**#COVIDCampus: Difficult Convos with Our Conservative Fathers and Uncles**

**Transcript**

[Video feed of Greg is displayed.]

[video feed of Helen is displayed.]

[video feed of Greg is displayed.]

**GREG:** Hello everyone! Thank you all for your patience, sorry about the little bit of delay here. We're going to go ahead and get started very shortly. But we are very excited about this conversation!

[video feed of MJ is displayed. camera is turned off, screen displays a black screen with white text that reads: ASL Interpreter | MJ Jones]

**MJ:** This is different because everybody’s video is up, so it’s going to be different. Oh!

[audio feedback]

[video feed of Greg is displayed.]

**GREG:** Um. So is it okay if I go ahead and get started?

[Video feed of ASL interpreter Annie is displayed]

**GREG:** I just wanted to check in with our accessibility team.

**ANNIE:** Leang says sure, great, we’re good to go.

**GREG:** Okay! Well, hello everyone and thank you for joining the official launch and the inaugural COVID Campus series with the People’s Collective for Justice and Liberation. We were founded in March in response to anti-Asian racism while also understanding the importance of building cross-racial solidarity. As Dr. Connie Wun reminded us in our recent town hall, anti-Asian racism is made possible by anti-Blackness and anti-Indigeneity. And we continue to declare “Black lives matter” and we are in solidarity with the Movement for Black Lives.

We wanted to let you all know that we will have simultaneous ASL interpretation and closed captions during this session. So if you would like closed captions, please make sure to turn them on using the bottom menu below. And then we also will do our best to make sure that if needed, that the interpreters are also spotlighted. If you are having any issues or anything comes up, please drop a message in the chat, and we will be sure to respond as soon as we can.

We also want to encourage folks to utilize the chat function as the conversation goes, as a way to engage with others as part of this conversation. And we just wanted to say thank you to: our ASL interpreters Annie (Deanna) Dieckman and MJ Jones, our captioner Darryn Hollifield, our accessibility team Melissa Kelley Colibrí and Leang Ngov. And then two members of our organizing team--and volunteers also--Helen Leung and Ji Cho as well.

I would now like to introduce a comrade, colleague, Hilario Benzon, who is the Manager of the Human and Civil Rights Department for the Center for Social Justice at the National Education Association, who will help facilitate a conversation on best practices and lessons learned in having difficult conversations about race and sexual orientation with your conservative fathers, uncles, or really any of your family members. And this comes at a timely moment while we are celebrating Pride Month, before Father's Day, and while we are in a moment of uprisings across the country and globe.

Please follow us on social media if you aren’t already. And you can share what you’ve learned utilizing the hashtags #COVIDCampus, #PrideMonth, #DefendBlackLife, and #FathersDay, which I will also put in the chat.

So without further ado, I’m going to pass it to you Hilario.

**HILARIO:** Thank you Gregory. I'm going to start sharing my screen. I do have a couple of slides.

[clicking]

**HILARIO:** Umm…

**IMAGE DESCRIPTION:** [screenshare displays a slide. Video feed of ASL interpreter Annie is reduced to the upper right corner. Slide is a black background with white text. The text reads: #COVIDCampus Difficult Convos with Conservative Fathers and Uncles. Hilario Benzon. National Education Association. Logos are displayed for People’s Collective for Justice and Liberation, National Education Association, and Center for Social Justice. End of slide description]

**HILARIO:** I think we're good to go there. Can everyone see it? Give me a thumbs up if you see it. Awesome.

So thank you all for being and joining us in this space. I think it’s important as we begin to think about the conversations we’ve had, the conversations we plan on having, and even the conversations that we’re worried about having--and those that are actually even unthought of or unspoken at this point--that we always begin remembering where we are. The spaces that we occupy. So we will start with the land acknowledgment.

**IMAGE DESCRIPTION:** [Slide changes. New slide is a black background with white text. Beside the text is a grayscale landscape photograph depicting plains and mountains. The text reads: We begin by acknowledging that we meet on the traditional lands served by the Nacotchtank and Piscataway peoples. We honor America's First People and all elders, past, present and emerging and we are called on to learn and share what we learn about the tribal history, culture, and contributions that have been suppressed in telling the story of America. We invite you to think about the spaces you are inhabiting and the Indigenous people who came before them and were stewards of the land. Logos are displayed for People’s Collective for Justice and Liberation, National Education Association, and Center for Social Justice. End of slide description]

**HILARIO:** So, we begin by acknowledging that we meet on the traditional lands served by the Nacotchtank and Piscataway peoples, here in Washington DC, where I’m based. “We honor America's First People and all elders, past, present and emerging and we are called upon to learn and share what we learn about the tribal history, culture, and contributions that have been suppressed in telling the *true* story of America. Right? So wherever you may be laying and sitting right now, we invite you to think about the spaces you are inhabiting and the Indigenous people who came before them and were stewards of the land.

So as we also reflect on this week, this month, this year, I’ve typically also started with a very brief moment of silence. To recognize all that has been impactful, traumatic over the last few weeks, years, decades. So if you would indulge me, just a moment of silence.

[silence]

Thank you everyone.

**IMAGE DESCRIPTION:** [slide changes. New slide is a black background with six grayscale photos and grey and white text. Three photos feature Black people who have been killed by police--Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade, and Ahmaud Arbery. The other three photos feature protest demonstrations. The text lists the names of Black people who have been killed by police. After each name is the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter. Some of the names are occluded by the photographs. The visible names read: George Floyd, Trayvon Martin, Oscar Grant, Philando Castile, Terrence Crutcher, Sean Reed, Michael Brown, Botham Jean, Alton Sterling, Keith Childress, Stephon Clark, Jonathan Ferrell, Jordan Edwards, Renisha McBride, Jordan Davis, Emmett Till, Akai Gurley. End of slide description.]

**HILARIO:** So as we begin, there has been so much to think about that has been impacting our communities, our solidarity, and our identities. Right?

Certainly, when we first engaged in this conversation a few weeks back, we were specifically talking about the impacts of COVID, the pandemic of COVID-19. The anti-Asian xenophobia and violence directed at the AAPI community. But certainly since then, we have seen many things brought more to the public attention because they have existed for such a long time. We are dealing with the other historic pandemic of violence and the policing of Black bodies, and justice for Black lives, and the movement of Black Lives Matter. And in the importance of the expression of the unheard, and the riots, and the rebellion, and the resistance that has come up.

But then we have the backdrop of this week, right? Where we have a SCOTUS decision that came out earlier this week. A very truly historic and momentous decision that we are only now beginning to unravel the impact that this will have on the lives of the LGBTQ community most certainly, but also the lives of all of us as a community. And then this morning we had the decision of SCOTUS on DACA.

So although there are certainly joyous reasons to uplift and shout from the rooftops and be happy, we also remind ourselves that there is still work we must do, right? We still must engage in the conversations to help our family--our fathers, our uncles, our mothers, our hermanos y hermanas--all of our friends, and even our colleagues and strangers understand how all of this is important. And why it’s important.

So I think about just the conversations I’ve been having in the last two weeks. About helping my immediate circle, my immediate family, understand why the murder of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and many more, are problematic. Why we have to bring light to the policing of Black bodies. Certainly I’ve had to have conversations about the aftermath--about the riots, the rebellion, the resistance, that are so prominently in the media narrative. And explaining to my parents that it’s not about just buildings burning, it’s about lives that have been systemically violated and murdered.

And then, you know, I came out many, many years ago. But again, having to have conversations on why I’m celebrating because of the SCOTUS decision, right? So these conversations never end. This is part of the work that we do.

So this time together is really meant for us to begin thinking about--you know, learn from one another on what is the best way to approach conversations that are often difficult, that are also very traumatic for us. Before, during, and after. Right? As well as, how do we resist when they don’t go as well as we want them to?

Because it’s very easy to go up to a stranger and have a conversation, and you will never see that person again. But most of us are tied in our communities--particularly the API community--and we are always dealing with having to defend how we feel, explain where we are and where we want to go. And we must constantly engage in those conversations. We don’t have the luxury of severing ties--not that we would want to do that in the first place.

So hopefully through our discussions, communal discussions, we will have the opportunity to speak out, share out, and plan out. And for those specifically who are in that space of having to have conversations and don’t necessarily know where to begin and where you want to end.

**IMAGE DESCRIPTION:** [Two text boxes and one more grayscale photo appear over the slide. The photo is of a mural featuring George Floyd’s name and face. The text boxes read: #BlackLivesMatter and #JusticeForBlackLives. End of slide description.]

**HILARIO:** So I think it would be very important that we start with a video. It’s a very short video. Many of you may have seen it. So I’m going to pivot. And it really talks about where we are.

**IMAGE DESCRIPTION:** [Screenshare shows a video. A grayscale video shows a closeup of a Black man in profile. He delivers a spoken word. As he speaks, the words appear in large text across the screen. All the text has no capitalization and is white, except the word “again,” repeated throughout the poem, which is yellow. The text reads:

last night another black man was murdered. lynched. again. by the police. again. this morning my folks said I should try to unplug from the news cycle. again. this morning I accepted I can't unplug when it's mine dying. again. last night they said the murder was justified because some sort of past crime. again. this morning proved that was a lie. again. last night they said wait for the facts. trust the justice system. again. this morning no charges were brought to that cop. again. last night we tried peaceful tactics. t-shirts. bent knees. silent demonstrations. again. this morning they dismissed us and mocked us. again. last night the language of the unheard was spoken. at the top of their lungs. in the form of burning buildings. again. this morning they said we were thugs. again. they said follow the law. again. we said you first. again. last night they said violence undermined our cause. again. this morning we said then why do you keep driving tanks into our neighborhoods? again. this morning i'm dizzy. again. nauseous. fearful. frustrated. angry. detached. annoyed. pissy. exhausted. worried. overwhelmed. again. last night a black man got lynched. again. by the police. again. last night. again. this morning. again. here we go. End of poem.

The screen displays a black background with white text. The text reads: We grieve and stand in solidarity with the Black community. The murder of Black people by the police must stop, racist police brutality must end. We will continue to cover these injustices and raise the voices of people fighting against racism and oppression. Black Lives Matter.
A white line underscores the text. Beneath the line is an upward arrow in a circle. End of video description.]

**IMAGE DESCRIPTION:** [The text is minimized and the logos for the People’s Collective and NEA and CSJ are displayed on the screen. At the top of the screen are displayed the words “For Every Person Tired of Police Brutality.” Video feed in the upper right corner has switched to ASL interpreter MJ Jones. End of image description.]

**HILARIO:** So I'm going to let that sit here. So as we enter this space, I invite you to think about how you are arriving in this community. So I'm going to invite for everyone who is willing and able to share in the chat box how you are arriving to our space this morning, or this afternoon. What's on your heart? What are the things that are challenging you right now--to either explain, or have conversations about? So we'll take a minute to allow people to just sort of share their thoughts out in the chat box.

[mouse clicking]

**HILARIO:** And as you’re doing that--do they have access to the chat box? Give me a thumbs up if you do. Again asking for those who want to share and are able to, in the chat box, to just share how you are arriving.

Welcome. My name is Hilario Benzon, he/him/his. I am the Manager of the Human and Civil Rights Department at the National Education Association. My primary work is on racial justice and education, as well as LGBTQ advocacy. I am a 6th grade teacher of over 20 years in the classroom and in schools. Moving back to Washington DC about three years where I grew up and was born. And I am a proud gay man, advocating all my life for the inclusion and recognition of the LGBTQ community. Specifically in the most past within our schools. And helping our educators do better and know better on providing support, education, and culturally relevant teaching for our students around LGBTQ inclusion, curriculum, as well as Black and Brown decolonized curriculum, and racial and social justice.

So I want to thank you all again. And I really just want to start with this quote from James Baldwin.

[mouse clicking]

**IMAGE DESCRIPTION:** [Slide changes. New slide is still a black background with the logos for the People’s Collective and NEA and CSJ displayed at the bottom. In the middle of the screen is a grayscale photograph of James Baldwin sitting in a chair. Beneath the photograph is a quote with black text on a white background. The quote reads: “If I love you, I have to make you conscious of the things you don’t see.” - James Baldwin. End of slide description.]

**HILARIO:** And this is like why we do this, right? We endeavor in these conversations that are painful, and that are hurtful at times to ourselves, because we love you. Right? We love those people that we're engaging in conversations. And we want them to see what they're not seeing. We want them to know what they don't know. Right?

And so hopefully in the next few minutes in our time together, I'm going to share a little bit of what I have asked and what I have gone through in the conversations. And that hopefully I'll open it up to you. And I would love for people to share parts of their stories, as you are so moved. Right?

But the reality is, we can't shy away from having the conversations. Trust me. I've done it. I'm closely--too closely, actually--approaching 50. So my narrative certainly includes a time and place in this country, in my family, where I had to stay in the closet, or I had to shy away from conversations. For safety, acceptance. And even now, in having conversations with family members and with colleagues and friends, it's still very intentional. I have to think through it. I have to figure out what are the words that I want to say, that I should say.

And so it’s...it never gets easy. Right? And so what I’ve learned, for the most part, is that if I don’t say it, and find the way to communicate it, that has more impact on me. And how I feel about myself. And how I approach this work. So I encourage you all, as you are willing, to share. Use the chat box. If you have questions, raise your hand. All those sort of things. I think we have people moderating the chat box.

But I want you to think about--and this is another activity that I want to sort of get a flavor of where we are in the space right now. What are some of the conversations that you are wanting to have, or that you have had, that you are finding to be difficult, or have been difficult, in having with her conservative fathers, having with your family, or that you are planning to have? So again: what are some of the conversations that you find difficult to have? To get an idea of what people are feeling.

[silence]

**HILARIO:** I’m not quite sure if people are… You know, I’m seeing a couple. “Politics” most definitely, is something. I am half Filipino and Latino. And I do have a Cuban side of the family. And very often, fall on different political sides. So family gatherings are quite fun, very often.

[silence, reading the comments in the chat]

**HILARIO:** Yeah I’ve had that. Thanks Ji Cho. They often feel that when I do this, I am “on my soapbox” in lecture. Right?

Actually what I’m going to do is take this off of share so that we get a little bit more of a look.

**IMAGE DESCRIPTION:** [screenshare stops displaying a slide, video feed of ASL interpreter MJ Jones takes up the entire screen. End of image description]

**HILARIO:** Thank you Helen. Certainly helping people understand. We balance the violence or the destruction from the riots to the actual-- many of our businesses are impacted, right? Romeo is talking about “respecting your elders usually means not making them uncomfortable.” There are certain things you wouldn’t tell Nana or something, and you just have to sort of live with the comments they make. Because “that’s what we do.” Right?

Again one of the big conversations I’ve had is about helping reframe the narrative of the protesters and the riots. And it’s not an easy thing to do. Right?

And helping people understand, in the words of Martin Luther King, that “rioting is the voice of the unheard.” And helping focus on the importance of...the fact that… also talking about the violence on Black bodies and Brown bodies.

Thank you Gail for “the anti-Blackness in the Filipino cultures.” Amen to that. “Addressing the mindsets,” certainly.

Obviously and then for many you add into the elements of religion. Many of our cultures are very tied to established religions, depending on your identity, and how does that play out in the discussion with--very often--elders in your community?

Alright. Thank you.

So yeah, there are a lot of reasons and a lot of things for us to consider and think about as we attempt to engage in conversations. And we recognize that there’s a lot of work to do. And we recognize that how we think, and how our parents, family, and elders have thought is often a way that they have been socialized to believe in their upbringing. And taking into account and the fact that our experiences, or the backdrop to our experiences and our narrative. Right, our story. And recognizing that what we need to do in our conversations is really help create some “connect the dots,” very often.

And so I am just really going to propose a couple of things to think about. I don’t have a lot of slides but one of the things, in terms of what I think is very helpful as we begin these conversations, is thinking about your plan. Right?

[mouse clicking]

**IMAGE DESCRIPTION:** [Slide changes. Video feed of ASL interpreter MJ Jones is reduced to the upper right corner of the screen. New slide is a black background, still featuring the logos. Against the background is white text and a zoomed in photograph of the words “the plan” handwritten on lined notebook paper. The white text reads:

In the Beginning.

Know Your Why.

Know Your Who.

Know Your When.

Know Your Where.

Know Your How.

Breathe.

End of slide description.]

**HILARIO:** So as you begin to think about having a conversation, what I do know: if I haven’t thought about it and it’s in the moment, I’m less articulate. I’m very often more impassioned and not as coherent. And one of the things I do practice, in having a lot of these conversations, is: it gets easier because I’ve thought through it. So these are some things to think about. So I’ll show you this and talk through it. And then I’ll sort of open up for questions.

What I do know is that as you engage in these conversations, and you are planning to have this conversation, “know your why.” Why are you wanting to have a conversation about this right now? In this moment? Why is this important to you? And begin to articulate that for yourself so that you can share--begin to share your story to whoever you’re talking to. So they are clear on why you are engaging in this conversation. Why is this important right now?

"Know your who." And this is twofold. Obviously you want to know who you're talking about and just be prepared. We all know what one of your uncles, or someone that is difficult to talk about this with, what they may say. Or what their response may be. So being able to sort of--well not "sort of." Being able to talk about that and think about that and help possibly craft some responses in advance. Or even just think about it. It will help you in the moment. Right?

What's also important in "knowing your who," is who around you can you get and sort of tie into for support? Who's in your support system? Either socio-emotionally or someone that can help you process through this. But where do you need to go to make sure that you're clear and you're even more articulate as you start to develop what you want to say?

Also in thinking about having these conversations, know your “when” and “where.” When is the best time to do this? And sometimes there is no best time. Because sometimes something has to be said in the moment. But depending on the kind of conversation you want to have, you think about particular spaces and places that you want to do it.

When I had the idea of coming out of the closet so many years ago, I planned that. And I was very particular on: when and where I wanted to do it, and with whom did I want in the room?

And then “know your how.” And then I will pause. What are you trying to get out of this? What other goals are you wanting to have in this conversation? What are you expecting to happen? What could happen? And more importantly, if the things that you’re fearing the most is going to happen--threats of being kicked out of the house, been there--do you have a plan? Do you have a support system in place if that piece does actually happen?

So I’m going to pause. I’m going to stop sharing and I’m going to entertain any questions.

**IMAGE DESCRIPTION:** [screenshare stops displaying a slide, video feed of ASL interpreter MJ Jones takes up the entire screen. End of image description]

**HILARIO:** If you have a specific question or example of what you’ve done, you can either share in the chat, or I think you could just ask it live. Is that correct?

**GREG:** Yes, that is correct. So feel free to come off of mute, come on to your video. Part of our hope was that to do these smaller, more intimate spaces, is that many folks have been a part of our town halls and haven’t been able to really engage. So we are hoping that this could be one of the ways and one of the spaces to do so. And thank you again.

**SPEAKER:** [crosstalk] ...something that will help you with a problem that they have. Also a problem [inaudible]. And then my mom said, “and then I dropped people here if they have kids that are gay or maybe they have a sister or cousin” [crosstalk]

**GREG:** Hey Diego.

**SPEAKER:** In the meantime…

**SPEAKER:** What do you want? To teach people about Jesus? [crosstalk]

**SPEAKER:** It’s just a madhouse [laughs].

**HILARIO:** So there’s [inaudible over crosstalk]

**GREG:** Alright.

[silent]

**GREG:** There were some folks that I muted because I don't know if their conversation was for this.

**JI:** I had a question, if I may? I’m just wondering for the purpose of this particular COVID Campus, why the gendered title? Why in particular are we talking about conversations with our conservative fathers and uncles?

**GREG:** I mean, I can weigh in here a little bit, Hilario, if that's helpful. I think our initial thinking was that Father’s Day is coming up. And that folks were… I think we imagined that this could potentially be an opportunity in case there was interactions, whether it was planned or not planned. So we also, while we said that specifically in the title, of course, this is also something that folks should be able to go across any family members. But we're mindful that in June, and particularly this week, there’s maybe specific types of conversations, or things that might show up.

At least I know with my dad I’ve had to bring up a lot about toxic masculinity and even heteronormativity and things like that. And I’m not saying that that doesn’t come up with other folks, but I am particularly conscious or mindful of it around Father’s Day, when I’m going to be calling him. Or things like that. So…

**JI:** I see. Oh yeah, Father’s Day. I forgot that you had mentioned that and that it was coming up! [laughs] I have to call my father on Sunday.

But related question, Hilario or Greg or whoever wants to chime in. I wrote in the chat about just...because this is an AAPI space, one of the metanarratives that we kind of share [laughs] mostly unfortunately, especially if you’re identified as female is it just the neo-Confucian… Just the hard consciousness of place. So if you’re female, or you're younger, or you’re a younger person it’s just like when you’re having these kinds of conversations, and very often our parents are not…they don’t have the same level of education that we do, some of us may. It’s so tricky to approach our parents with any kind of new knowledge without the perception of “hey, are you correcting me?” Like “stepping out of place.” So I’m wondering if you have any shares about how you manage that? Anyone, actually.

**HILARIO:** Yeah certainly. Yeah, most definitely. Thank you for that.

**IMAGE DESCRIPTION:** [ASL interpreter MJ Jones turns off camera. Screen displays a black background with white text that reads: ASL Interpreter | MJ Jones. After a few moments, video feed of ASL interpreter Annie is displayed. End of image description.]

**HILARIO:** There is a time and place, there is very often I’ve been told that that is something I cannot talk about because that is not something that someone younger brings up. Or if I do, and I approach it in a certain way, it is very much a sign of disrespect. Or it’s not even appropriate to even address some of my elders in my family, to even talk about. “These are things we don’t talk about.” Necessarily challenging them.

What I’ve done, and I’m interested in hearing what other people have done and are doing, is that I always start from a place of my story. So even my conversations, I talk about the impact on me. So I’m very… Because that’s the only thing I can speak from. How their words are landing on me. How their actions are landing on me. I try in particular to not try to classify someone, what they’re doing, or what they’re saying as being “anti-Black.” Especially with my family. Or that they’re racist or things like that.

What I try to say is “shoot through my stories” how it hurts me. I then provide some language because of the work that I do and how what they’re saying could possibly be viewed as xenophobic. So I don’t resist the temptation to actually use some of those words, but I try not to say “*you are* homophobic,” or “*you are* anti-Black,” or “*you are* racist.” I try to make the connection that why that type of thing is problematic for people, especially now.

But I hear, because it’s just, “Well, we’re a different generation.” True. But I want you to see me, how it’s impacting me now. And very often, a lot of these conversations are painful for me and I have very quickly, very long, patiently--excuse my language. It's taken time for me to connect with that piece. Talking about that toxic masculinity that Gregory was talking about. That I never would want to let anyone show my emotions or how it's been impacted. So it's taken a while for me to be able to really show the true impact and the vulnerability in sharing about how what they've said or what they've done has hurt me. Without the fear of being labeled something or being thought of differently. And I can only speak from my heart.

How about someone else? Does anyone else want to share? Any thoughts or reflections?

[clicking]

I have great wait time. I’m a teacher.

Well, I think what's important here, and I think that's part of "knowing your who" and approaching the conversations, that's part of the pre-work or plan you have to. Especially when you are...Again, I said earlier: it's easy to engage in conversations--and I'll share some things that I've used--with a stranger. Especially now, especially this morning. I'm still running into it. In terms of just daily occurrences. It's easy to have a conversation or choose not to because we don't know them. We're not invested in them. It's harder to have the conversations and risk being hurt, and risk being vulnerable, and risk all of that when it's someone that you're tied to or that's closely related to you. Either by blood or by relationship. Or someone that you care for the cares for you.

So all I know is that having--thinking through it before you engage in it has always proven to be helpful to me. Especially in making sure, if you're in a situation where that conversation can go sideways or end up in a place where you don't want it to go, I encourage you to make sure that you have ways that you thought through how you're going to keep yourself safe and how you're going to keep yourself whole. Right? I think that's an important piece too.

Thank you, [name]. I'm reading a couple of the chats. And very often--this is what [name] also says, is that we are in places where, because of the work and because of the sacrifices of our families, we often are in places where we have the ability to pursue more education or experiences that they were not afforded to. And so very often we have that duality of being thankful for the chance as well as the reality is: you provided this chance for me to be educated. So guess what? I am educated! And we balance those lines of being able to make sure that we're respectful. But we're also true. And there's some awareness that even our parents have to go through. Right?

One of the big things we do in our training--we spend a lot of time talking about implicit bias. And the impacts of implicit bias. And very often because of the white supremacy culture that we’ve been socialized to breathe--the fog that we’ve been able to breathe--the insidiousness of it, we often co-sign or we accept the biases. And so have our parents. And probably more so because the messages and narratives that they were taught when they first came to this Westernized American sort of society is more pervasive and that’s what they knew.

So part of our work is helping them unpack that and understand why that is not...why that is having the impacts right now on you or members of other communities or our community. And that’s heavy work! That’s a large lift, right?

So we talked about things we can do in the beginning, which is so important to making sure that you’re in a place to have the conversation. Let’s talk about when you’re *actually* having the conversation. Right? You know, things to think of when you’re in the middle. So I’m going to sort of pivot a little...um...if I can figure...I’m getting used to this now. [clicking]

**IMAGE DESCRIPTION:** [Screenshare displays a slide. Video feed of ASL interpreter Annie is reduced to the upper right corner. New slide is text overlaid on top of a grayscale photograph of James Baldwin. Half the photo is dark and the other half is light. Over the dark half is the text: “Not everything that is faced can be changed.” Over the light half is the text: “But nothing can be changed until it is faced.” -James Baldwin. At the bottom left corner of the photo is the hashtag: #GoBigger. End of image description.]

**HILARIO:** Again another great quote from James Baldwin, one of my prolific mentors. What I do know is: if you don’t have the conversations, things won’t change. We don’t face it, we can’t change it. And that’s a daunting task, I understand. But the reality is: we have to, at least for ourselves. I got to a point in my life where I could no longer abide by what society’s narrative or the heteronormative narrative that my parents wanted for me…I couldn’t do that anymore without doing severe damage to myself, to my life, to my existence. That I actually had to change, or I would not survive. So I found--and I didn’t do it by myself, I did it through connections and talking with people, I had that plan. But in the moment, having those conversations, I was scared shitless! Pardon my French.

**IMAGE DESCRIPTION:** [Slide changes. New slide is a black background with white text and a grayscale photograph. The photograph shows a monk in silhouette, meditating on top of a rock. In the distance, there is a mountain cloaked in fog. The white text reads:

In the Moment.

Be clear with your intentions.

Be clear with your words.

Be honest with your feelings.

Be self-compassionate.

Be clear on what you want.

Breathe.

Logos for the People’s Collective and NEA and CSJ are displayed. End of slide description.]

**HILARIO:** So I had to think through. And I practiced! I wrote things down. We didn’t have like iPads back then or anything like that [laughs] I had 3 x 5 cards. I wrote things down to make sure and… But as I approached that moment, what I wanted to make sure...I thought about what I wanted to get out of it. I wanted to make sure I was clear with what I was saying. Because I knew when I started getting the obstacles like “you’re being disrespectful,” or “who are you to say this?” or “you think you’re better than me because you got a college degree,” or whatever it may be, I wanted to be clear on what...I wasn’t going to get pivoted off what I was trying to accomplish.

I also recognize just for me that I have a habit, especially in English is not my first language, but I’m also because of being older and also not as proficient in my first two languages. And so I had to be very clear with my words, in terms of being able to actually know what I wanted to say. And making sure they’re not lost in my fear. They’re not lost in translation--literally. And they’re not lost in feeling guilty when I’m confronted with the responses. So I wrote them down. I practiced it. And so I made sure that at the very least I was able to say this.

And the other piece is talking about being aware in the moment of how you are feeling. And being aware that...and being aware of what the dramatic toll this is taking on you in these conversations. Are you feeling anger? Are things starting to escalate? Are you feeling fear? Are you feeling anxiety because you feel like--in my case, many times I would talk, I’d feel like I was giving into their resistance. “I’m not saying enough. I’m not doing enough.” Right? And then it becomes all my fault. So just being more self-compassionate. But ultimately, again, being clear on what you want to happen from this conversation. What are you trying to express? Whether it’s with your conservative parents, family members, or even with a stranger. Being clear from the beginning and just sticking to that narrative. “This is what I need from you. I need you to hear me. This is the impact it is on me.”

I want to share one thing and that I will pause and take some more questions or sharing. Please again, feel free to share thoughts in the chat.

**IMAGE DESCRIPTION:** [Slide changes. New slide is a black background with white text displayed as a flowchart. The slide is titled “Name It! Claim It! Stop It!" The flowchart shows those imperatives as headings.

Under “Name It,” is the text: Be clear about your own intentions. Be specific!!! Examples: “That’s not okay when…” or “That’s problematic when…” There is an arrow from this section to the next section, which is titled “Claim It.”

Under “Claim It,” is the text: Use “I” statements: Examples: “I don’t like when…” or “I am not comfortable with…” There is an arrow from the section to the next section which is titled “Stop It.”

Under “Stop It,” is the text: Clarify expectations! Examples: “Please don’t use sexist language.” or “Please don’t make racist comments.”

End of flowchart. Beneath the flowchart is the text: (Adapted from NEA Diversity Training, Our Diverse Community: Living, Working and Learning Together.) the logo for the People’s Collective is displayed. End of slide description.]

**HILARIO:** I do a lot of work with our educators, and actually community members, talking about “how do I respond?” And I’ve used this with my parents, and with educators. I’ve used it in meetings and trainings. The reality is very often we hear something, or something is done--or not done, in some cases--and then we are stunned. We don’t actually know what to do or say. Because (a) we can’t believe they said it. We can’t believe a loved one has said it to me or said something about it. And we literally oftentimes do not have the words to actually respond. And this may be two hours later, you’re driving home, or you drive someplace else. And then finally that perfect response comes into your mind. Right? You’re like “Oh! I wish I would’ve said this then!”

So I use a frame with our educators. Because that’s what I do, and educate educators. Especially when they’re talking on behalf of their students and their students are in the space. Because what I recognize in our schools, in having been a teacher and a principal of a school, recognize that when we don’t speak up and our students are watching, even if we didn’t say it but we heard it in our classroom and someone uses foul language, or uses a derogatory term, or is being racist, or something like that. If we don’t say anything, it’s a sign of complicitness. Right? And very often, that sends a message to the student who heard it or the students who have been impacted by it, that that classroom, the school, that bus is not safe.

So we as educators do not have the luxury of not saying anything. We have to be willing and able to speak up in the moment. So this framework that we are using is really about putting words to voice, voice to power. And it’s simple. It’s “Name it! Claim it! Stop it!” And the idea is…

The first part is “Name it.” Be very clear on what your intentions are. And be specific on what you heard. So if you can repeat what they said, repeat it. And say, “Hey, that time when you said that Asians cause the coronavirus--I have a problem with that.” So I’m naming it. So if there’s any question of what I heard, they have the opportunity to correct me. And say, “No, I didn’t say that.” But if they have questions about...So we’re being very, very clear and very specific of naming the language or the actions that are problematic.

The next part--I sort of talked about--is “Claiming it.” You are sharing how this has impacted you. “That offended me because of...however.” “I don’t like when you do that because it makes me feel, as an Asian person, angry.” “It makes me feel violated.”

And then the “Stop it” piece is really about laying down the law, laying down the line. What do you want? “I need you to stop using that language.” “I need you not to say that again.” “I need you to change--if you want to have a relationship with me--change the way that you talk about ABC and D.”

What I can tell you, that having something in this framework makes it easier for me to stand up. And to whoever I’m talking to, when I hear or see something that I’m not okay with. I used it this morning. I heard someone talking when I went to go fill up my car. And I didn’t know them, it was a stranger. And they noticed that I--this morning I’m wearing a “Black Lives Matter” T-shirt. Because I wanted to. And, typical response, “All lives matter.” And certainly I had the choice at that time: Do I respond? Do I engage in the conversation?

And for me, because I engage in this work and I engage in these conversations, it’s easier for me. Because when I think about this, I think about my students. I think about my Association, my union, and the importance of the work that I cannot cosign on silence.

So I went through this. And I named that--”That statement, when I hear you say ‘All lives matter,’ that you just said, this is what…” And I went through this processing. “I don’t understand how you can say that, and recognize…and not see the impact of the Black and Brown violence that you’re seeing on the media. It’s not about ‘all lives,’ it’s about the need for us to pay attention, now more than ever, to Black lives that are being violated and murdered.”

And “Stop it” was very clearly: “I would want you to stop using the ‘All lives matter,’ and think about and do some research on your own on why people are saying ‘Black Lives Matter.’” It was all of about like three seconds. And it wasn’t these exact words. But similarly, it allowed me to know that I had a way to approach the conversation.

And what I do know is, very often-- and this is just from my past--there’ve been many times where I didn’t say anything. That I felt... out of fear of violence, or fear of threat, or just not having the words. What I do know is it has had a cascading effect on me. In terms of hours or days after that, I would reflect that when I didn’t say something or I didn’t speak up, I would then start beating myself up. “Well you're an advocate for all this stuff, yet you didn’t say anything. You’re a fake, you’re a phony, you’re a liar.” Right? And the mental torture I put myself-- especially not having those conversations about who I am with my family, in particular.

Like I said, it had a detrimental impact for so long. I would beat myself up. And you know what happens, the collective impact, very often. Especially if you think about the LGBTQ community and the struggles with identifying your true self. It impacts us. Right? It hurts us. To the point where you wonder if this is even worth keeping going. So I think it’s important for us to put words and practice words.

So I’m going to stop there. Because that was a whole lot. I’m getting a little bit emotional here. So I’m going to open it up a little bit for people to share any experiences or what you’re thinking.

**IMAGE DESCRIPTION:** [screenshare stops displaying a slide, video feed of ASL interpreter Annie takes up the entire screen. After a moment, Annie’s camera turns off, displaying a black background with the white text: ASL Interpreter Annie. After another moment, video feed of ASL interpreter MJ Jones turns on. End of image description]

**HILARIO:** And Gregory is… Should we… Yes! Gregory, I read your email. [laughs] That would be very helpful. Would it be helpful to do some small groups, people? Because I know there are a lot of people in here, so I think we could spend some time in smaller groups.

I saw a thumbs up. I like that idea too. So...I’m not the one to do it, because I don’t know how. [Laughs] So I’m going to trust my... the trusty people behind the scenes. If you could throw us into a breakout group?

**GREG:** So what I’m going to say is I am also mindful that there may be folks who need interpretation. So maybe what I could offer is, when I do break out folks into groups, the interpreters and folks who need interpretation could not go into the breakout room and just stay in the main room? Then we can decide to either have a separate conversation or integrate you into one of the other breakout groups. Does that work for folks?

Okay. All right, so I’m going to do some breakout groups right now then.

**HILARIO:** Thanks Gregory.

**GREG:** Okay I’m going to say… Here we go.

**HILARIO:** Heh heh!

[silence]

**HILARIO:** Whoof. I didn't go. How am I doing? Is that all right? Am I sharing too much?

**GREG:** You’re doing fine. Um. Okay. I’m trying to see…

Hi Erika! I’m checking in. Oh! Alright. It looks like...Okay. it looks like folks went into the breakout groups.

[silence]

**HILARIO:** So how much time did you...give them?

**GREG:** Um. Let’s see. I’ll say 15 minutes. Or how long? 15 minutes? 10 minutes? I can give them a message now.

**HILARIO:** I think 15 would be good. I don’t have much after this, actually.

**MJ:** [interpreting] This is Leang. I didn’t realize there were any Deaf participants today. So.

**GREG:** Okay. Would you like to join a particular breakout group, then, Leang? Or we can just hang out in the main room too, if you want.

**MJ:** [interpreting for Leang] I’ll just stay and hang out with y’all. I’m good. I’m just making sure accessibility is covered. So, we’re good. Yeah. Just want to make sure I’m here if anything happens or if other Deaf folks come in. But yeah, I’ll just hang out here. But I’m enjoying it so far, thank you Hilario.

**HILARIO:** Oh, thank you MJ.

**MJ:** Oh, that was Leang, I was interpreting.

**HILARIO:** Oh, sorry! Thank you Leang.

**MJ:** [interpreting for Leang] No problem.

**GREG:** Um..
 **HILARIO:** Any thoughts for me Gregory?

**GREG:** No, I think...I feel like people were here really to listen. I was hoping for more conversation, but I know we’ve been trying to push, so. Hopefully the small group breakouts will help with it.

**HILARIO:** It’s not too much? Because it’s hard to sort of...I was hoping that...Some are sharing and I did look back. Are there any...I’m looking through the chats to see, and I wanted them to actually...I was hoping that they would put specific--some of them are putting specific things. Like Ji Cho talked about that idea of place and that “know your place.” And so she brought that up. And other people have talked about Trump and things like that.

So there are a couple in the chat that I can lift up. Or if you want to lift up specifically, it’s up to you. You know, some specifically asking for defunding the police and things like that on Facebook. And “if you don’t like this country, get out of it.” [laughs] I’ve heard that so many times too. So either of us can wake some of those pieces up and respond.

The last section, for me, is just really about...you know, I framed it in the beginning and in the end and as you in the end, right? So it’s just really “how do you keep yourself whole, regardless of how the conversation went?” Because even in a good conversation, your work is not done. But certainly in a bad conversation or something that is more hurtful and painful, you have to be intentionally, acutely aware of the collective impact on you. And so you don’t let it destroy you, honestly. Right?

**GREG:** Yeah. I also think another part of this for me, too, is like...there has to be a decision around...and this is part of what you were saying earlier. It’s like, yes we have to have the conversations, but then there also may be a point where you want to either draw a boundary and feel like even after you tried and made an attempt, that it may not necessarily be the best way to use some of your capacity or time to have some of these conversations. But knowing that you’ve tried or knowing that you’ve made an attempt I think is an important piece of it. So yeah.

**HILARIO:** Yeah. I think I framed it...the way I framed the last slide was like “looking back, look forward.” And using “look” as a sort of...But I think sometimes you *have to* look forward. And there are some things that you have to be okay with. Very often it may be, in some cases, being away from someone.

There are many people in my--I think I may have shared with you. You may have been one of the people I shared with. Education was a second career for me, so I spent the majority of my formative years as a young 18 to 28 year old in the military. And I have a lot of close friends who I have lost recently because of all of my postings and all of my “Naming, Claiming, and Stopping it” about the things that they’re saying or responding to my posts. That I’ve actually had to draw that line. And these are friendships of 30, 40 years, so to speak. That I can no longer...and I would say, “We need to pause.” Right? “I can’t continue in this dialogue with you right now until we both have a meeting of the minds.” And having to be okay with saying, “Goodbye.”

**GREG:** [softly] Yeah.

**HILARIO:** And I’ve heard many cases of that, like of people who they love having to release fractured relationships. That’s why these conversations aren’t easy.

**GREG:** Definitely.

[silence]

**HILARIO:** So this is the first one?

**GREG:** Yes.

**MJ:** [interpreting for Leang] Sorry, this is Leang. I did want to share while you were asking, but as the accessibility coordinator, I was trying to keep my role in.

Um...I can definitely imagine that within the LGBTQ community, having that kind of conversation--even including myself, there’s also the religion, values, and that too.

I remember I found a website that had like the history. [asks for clarification] Oh! That historically like heteronormative, like that concept. And that’s based from Europe. And so I’m trying to look more into that to figure out “Where are my countries from?” and go back. And where do those philosophies come from? Where did that thinking come from, because that’s really deep-rooted into those thoughts. And like, how did it connect to my country? So for example, in Cambodia, like trans people have a lot of power. They have a lot of good energy. They believe in that third gender. And they respect them. But, you know, in other countries it’s not the same.

And so I went to my family to share them about the history. I was like, “Okay, well see? There’s difference in history.” It’s not *our* history, it’s other perspectives. But people find that often connected and lose and get twisted with what actually is the history. But if you go back to a country’s specific history, you’ll find out things you never knew. So I thought that was really interesting.

**GREG:** Mhmm, mhmm.

**HILARIO:** Most definitely. Most definitely. You know, this is the air we breathe, in this space. It’s through a filter of white supremacy culture. And very often, that assimilation type of mindset, that most certainly our parents were subjected to as they immigrated or have come to this country--whenever that may have happened--that they’ve been indoctrinated to adopt that sort of idea that to “get along,” you have to adapt and lose part of your story. Part of your history.

And I get this because very often even their own remembrance of their own history is tied to violence...that has been perpetuated or perpetrated in their home countries and coming here. So it’s not an easy remembrance for them to actually even go back there...and think about where they’re from. At least in my case with my family. I don’t know about you Gregory, but they never spoke about--very hardly--about what life in the Philippines was like. It’s only now, actually, that I’m hearing more from them. And it’s usually in the context of them talking with my nieces and nephews--their grandkids. And I’m hearing about their lives even more. But growing up, we never--err, I never heard anything. And if I *did* hear something, it was along the lines of: “I should be grateful I’m here and not there.” [chuckles]

**GREG:** Yeah, my parents used to tell me, “When in Rome, do what the Romans do,” because I would always ask like “How come they never taught me Tagalog?” How come they never taught me any of my mother tongues?” And they were like, “Well we didn’t want you to have an accent. We didn’t want you to speak Tagalog on accident and get in trouble at school.” So very like...colonial mentality. And it took a lot for me to push them to say, “Hey, I actually want to know.”

And it wasn’t until 2012 where I got a chance to go to the Philippines as part of a delegation with then the Philippine ambassador to the US. And it was my first time because...and so I actually got to meet some of my family. And it gave me a very different...and it was interesting because the experience of my family versus being on a trip with the Philippine ambassador to the US--you could probably imagine the types of meals we were having and where we were staying. And they chose like ten of us from across the country.

**HILARIO:** Wow!

**GREG:** So I felt very blessed, but then also felt like I was living in a different world. Because my family was like they have *tabo tabo* so they have to pump the water and then put it into a tub and then pour it. At night I would go and stay in this, like, four star hotel with the ambassador and I was like, “This does not feel like I’m in the Philippines right now.”

So it really humbled me to know where my family was from and where they were living. It just made me really think differently about wanting to know more and feel more grounded in my community. It actually pushed me to then say, “Mom, Dad, my sister, I want us to all go back to the Philippines. I want us to all stay with our family. I don’t need to stay in a hotel. I want to just stay with our family and ask questions and learn and just be with our people.” And it’s forever since changed me. And I now have a better sense and understanding of how do I sort of push them to help decolonize their minds a little bit.

But I really am grateful because we never really...like us having that same experience together, they were like, “This is where Mom took her first step.” “This is where Mom and Dad met.” “This was their first date.” And it just gave me a very different understanding or relationship to them, that now I’m able to have these different kinds of conversations. So I’m definitely grateful for that.

And it really resonates that my dad was the hardest… And I specifically was like, “Father’s Day is important because my dad is still the person I have some of the hardest conversations with.” My hardest conversations are still with my dad, who it wasn’t until recently, actually, was like, “Yeah, Greg is gay and it’s not this in between the thing he’s going to go back to, he’s going to marry a woman.” He’s finally accepted I’m gonna...you know, I’m gay.

And I think that’s hard for him because I’m the oldest, I’m supposed to carry on the name. And I’m supposed to help build his legacy. But I tell him, “There’s ways to still do that, that’s not me having a kid with a woman.” Or, “I can have a family, and have a kid, but there can be different ways to do that.”

**HILARIO:** Yeah.

**GREG:** So it’s ongoing. And he’s moved and he’s grown a lot too, so I don’t want to negate that. But it’s definitely been a process. So yeah.

**HILARIO:** Yeah, it certainly is a process. And I have a quote, the very next quote is from Malcolm X, which talks about… And then we run into this also, like in doing the racial justice training specifically. Especially when we get to a space where there are a lot of woke white people. Or “woke” white people, right? And the reality is that we have to remember that this is a journey. Right? And we all have been on the journey. And sometimes when we first started this journey, we were not where we were.

**GREG:** Yeah.

**HILARIO:** And we’ve had to, through lived experience, our own awareness, and scholarship, we’ve gotten further along. And very often, especially as you are leading this work, we get easily offended--as we should sometimes, because this is really important, people should be engaged. But then when people come on and they’re not where we are, we can very often go to the realm of, “Why aren’t you where I am?” Not forgetting that, you know, you just started thinking about this stuff last week, so let’s not front that you were born with the racial justice lens in place. Right?

**GREG:** Yeah.

**HILARIO:** So having a little bit of grace to recognize that we say that we want people to build their awareness of it, we have to create the space for them to build that awareness. It doesn’t instantaneously mean that just through one conversation, and through the powerful words that Hilario Benzon says, that “Poof!” they magically understand everything at that moment. Because we didn’t understand the very beginning either.

So it’s just the idea that in this work, if someone admits that they are not where they need to be, it’s going to take some time for them to get where they need to go.

**GREG:** Yeah.

[clicking]

**HILARIO:** So that’s where I try to lead with a little more grace and compassion. Because that’s the only way how I can operate. Because it takes a lot to remind myself to be gracious to myself.

**GREG:** [softly] Yeah.

**HILARIO:** And to be gracious and just give myself a little bit more patience to do more. And to realize that in my best attempts at being perfect, I am imperfect. [Chuckles] Right?

**GREG:** Definitely. And maybe that could be a way to also kind of help close out. Because I feel like there’s a lot of pressure people feel, I think, to get it right. They feel like they have to convince people and do it all in like a night, overnight. [laughs] And it’s like--

**HILARIO:** I have the perfect--

[both pause for a moment]

**HILARIO:** I always end with Maya Angelou. And--

**ANNIE:** [offscreen, interpreting for Leang] Leang says I agree. 100 percent.

**GREG:** Okay. I’m going to close the room, so people are going to start coming back in now. Okay?

**HILARIO:** Ooh okay, here we go!

**IMAGE DESCRIPTION:** [MJ turns off camera, leaving the screen displaying a black background with white text that reads: ASL Interpreter | MJ Jones. After a moment, video feed of ASL interpreter Annie is displayed. End of image description]

[silence]

**GREG:** Alright folks are gonna probably start coming back now.

[clicking, bells tinkling]

[scraping, clicking]

**GREG:** Welcome back folks! Hopefully you were able to have some fruitful conversations. I know that we were able to have a very fruitful conversation in our small groups. I don’t know, Hilario, if you want to kind of take it back, but...I don’t know if there is any report back or highlights from the small group breakouts. We didn’t get a chance to kind of hop in. But I’m curious to see if there’s anything folks would like to share, in terms of a highlight or something that they learned.

And maybe if I could ask for someone who hasn’t spoken yet in the big group to say something. I know that a lot of folks are hiding their video. And maybe you don’t even have to come onto video, but if you could at least unmute yourself and share something, I would appreciate hearing from somebody new, if that’s okay.

[silence]

**GREG:** Oh! Justin! We welcome you!

**JUSTIN:** Hey, thank you so much for the space. I appreciate you all. I wanted to say that in our breakout session, we had a very good discussion about how...it was Marnelle who pointed out that when trying to has these difficult discussions with our elders, or our parents, or whoever, it's important to try to communicate to them that...

Because I gave an example of how my mother thought that... Well, her rebuttal to my argument was, "Well, you know, I've seen on the news that Blacks treat Asians very poorly, especially during COVID." And Marnelle pointed out that a good goal to have is to broaden the mindset and try to communicate to them that it's the minorities that are being pitted against each other for white supremacy. And that we all should be united together in solidarity to fight against white supremacy, as opposed to just pitting against each other. And she brought up the example of how Asians are seen as the "model minority" but obviously lately, and perhaps over the years, the Asian population has been trying to break that down and perhaps even--excuse me for my lack of knowledge, but--take back that name and restructure it, repurpose it to where we are not necessarily the "model minority." We're just as equal as everyone else and we are here to advocate for each other and to fight against white supremacy and ultimately police brutality and all the other evil concepts that exist in this society. [Laughs] Thank you.

**GREG:** Thank you for joining us and thank you for sharing! One of the things that we actually talked about in our group was that it’s an ongoing process. For us, for the folks in our communities. And there’s a lot of unlearning and decolonization that needs to happen. And part of the hope is that this will give you some ideas, lessons, things that you can build off of.

But even for me, as someone who’s organized for almost 20 years, who feels like I have a pretty good sense of my own identity, like I’m always learning something new every time I’m having a conversation with a family member or with somebody who I may have differing opinions with. And it pushes me! Like, it actually either affirms my belief or it actually opens me up and says, “Okay, is there another reason or way I could enter this or think about this conversation?”

So I definitely… Yeah, what you said really resonated, just in terms of the types of interactions a lot more of us are having in this moment. Especially as things are in the news. So just know: you’re not alone. We’re in community and space with you. And we’re grateful that you took some time out to share and be in community with us.

**HILARIO:** Appreciate you, thank you so much.

**GREG:** Anyone else? Maybe if there’s one other person?

**LINDA:** Sure. This is Linda. I’m sorry, I’m without a picture. I would like to know--and I can’t remember if it’s you, Gregory, or Hilario who teaches educators how to work with kids. But I’m interested in that because I think back on my own experiences as a kid, as well as my grandchildren now. So I’m obviously the much older generation.

But I appreciated all the various strategies you talked about and the way one would organize one’s thoughts.

I want to know more about how one helps kids protect themselves from some of the negative responses that they may get when they hear a comment and then say something. For me, growing up it was...really negative! What I would get back. And, it didn’t just last that one time. It would then be brought up again, and again, and again. And so I think of my grandchildren, who are multiracial. And I know how well their parents are teaching them. But I do think about that piece of how do you keep teaching kids not only what to say, but teach them how to protect themselves? Thanks!

**HILARIO:** So I can take that real quick. And thank you for sharing that. Part of the work that we do on behalf of the education field or the National Education Association is certainly we know that one of the ways that our students begin to find the power and strength to speak up and not just be silent bystanders is through the modeling of our educators.

And we also recognize that our educators typically speak and use what they’ve been socialized, the frameworks that they have adopted through their lifetimes. And so we recognize that in many instances, there is a void of our educators not knowing the words, or not knowing the actions, or not having those conversations and how to have those conversations. Because quite frankly, they don’t teach you that in teacher prep school. Like in your college classes, specifically, I know that from experience.

And so there’s a lot of work that we’re doing to particularly give power to voice and voice to action. Through our bully prevention programs, as well as the importance of not being a bystander--being someone that is going to advocate for yourself and also advocate for others to create a more welcoming and more safe environment in our schools, and our classrooms, and our buses.

So certainly, there are things...I’m going to put in the chat to one of our websites specifically that talks about these issues and more. It’s NEA@justice.org. And there is very specific resources on this as well as other types of resources that we can use, not just educators but it’s a public-facing website where people can actually use that. Because it is important for all of us to help one another do better. Right?

I’m noticing the time. I want to be respectful of where everybody is. I just want to close out real quickly--if that’s okay Gregory--with maybe one or two last slides that frame our thinking for the day.

**GREG:** Sure.

**HILARIO:** Alright. So we talked about the things that we want to do and the things that are important in the beginning, preparing. Things to think about when you’re in the moment. But I also think what’s important is making sure that we are also critically aware of what to do afterwards. What do we do in the end?

**IMAGE DESCRIPTION:** [New slide is displayed. Video feed of ASL interpreter Annie is reduced to the upper right corner of the screen. New slide is a black background with white text and a grayscale photograph. The grayscale photograph features a person standing on a road, walking forward into the distance. The white text reads:

In the End.

Look back.

Look for bridges.

Look through mirrors.

Look out windows.

Look forward.

Logos for the People’s Collective and NEA and CSJ are displayed. End of slide description]

**HILARIO:** We had a conversation regardless of how it went, it’s important to look back. Be reflective of the conversation. Be reflective of what happened. We also want to look for signs of bridges. Are there ways that you can connect? Is there a point or something that you could build a bridge to? It doesn’t mean you necessarily cosign and accept where it is, but looking for those opportunities to create connections.

We have to look through mirrors. Look at yourself. How has this impacted you? What care do you need? What support do you need after this conversation, so that you are whole? So that you're making sure that you’re in a place of safety, you’re in a place of strength and are able to continually move forward. I know that’s hard.

We look out the windows on what work needs to be done. And Gregory and I, in our small group we had a conversation about looking forward. There are times when you have to make some tough decisions. Where you have to put specific markers in the ground and say, “You know what? That is not okay with me. And for now we’re going to have to pause our relationship, or I cannot continue this.” And before you make the decisions and things like that, I always find it’s important to seek counsel. Either from some families or friends. But being clear that our goal in all of this is to move ourselves forward, in hopes of moving people forward.

So I just want to offer up this very last quote. It’s one of my most favorite quotes of the world. It’s by Maya Angelou. I think many of you have heard it.

**IMAGE DESCRIPTION:** [Slide changes. New slide is a black background with a large grayscale photograph of Maya Angelou. The photograph has a black background, and overlaid on top of it is white text. The text reads: Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better. -Maya Angelou. The logos for the People's Collective and NEA and CSJ are displayed. End of slide description]

**HILARIO:** Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, you do better. If I were to be so bold as to add one other piece: in our focus to know better and to do better, there is a period in time where we simply just have to be better.

**IMAGE DESCRIPTION:** [Text appears beneath the photograph. It reads: “Be better.” End of image description.]

**HILARIO:** We have to practice, and we have to learn. And we have to create the space so that our families, our uncles, our mothers, our aunties, our friends…have the chance to be better. Because we get so focused on doing things and saying the right things that we aren’t actually being better people. And we aren’t actually living up to what we promised.

So hopefully, in our time together, what we’ve shared and what you shared with one another has created a space to feel encouraged to have conversations that will leave you whole. That will provide the strength to actually risk more. And so, I just want to say thank you for sharing a little piece of this time with us, with me. And I wish all of you well.

**GREG:** Awesome. Well thank you again Hilario. Everyone thank you for joining us. I wanted to just plug a couple of quick things. And you can also find this on our website.

But, this Saturday we have an AAPI Educator Strategies session. We’ll be talking about anti-Blackness and anti-Black racism, the reopenings of schools, and how that’s impacting folks.

And then we also will be having a town hall at the end of this month. And it’s going to be a town hall on gender and LGBTQ justice. It’s called “Femmes and Queers on the Frontlines: The Intersections of Racial, Gender, And LGBTQI Justice.”

All the information for our upcoming programs is included on the website which I just put into the chat. So please join us and please continue to stay engaged. Thank you again and hope you have a great rest of your day and evening.

Oh wait did you have a question Justin?

**JUSTIN:** Yeah just a quick question. I wanted to ask: what’s the difference between a town hall and, say, a meeting like this?

**GREG:** Yeah, great question! So this is actually something new that we just launched this week. We're calling it “COVID Campus” but we are likely going to change the name. But the idea of it, the essence of the idea is to have smaller group conversations, ability to engage in breakouts like what we did.

**JUSTIN:** Oh okay.

**GREG:** The town halls have been much larger.

**JUSTIN:** I see.

**GREG:** Like, the first one had almost 4000 people so it’s a little harder to do breakouts in that same way. But our hope is to be able to have a combination of town halls that will be able to accommodate hundreds or multiple thousands of people, and then in between also have these smaller workshops and roundtables. We actually just brought up some new organizing committee folks, so hope to also diversify the types of things that we have available.

**JUSTIN:** Okay, appreciate the clarification. Thank you so much.

**GREG:** No, of course. I appreciate you asking. Thank you.

Any other questions? Okay. Well, thank you all so much for being with us. And we’ll be in touch. And Black Lives Matter. Here we go.

Bye everyone. You’re welcome. I see your chats, I really appreciate it.

**ANNIE:** Alright, thank you. Leang is saying thank you. Thank you, goodbye.

[End of event.]