



# Red & Blue:

A conversation series about bridging the divide

## Zeidler Center Dialogue Report 1



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## Executive Summary

This report details dialogue themes emerging from the first “Red & Blue Dialogue,” a conversation series sponsored by the Millennial Action Project and facilitated by the Zeidler Center. The dialogue took place on Tuesday, March 20, 2018 at the Pabst Best Place in Milwaukee.

During the event, Zeidler Center facilitators guided participants through structured dialogue. Participants responded to two key questions:

1. *“This dialogue is an opportunity for us to set the stage for the rest of this series, specifically brainstorming how people can disagree politically without being disagreeable. With that in mind, describe an experience where you felt respected OR disrespected for your political views? What was the experience? What would have made it MORE respectful?”*
2. *“What motivates you and what holds you back from building relationships across political divides?”*

Participants were also asked to participate in “connected conversation” if time allowed. This section encouraged participants to have an open conversation, ask question to peers, and discuss what was heard in the facilitated listening circles. In addition, participants were asked a series of follow-up questions:

- “Since the election, have there been ways that your values and perspectives have been stereotyped by the “other side”? If so, what is it about who you are and what you care about that makes those stereotypes especially upsetting?”*
- “Are there some stereotypes of your own party that you feel are somewhat deserved—even if they are not fully true?”*
- “What aspects of the other party or candidate do you admire—or at least understand to be reasonable counter-balances to excess on the side you generally support?”*
- “Given the challenges we face, what dreams do you have for yourself, your family, community, or country?”*
- “What steps can you take toward making one dream real?”*

During the first round, participants relayed personal experiences feeling both respected and disrespected regarding political views. Participants noted that they felt respected and comfortable as long as interactions remained civil. Participants noted that they are intentional about interacting with those who had different views and wished for more opportunities to do so. Participants also noted that they felt most comfortable in one-on-one and in-person situations, noting that it contributes to accountability and better behavior. Conversely,

participants felt most disrespected and were upset by people making assumptions and judgements based on face-value or labels.

During the second round, participants discussed motivations to build relationships across political divides, included learning and thinking about the future, as well as reluctance, based upon fear and lack of civility. Overwhelmingly, participants shared that they were motivated by learning something new, building relationships, removing barriers and looking towards the future. Other participants spoke about being reluctant because of others' unwillingness to listen, be civil, not wanting to be offensive or create a charged emotional situation. Participants also relayed access issues as well as fear of having views held against them at a future time.

During the connected conversation portion of the discussion, participants' discussion took two primary tracts, geared toward a discussion of stereotyping and steps for change. In terms of problems or challenges, Participants identified stereotypes, including party-biases, and the problem of "losing the middle," and the need for diversity. Groups discussed the problems of others' making assumptions and tribalism in our society. Participants also talked about the need for opportunities for listening, and compromise, as well as need for diversity, avoiding labels, and a change in systems.

In their final words, participants stated overwhelming positive feelings toward both the conversation and hope for progress on political divides in general. Some participants relayed their "take-aways" including fostering creativity, understanding and compromise while avoiding tribalism.

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## Analysis

**Question Round One:** *“This dialogue is an opportunity for us to set the stage for the rest of this series, specifically brainstorming how people can disagree politically without being disagreeable. With that in mind, describe an experience where you felt respected OR disrespected for your political views? What was the experience? What would have made it more respectful?”*

### 1.1 Civility and Opportunity

When discussing personal experiences feeling respected or disrespected for political views, participants mostly noted that they felt respected and comfortable interacting with others that have opposing views as long as the conversation remained civil. Some participants noted that they were intentional about staying in touch with and interacting with those who had different views and wished for more opportunities to do so. Overall, groups discussed interacting with those with opposite political views in a positive light.

“I feel most comfortable, actually doing what some of the previous people said. . . among people who have divergent opinions, yet, we can be civil.”

“I find pleasure when I can run into someone who disagrees with me on my political beliefs, but I believe in my heart, and you should believe in yours, to do what is right when it comes to politics.”

“I feel most respected when I am engaged in a conversation, political or otherwise with a person(s) that do not possess predetermined ideas or concepts.”

“I wish there were more opportunities for me to encounter people that are diametrically opposed to my views, so that I can hear another side and be enlightened.”

### 1.2 In-Person Interactions

Participants also noted that they felt most comfortable in one-on-one and in-person situations, noting that it contributes to accountability and better behavior. A few participants relayed situations where they felt disrespected by strangers on an online-platform.

“I feel best in one-on-one situations where I am in the presence of someone and not on the internet where, it appears that anonymity provides courage for some TROLLS...”

“...it has been my experience, the one on one way works best for me, not large forums or meetings, I hate when people attempt to embarrass you in public.”

“I never realized how political education was until I started writing about it. People are vicious; they send me tweets, emails, stuff like that, and they get extremely disrespectful.”

### **1.3 Disrespect in Assumptions**

Along those lines, participants felt most disrespected and were upset by people making assumptions and judgements based on face-value or labels (including religious, party-related or based on their work), instead of who they are, whether in person or not. Participants relayed many intense feelings about judgements and labels put on them by others when discussing what makes them feel disrespected.

“I find it disrespectful when people say bad things about the other group or insult people because they believe in X.”

“I feel disrespected when they say, “you must support \_\_\_\_\_” or “you must believe \_\_\_\_\_”. I would feel more respected if people just didn’t assume.”

“As a lobbyist and Evangelical Christian people make assumptions about me.”

“In today’s political climate with Donald Trump I often feel disrespected. Because I’m a republican people judge me as a person.”

Overall, participants collectively relayed that listening is key to having meaningful interactions, as well as progress in understanding other groups and opinions.

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**Question Round Two:** *“What motivates you and what holds you back from building relationships across political divides?”*

### **2.1 Motivations: learning, the future**

When discussing building relationships across political divides, overwhelmingly, participants shared that they were motivated by learning something new, building relationships, tearing down bridges and looking towards the future. Participants talked new generations doing something different, in order to “get things done,” and to ensure that our country “has a bright future” as well. Other participants noted that they are motivated by avoiding boredom and connecting with humanity.

“What motivates me is meeting people who do not share my same background. I want to build, thrive, and tear down bridges of discrimination, racism, and any other isms that go against my beliefs.”

“I am motivated by my personal belief that the system works, and I hold true to the motivator of working together and compromise to arrive at real solutions.”

“...real sense of curiosity. I don’t want everyone to think the same super stale and boring thing.”

“What motivates me is my desire to connect with humanity and the humanness of those I encounter.”

## **2.2 Reluctance: civility, fear**

When discussing what holds them back from engaging in relationships across political divides, participants spoke about being reluctant because of others’ unwillingness to listen, be civil, or not wanting to be offensive or create a charged emotional situation. Other participants also spoke about not having access to other people with different views, and also fear of their views being held against them in the future in relationships, jobs, etc.

“What holds me back is. . . people who have demonstrated throughout our connection or association their unwillingness to listen and engage with civility.”

“I find that is this time the lack of civility and willingness to listen makes me reluctant to engage as much as I would like.”

“What makes me hold back is a lack of trust and not knowing if certain things will be used against me later.”

“I hold back because I don’t always know where people stand. I don’t want to say something triggering or offensive.”

**Connected Conversation** – *“Since the election, have there been ways that your values and perspectives have been stereotyped by the ‘other side’? If so, what is it about who you are and what you care about that makes those stereotypes especially upsetting?”; “Are there some stereotypes of your own party that you feel are somewhat deserved—even if they are not fully true?”; “What aspects of the other party or candidate do you admire—or at least understand to be reasonable counter-balances to excess on the side you generally support?”; “Given the challenges we face, what dreams do you have for yourself, your family, community, or country?”; “What steps can you take toward making one dream real?”*

Participant’s responses during the connected conversation were mostly geared toward the questions about stereotyping and steps that can be taken for change. Responses mostly fell into two categories, including problems and solutions.

### **3.1 Stereotyping, diversity and losing the middle**

Participants identified stereotypes, including party-biases, and the problem of “losing the middle,” and the need for diversity. Participants talked about their feelings about being stereotyped, including stating that people “just assume I believe in certain things instead of asking.” And also relaying that social media doesn’t help because you “continue to be herded with other people like you.” Participants spoke about diversity, taking party sides and the loss of the “middle.”

“We say “diversity” but we only accept it when it’s palatable for us.”

“I am not my party. No one is. And it’s tough because even within the party, if you don’t agree with other people, you’re out.”

“What I find most troubling is the people who KNOW me and still stereotype me.”

“What happens is, you get two extremes, and the middle doesn’t come back. Maybe we need to start bringing more to the middle.”

### **3.2 Listening, compromise and change**

Participants also talked about the need for opportunities for listening, and compromise, as well as need for diversity, avoiding labels, and a change in systems. Participants both said directly that increased opportunities for “this type of forum” and for “bipartisanship’ as well as indirectly addressing listening and compromise in conversations.

“Small efficiencies, well-thought ideas -- real change comes from compromise. I feel that people need to sit down with other people with tough decisions and find some resolutions

instead of fighting about the problem.”

“I believe one should be careful when describing the intent and beliefs of others.”

“I think that’s why we need change the primary system and when we become responsive to all sides that will make for a civil society.”

“I do not like labels and really wish that each of us could just be individuals and not parties.”

#### **4. Parting Words**

In final words, participants overwhelmingly relayed feeling good, invigorated and energized. They mentioned feeling heartened and “nice to see I’m not alone” about their feelings towards political divides. Participants also noted some takeaways, like fostering curiosity and avoiding tribalism.

“It’s nice to see I’m not alone. We might not all agree, but we all want better.”

“I feel this was a good start to what is needed for understanding and compromise while working together.”

“Be careful of your assumptions about people and where they come from.”

## Annexes

**Question Round One:** *“This dialogue is an opportunity for us to set the stage for the rest of this series, specifically brainstorming how people can disagree politically without being disagreeable. With that in mind, describe an experience where you felt respected OR disrespected for your political views? What was the experience? What would have made it more respectful?”*

- I feel most respected when I am engaged in a conversation, political or otherwise with a person(s) that do not possess predetermined ideas or concepts. It has been my lived experience that when you do listen closely and deeply you are the one that gains insight into the other person or groups motivation. I feel disrespected when I am with my nuclear and extended family, because they often feel that since most of them have known me all my life that is acceptable to use pejorative language and bellicose behavior, when discussing politics, race, and religion.
- I share some of the previous speakers' sentiments, I feel that the divide in this country is based on FEAR, fear of the unknown. I moved from the Midwest and I was in awe when I relocated to The East Coast, where I have found that people do not have a problem hurting your feelings and disregarding your opinion or point of entirely. I am not intimidated :) not in the least. When I feel safe to engage is when I am with strangers because of lack of a previous association.
- I would like to weigh in from a “Real World View” I have two children that do not, I repeat do not share my political view. We can indeed talk, however, we do keep it civil but at times it does become volatile. Now, I feel weary of just hanging out with those of like mind, it gets boring and some of the persons that I used to regularly engage are stuck in a place where I feel I have grown from. I wish there were more opportunities for me to encounter people that are diametrically opposed to my views, so that I can hear another side and be enlightened.
- I handle disrespect by saying to myself, often, that that person is just ignorant (not knowing or aware) limited in their world view of, especially the political landscape. I feel best in one-on-one situations where I am in the presence of someone and not on the internet where, it appears that anonymity provides courage for some TROLLS to just “go off halfcocked” I am a member of our local school board and this is the arena where I experience the most “Push Back” and outright disrespect. . . . Go Figure :)
- I too have challenges with people who are uniformed, yet, they feel compelled to “diss” me whether in private or a public venue. I feel most comfortable, actually doing what some of the previous people said. . . among people who have divergent opinions, yet; we can be civil, and it has been my experience, the one on one way works best for me, not large forums or meetings, I hate when people attempt to embarrass you in public.
- I feel the most disrespected when I talk to women my age when they find out my views are more right-leaning. One time I was talking to a woman and I told her where I work and

what I do and she said, "that must be soul-sucking", as if there are no redeeming qualities in my work or the people I work with and for. It was very dismissive; I would have felt more respected if she just didn't say anything. Otherwise, I don't really ever feel disrespected because I'm not very vocal about politics.

- I'm a reporter, and recently I started writing about education. I never realized how political education was until I started writing about it. People are vicious; they send me tweets, emails, stuff like that, and they get extremely disrespectful. One man in particular, a middle school teacher, called me the "c-word". I don't even remember why, but I'll never forget him calling me that. I would have felt more respected, or at least understood it more, if he had at least told me what upset him so much. I still don't know what triggered him to say that.
- I'm a career woman, and I work in business, so people assume they know a lot about me based on that. For example, they assume I'm very far left, so I feel disrespected when they say, "you must support \_\_\_\_" or "you must believe \_\_\_\_". I would feel more respected if people just didn't assume. It's very dismissive to not account for my experiences or the fact that I come from an urban environment. You can't assume my politics based on my line of work.
- I feel respected and disrespected every day; it's part of the job. I met a gentleman last year when I was just starting out in politics and he had an idea for a bipartisan paper caucus; he had a paper company and thought there was value in both sides of the aisle investing in sustainable, eco-friendly paper practices. The next day, I called some people, both democrats and republicans, and asked if they were on board and a lot of them were. A couple days later, I got a call from a man saying they were starting a bipartisan paper caucus, so I asked, you know, "why'd you take this idea from me?" and he said "well we talked to leadership and they don't want you to get credit", so I said "well can I be a chairperson on the board? I have a lot of ideas I still want to contribute" and he told me that leadership didn't feel like I should be on the board because I don't have a paper business, but I know it's really because I'm a democrat. I'm often pushed out because I'm in the minority party right now. On the other hand, I feel respected when I get letters or meet constituents who tell me I'm doing a good job or get endorsements from organizations or other politicians. That makes me feel like I'm doing quality work.
- Recently someone posted an article on Facebook about myself and the other people running for school board in New Berlin and a man commented on it saying how I'm too young, I'm inexperienced, and he disagrees with my views on one specific issue. He didn't even consider my stance on other important issues or the experience that I do have. I would have felt more respected if he had asked questions about my views and stayed away from personal attacks. Just stick to the issues, you know?
- In today's political climate with Donald Trump I often feel disrespected. Because I'm a republican people judge me as a person. It's especially hard in a city like Milwaukee it's hard to even say I'm a republican and it's unfair. I feel like our president constitutes what it means to be a republican. But I'm a republican for several different reasons, I started my own business at 19 and I looked at what political views had less taxes and less regulations. It's disrespectful to judge or label me with misogyny and that I hate immigrants.

- In the national dialogue with the #metoo movement I had a conversation with a friend on sexual assault. We had a disagreement about who takes ownership when something happens. I did lots of work in my previous job with survivors and my friend is a lawyer and tried to base things off of that. I felt like I was being talked down to because she was using laws and words I didn't know. I feel like we got to a point in the conversation when we were just trying to one up each other and hurt each other's feelings. At the end of it all I think we actually felt similar about who's responsible, but it took a long time to get there.
- In the service world (work with communities who face barriers to access social services) I receive passes/vouchers for a program. I thought there was some type of benefits qualification from the way it was explained to me. The org that I was working with wanted to make it as easy as possible to get the pass. It was about the principle for me and I had to fight to make sure our partners were satisfied and felt safe and supported. I didn't feel like we were fulfilling the mission if we didn't provide transportation for all.
- I think I'm different from many other people, I tend to be in situations where I'm with all these or all these people. They assume I agree with all they but really it may only be 1/3. I find it disrespectful when people say bad things about the other group or insult people because they believe in X. I tend to always question myself and say, "is it worth jeopardizing my standing in this group?" I typically never do because it would take up too much time. I wish there were more things like this where people can see that the isn't as tribal.
- I recall being at a friend's wedding and having a stranger lead the conversation with the question "So were you a Bernie Supporter"? As the conversation proceeded I felt somewhat disrespected so we switched to another subject other than politics and money. What would have made the situation better when both parties have to listen without disrupting.
- After being sworn in and engaging in conversations with colleagues on other side of policy items I felt at times somewhat disrespected. Making it better would mean us working together for good policy.
- Having been involved in government and politics for many years it happens to me every day. As a lobbyist and Evangelical Christian people make assumptions about me. Making it better is learning what is going on both sides of the aisles and be careful in emotional response and reaction.
- I've felt disrespected when my personal thoughts and perspectives were limited due to certain political causes and found that I felt most comfortable with the caucus that allows one to say what is on their mind and allows one to have a right to ask whatever questions they needed to ask.
- I met with one of the vice-presidents [of a corporation] and he heard that I worked at Rockwell. He was very polite in conversation and our discussion came about and we began to talk about my background and my school upbringing. I went to public school and for me that was not the way to go. As I got older I [find that I] very strongly disagree about public school funding. I feel that schools should be supported by their communities. I was also told by my colleagues that I push my beliefs on everyone. I was told that I wanted everyone to get on the liberal train.

- I have a friend in northern Wisconsin and they have different views about the surrounding areas – Milwaukee, Racine, and Kenosha. They want to play the liberal card and I will allow them to play it, but I will not budge from my beliefs. My friends are hard-core liberals. As a progressive, I should be able to agree to disagree. It always turns into a dialogue, and then an argument. I was no longer listening, nor were they listening to me. I find that listening is the key. Dialogue is not about persuading someone to be in your corner.
  - I work in politics. I really can't find any reason to disagree. I am one young republican. I was welcomed by persons on the porch, meaning that I get out and I campaign. I ran into a man who was sitting on a porch who was a Viet Nam vet. He was affected by Agent Orange. We stay in touch and we come together, and we always end up disagreeing on politics. However, our conversations are always great. I find pleasure when I can run into someone who disagrees with me on my political beliefs, but I believe in my heart, and you should believe in yours, to do what is right when it comes to politics.
  - I am pro-life, and I don't care about the women's movements at all. I practice Buddhism and I am an atheist, but the question is often asked of me, 'How can you be pro-life and be an atheist?' I am also living the green life. I am very far left. At one point in my life I was very afraid to let people know that I am on the far left. It's hard for me to agree on any given topic, although my curiosity weighs heavily on me on the very tough topics.
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**Question Round Two:** *"What motivates you and what holds you back from building relationships across political divides?"*

- What motivates me is my desire to connect with humanity and the humanness of those I encounter. What holds me back is. . . people who have demonstrated throughout our connection or association their unwillingness to listen and engage with civility.
- What motivates me is my family - friends - party affiliation. I desire to represent with dignity and I find that is this time the lack of civility and willingness to listen makes me reluctant to engage as much as I would like.
- What motivates me, especially with someone that holds an opposite view or opinion; not to win them over, but; to be prepared to possibly learn something that I did not know or was aware of previously. What holds me back is that I can only stand ignorant behavior for only so long... my patience wears thin quickly.
- I am practicing with my spouse "how to slow down" in my discourse with others, that is what motivated me to attend today's event... it is a perfect opportunity to practice some newly developed skills at deep listening and being open and receptive. What holds me back is that I know I am not perfect and may, depending on the time and place default back to my original ways.
- What motivates me is the need to get things done. The reality is that I have the minority opinion right now, so if I wasn't willing to work across the aisle, nothing would get done. Plus, I also find that I agree with the other side on some things, so it's not about what label people fall under. That doesn't determine what people will believe about any specific

thing. Sometimes I disagree more within my own party on issues. Another thing that motivates me is my constituents. I hear them say all the time that they want politicians to work together on the major issues, so I owe it to them to at least try. What makes me hold back is a lack of trust and not knowing if certain things will be used against me later.

- I'm motivated by other people in my generation. I'm young, and I think that my generation can be more laidback politically. Most people I've met aren't very confrontational and are willing to hear people out. It's easy to work with people on the other side when they're willing to listen. What holds me back is the stigma within the party. I'm younger and not as established, so I'm fearful that older people in the party will hold it against me. I have friends in other political parties, so when I talk to them, some people question and ask "why are you talking to them? How can you work with the opposition?" I worry that it can impact my political future.
- What holds me back is feeling like I will have to be on the defense or explain my views repeatedly. I always wonder what people will say, especially because of my age and gender. I have personal and professional stakes in politics and I don't think people understand that. I'm motivated by my own personal interests. I think people are interesting. I want to know what people believe and why. It wouldn't do me any good to only hear one side.
- What motivates me is that my life is so segregated. If I go to dinner and talk about politics, 99% of the people there will agree with me. I'm embarrassed by that. I feel like I'm missing out on something. What holds me back is access. I live in D.C., so I encounter tourists more than anything, so there aren't very many organic conversations happening around politics. It's scary.
- I hold back because I don't always know where people stand. I don't want to say something triggering or offensive. I'm motivated to build relationships because I see a need to do so. I feel like it's my personal duty. I love my country and I have to do whatever I can to ensure that it has a bright future.
- Motivates – to build bridges because tribalism is super stale and boring and can't be the only way to gain change. Grey matter can change things. If you look at history peoples' ideas have always shifted.
- Motivating – it's just nicer and more practical. I hate a wasted opportunity because there are so many things we could get done if we weren't busy opposing sides.
- Motivates – I don't want to live in a world where everyone acts alike. That's boring. I hear stories from people of color or people who are different from and that's okay, I like that as a young republican. We believe in equality for everyone.
- What holds me back is the assumptions because of my background, skin color and blessings. The stereotype of a republican business owner and white. Necessity there is nothing necessary about me crossing the political divide sometimes I'm scared of tweeting because there's more people out there that want me to fail than succeed.
- Something that holds me back is the thought "where are they?". I don't interact with people who think different but then I thought maybe I do but we just don't talk about certain topics. People can make assumptions and they can become layered after that.
- Motivates – real sense of curiosity. I don't want everyone to think the same super stale and

boring thing.

- I am motivated by my personal belief that the system works, and I hold true to the motivator of working together and compromise to arrive at real solutions. What holds me back sometimes is the lack of receptiveness when discussing issues on the table.
- I am motivated by “The Debate” my best friend is a philosophy major and avid Trump supporter and I enjoy how we are able to debate without our emotions getting out of hand. Emotions getting involved holds me back from building relationships and being stuck in gridlock.
- Because of my background and experiences, I am motivated by my ability to be receptive of someone else’s opinions and thoughts even if I don’t fully agree. The thing that holds me back when there is no willingness on the part of others to be receptive to my thoughts and perspective.
- What stops me from building relationships is the gerrymandering that takes place sometimes. I often have the analogical opinion that politics is a game.
- I am a child of an immigrant parent. I want people to hear my stories. My story of what holds me back. Values hold me back. Discrimination holds me back, and it doesn’t work well with me at all. It’s hard to hear all of this political talk about the immigration laws, but I want to let them know that I am a daughter and a granddaughter of immigrants. So, hearing this come from our political leaders really grieves my heart, and that’s why I joined political parties to help shoot down those unbelieving ungracious laws of importing immigrants.
- What motivates me is meeting people who do not share my same background. I want to build, thrive, and tear down bridges of discrimination, racism, and any other isms that go against my beliefs. I am glad people don’t think like me because I am very comfortable in my skin. I don’t mind the challenges of meeting new people on different levels on their political beliefs. I enjoy the challenges and the debates that I am engaged in.
- Changing diversity, attitudes of religion – it’s easy to say let’s keep slavery going because a lot of people have died. A lot of people fought hard. A lot of people have built, and they achieve out of the sense of that slavery mentality.
- Badger Care was created and no longer is [in existence] because it out-priced itself and it became non-affordable, and the statement was made, ‘two Jews in a room. How did they come up with three different opinions?’ [This participant was redirected upon making this statement.]

**Connected Conversation** – *“Since the election, have there been ways that your values and perspectives have been stereotyped by the ‘other side’? If so, what is it about who you are and what you care about that makes those stereotypes especially upsetting?”; “Are there some stereotypes of your own party that you feel are somewhat deserved—even if they are not fully true?”; “What aspects of the other party or candidate do you admire—or at least understand to be reasonable counter-balances to excess on the side you generally support?”; “Given the challenges we face, what dreams do you have for yourself, your family, community, or country?”; “What steps can you take toward making one dream real?”*

- Increased opportunities for this type of forum
- Trust
- The willingness to “really listen”
- Faith in humanity
- Learn how to truly collaborate
- Opportunities for “bipartisanship”
- I must say, of all the things I’ve heard here tonight, I think age and gender are the most divisive traits in any group. I would agree with that. For every group, those are the two subgroups.
- Speaking to tribalism, I think that’s a huge part of the access issue. You have to make an extra effort to talk to people and get to know them. As people we tend to flock together. Absolutely. It’s natural. We seek people similar to use, which is how you find yourself in a bubble. It’s no one’s fault, but it’s very real. Yes! You see it politically, geographically, everything.
- I agree. Social media doesn’t help! Everything is targeted to your interests, so it’s like you continue to be herded with other people like you.
- I find it interesting that I have a more diverse group of friends in Brookfield than I had in Chicago. Like sure, Chicago is the more diverse city, but for me personally, my bubble was very small and white. Now, I’m exposed to more races, ethnicities, ages, and family structures in my friend group. It’s brought about a different quality of conversation, which is very eye-opening and refreshing.
- Diversity. That is the buzzword of the moment lately. My kid was going to a public school in D.C. that sells itself on diversity. Different races and ethnicities, orientations, disabilities, et cetera., but in the last election, ONE family voted for Trump. ONE. That child in that family was singled out by everyone else because their family had a difference in opinion. We say “diversity” but we only accept it when it’s palatable for us. Now my kid goes to a private catholic school and he came home one day saying “Mom, do you know there are people here who actually LIKE Trump?” I said “Awesome! That’s ideological diversity and we need more of that.”
- I’m glad someone brought that up. There’s a very dominate racial group in my hometown,

and some of my family members adopted a Korean child. Now they want to move to where I live and I had to warn them against it. They live somewhere a lot more diverse right now, so their children aren't used to such a white, homogenous community. Their white child isn't used to being somewhere where everyone looks like them, and the Korean child isn't used to being somewhere where no one looks like them. I probably would've never thought about this before, but now running for school board, I see the plight of racial or ethnic minorities.

- I don't think I've been stereotyped any more than usual, it's just more socially accepted and talked about. I'm fairly central in my views, but people often say "you must be racist, you must be rich" etc. What I find most troubling is the people who KNOW me and still stereotype me. I have a friend, best friend actually, who no longer speaks to my parents because she knows they voted for Trump. I'm just thinking: you KNOW these people! But politics has become so polarizing. In a way it makes people float even more to an extreme because of the stereotypes. Like, no, I'm not like that, but if this is how you're going to treat me then I might as well go over here.
- Yea, I've definitely found that people are more socially accepting of tolerant. I meet people who ask blanket questions like "what kind of person would vote for/against this?" as if there really is ONE kind of person. I am not my party. No one is. And it's tough because even within the party, if you don't agree with other people, you're out.
- I read a book and it was talking about the Middle East, but the author was tackling what happens when you lose the middle. What happens is, you get two extremes, and the middle doesn't come back. Maybe we need to start bringing more to the middle. I have a friend of over 20 years who voted differently from me. This is someone who I respect and admire, but we voted a different way. I think that's a positive. We need to find more of that positive.
- I read that too! The author also did a podcast on it. He said that when you base your self-perception on being "stronger" than the other side or being "right", you lose the middle and then there's no motivation to compromise. That makes it hard for the people who actually want to compromise, because they have to be secretive. There's a pressure to pick one side and just stay there, as if to say if you're a democratic or republican, you MUST believe certain things.
- I had that experience as a young college student involved in politics. Everyone assumed because of my age that I was what we would call a "Bernie Bro", and when I would say I'm actually a republican, they would ask "are you a Crews republican or a Kasich republican?" I don't even know what that means! They would just assume I believed certain things instead of asking.
- Do you think you're more stereotyped for your age, race, or gender? It depends on the generation. For older people, it tends to be my age. For younger people, it tends to be race and gender. You have to cater to what people care about. Older people tend to care about your experience and younger people tend to care about your thoughts and ideologies.
- I had that same experience 30 years ago coming into my field. People usually get over it once they see you in action. You do well, and you gain respect.

- How have your views changed since the election? My priorities are just different. At the last election, I was newly married and had a new baby. Now I'm on baby number 2. When I was voting at 18, I voted based on things like women's economics because I thought it just made sense, but I didn't have any real opinions on it. Now, I vote more on things like family rights, paid leave, stuff like that. It's just different. My heart changed, but not my mind. What I care about is different, but not my fundamental beliefs.
- You said it's hard to be a republican. In the past couple of years has it gotten harder? Yeah, no doubt about it. Trump has changed everything. Politically there isn't a lot I disagree with Trump. It's hard to identify with that world view though, he seems so out of touch.
- I think there are for white males and we deserve that. I don't think it's fair. There's a stigma. I do want to say that there's this story out there about republicans taking cues from the NRA, but there's nothing I get more than people calling about ways to protect their guns. The people I talk to care so much about their 2nd Amendment.
- For me it's in 2 places, being a pro-life democrat and the act blue movement. The act blue movement is difficult because it's pretty much telling democrats don't be partially blue during these times. As for the pro-life democrat, candidates for each party were the most extreme and there was no place for me. But I do feel like not being open to non-standard pos. is somewhat true.
- I think that's why we need change the primary system and when we become responsive to all sides that will make for a civil society.
- Our policy shouldn't destroy families.
- I think it's hard for a younger politician, I don't feel I belong in either, we need parties though. Its hard to run as an independent because you may have a spectrum of views.
- I think we could do something about that by changing our curricula. Curricula required to teach from top down if social curricula required local politics. If social studies went from K-12 they'd have a different system.
- My dream is for Black wealth to exist.
- I used to live in Switzerland and you could get anywhere in the country without using a car. The system was networked. There was so much money saved on road repairs. Rails last longer. I have a dream where older people aren't stuck in their houses in suburbs due to inefficient transportation. There are easy ways to make things more efficient.
- I would have robotics in every school. Broadband for every person in the city. A hyperloop from here in to Chicago. I'd have self-driving cars. But I would trade all of that for my 2 kids to be healthy, happy and have any opportunities to do whether they wanted. Hyperloop – underground super-fast bullet for transportation.
- Creating a system of governance that's innovative thinkers not beholders to the past. Disruptors. Expiring people who they never had a chance.
- I do not like labels and really wish that each of us could just be individuals and not parties.
- I believe one should be careful when describing the intent and beliefs of others.
- Our limited understanding of issue can cause the conversation to become inflated.
- You use the pro-life as it should be used. But how can you consider yourself to be pro-life when you are an atheist is my question to you? I am still trying to understand how you can be pro-life? How can you be so far left?

- Why would you take away money because they don't know how to read out of schools?
- What sense does that make, taking money from public schools to hinder and to hurt children of color and ethnicities because some of these children, I believe, possibly could be your nieces and nephews? Why do we want to hurt our young and innocent children?
- Best things happen. I know diversity is a great thing to happen to older men. Older men should not apply for ITT work.
- Why is it so hard in the political arena for the parties to agree or to disagree on certain political issues that I feel should be just cut and dry?
- I like what was said about lifestyles and being self-sustaining in small communities.
- Small efficiencies, well-thought ideas -- real change comes from compromise. I feel that people need to sit down with other people with tough decisions and find some resolutions instead of fighting about the problems. When I am fighting other people about their political agendas I go to my own space because I pick and choose my own political battles.

### **Parting Words**

- No time, due to Elected Officials short talks and the ZCFPD facilitators moving forward to the evening facilitation at THE MILWAUKEE REPERTORY THEATER.
- Be careful of your assumptions about people and where they come from.
- Our common thread is curiosity. It makes us more respectful. As a journalist, I have a responsibility to end tribalism and revive curiosity.
- I'm heartened by the fact that we are all going through similar experiences and breaking molds.
- It's nice to see I'm not alone. We might not all agree, but we all want better.
- None.
- Stale, tribalism, boring, its old.
- Energized. I feel more prepared.
- World view. I'm wondering how much it matters, one's own world view? Do we work on vision or issues.
- Disruptors – things that change the status quo.
- I feel invigorated, more engaged and happy for the dialogue circle.
- I feel great, fantastic and hoping next time for more ideological diversity
- I feel good about the conversation
- I feel this was a good start to what is needed for understanding and compromise while working together.
- If we can learn to work together in all areas –
- I love this listening circle. Although I didn't get into any challenges or great debates it was good for me just to listen and learn not to be so defensive and always ready for debate.