examines its institutions and makes structural changes immediately to ensure more diverse representation on the Council, on boards and commissions, and other parts of City Government.
- Eliminate guns for SROs.
- Have the police acknowledge their historical and/or recent wrongdoing as a means to building trust with the community.
- Change what is taught in schools to help students and future generations understand and overcome racism.

**STRAW MAN: OTHERS HAVE ASKED FOR...
WHAT'S MISSING / WHO'S MISSING?**

Connecting Spaces

- Physical & Social
- Inter-Race & Intra-Race

**Community Oversight -
With Authority**

Hiring

Policy Changes w/Training

- Bias/Profiling
- De-escalation
 - Philosophy of Public Safety
 - Ltd. Commission
- Use of Force
 - Demilitarization

Monitoring/Reporting



Training

- When/why Call 911
- History/Context (i.e. profiling)
- Welcoming Behaviors

Monitoring/Rating

- Participation
- Assessment and Reporting

Collective Leadership Forum

- Residents, Business, Community-Based Orgs, & City
- Partnerships
- Advises re: Policies and Practices
- Community Concerns/ Opportunities