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# The Dialogue:

## Final Report

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Prepared for: Community Roots  
Flint, Mich.  
pdmcneal76@gmail.com

Prepared by: Nikki Bassett, BA  
GVSU School of Social Work Graduate - Intern  
Liz G. Consulting, LLC  
nikki@lizgstrategy.com

Liz Gordillo, MSW  
Owner & Principal  
Liz G. Consulting, LLC  
lizg@lizgstrategy.com

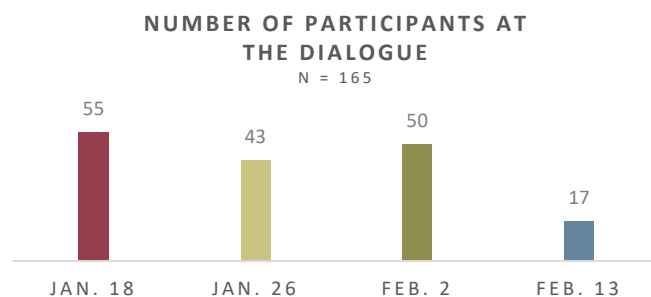


## Introduction

Community Roots contracted Liz G. Consulting, LLC (LGC) to assist with measuring the outcomes of The Dialogue, a series of courageous conversations regarding race, racism, and radical change. The purpose of the evaluation was to answer the following questions:

1. What was the process used for this work?
2. What were the strengths of the process used to engage with the community for these conversations?
3. What needed improvement for future conversations, and what recommendations would help?
4. Did the conversation accomplish the identified outcomes?

There were four virtual gatherings held over Zoom. *Figure 1* displays the number of participants at each of the sessions. In total, the events had 165 participants though the same individual may have attended more than one session. The number of sessions one person attended was not collected to keep survey completion anonymous.



The following documents the methods, results, and evaluative conclusions based on meeting notes and an administered survey.

## Methods

Two forms of data were collected: facilitation notes collected through Google Jamboards (Jamboard) and a 12-question survey. The Jamboard data were collected during the sessions while the survey was administered at the end of the sessions. Data were shared with the evaluator who analyzed and summarized the results.

The Jamboards were used to facilitate the sessions and record participant comments to each of the four prompted questions. Each of these electronic white boards allowed participants to add sticky notes to document their responses to the questions below.

1. *When you are fast asleep, a miracle happens, and racism is eliminated. But since the miracle happened overnight, nobody tells you that the miracle happened. When you wake up the next morning, what will you notice?*
2. *From your point of view and in your honest opinion, why does racism exist?*
3. *On a scale from 1 to 10, 10 being perfection and we live in an anti-racist county, where would you as a group, rate Genesee County?*
4. *From where you and your group rated Genesee County, what would need to happen to move the rating one point higher towards 10?*

Data collected through the Jamboard were analyzed using qualitative coding. In total 776 comments were coded.

Surveys were collected online and analyzed to determine the strengths, areas of improvement, and impact of The Dialogue. The survey also included demographic questions including zip code, gender, and race. In total, 135 surveys were completed for a response rate of 82%. See the *Appendix* for the survey tool.

## Results

The following are results from the Jamboards and the online survey. The Jamboard results are grouped by the four crosscutting questions listed above. The survey had twelve questions which are grouped into five sections for reporting. Those sections include:

1. *Did the Community Roots conversation help you know what you can do to eliminate racism? What can you do?*
2. *State your level of agreement with the following statement: I think we can eliminate racism in Flint, Michigan.*
3. *What worked well in today's conversation?*
4. *What would you have liked done differently in today's conversation?*
5. *Demographic questions.*
  - a. *Gender identity, age, ethnicity, race, and zip code*

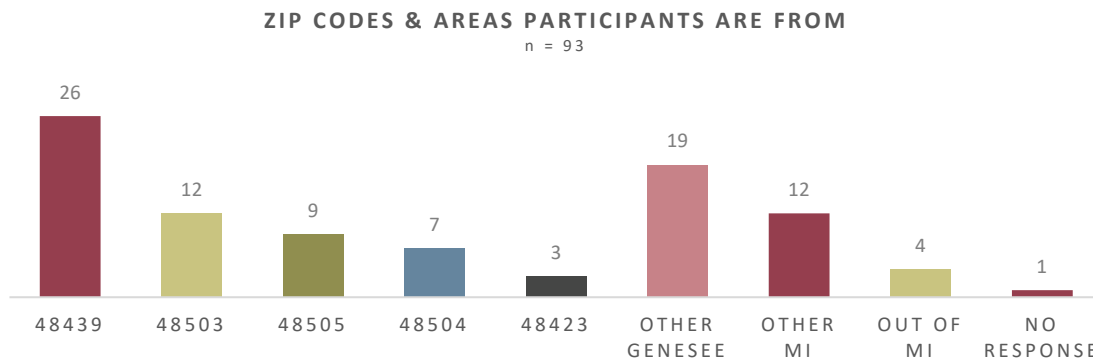
### Demographics

Demographics were collected on the post-survey. Participants were primarily women, aged 16-30, and white from 48439 zip code. The following documents the participant attendee's demographics.

#### Zip code

Since half of the discussion was around Genesee County, Community Roots thought it would be important to see which counties the participants are actually from. *Figure 2* exhibits the zip codes with the highest frequency of responses. The rest of the responses were from Genesee County, Michigan, and out of state. As for no response, one participant stated they did not know their zip code. The zip code with the largest number of participants was 48439, which is Grand Blanc in Genesee County. The zip codes with three participants or higher were 48503, 48505, 48504, and 48423. The other counties in Michigan were present: Fairfield, Lapeer, Oakland and Wayne. Finally, there were participants from Logan, Utah; Lynnwood, Washington; and Atlanta, Georgia.

*Figure 2*



## Ethnicity and Race

With the Dialogue’s conversation centered around race, Community Roots thought it would be important to gather information on participant’s ethnicity and race. This can be used to see what type of audience is being reached. Of the 130 participants who answered, “are you Hispanic, Latinx, or of Spanish origin”, 95% of participants answered no. The other 5% of responses did identify with this origin.

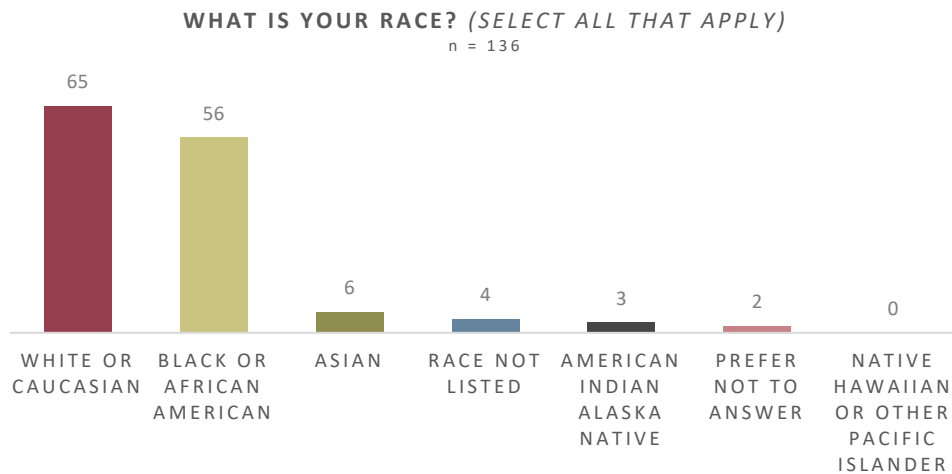
Overall, there were 101 participants who responded to the question, “are you of Middle Eastern or North African descent”? Most participants (95%) replied they were not. The other 5% did identify as Middle Eastern or North African origin.

Figure 3

As displayed in Figure 3, the most common responses were White or Caucasian and Black or African American.

There were 65 (48%) who selected white or Caucasian. The second highest

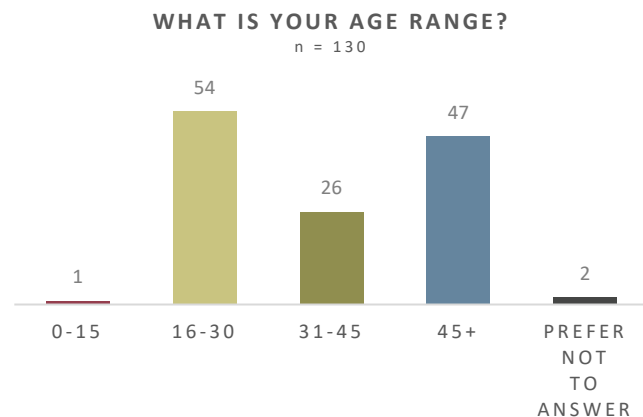
frequency of responses was black or African American. Six participants identified as Asian, and three selected American Indian or Alaska Native. Two participants preferred not to answer. Finally, there were four participants whose races were not represented in the options provided. They were asked to list their race. The responses were Caribbean, African Jamaican American, Latinx, and Hispanic.



## Age

Because there were many different people attending, The Dialogue wanted to observe the predominant age group that was present in the sessions. This will also allow Community Roots to examine the age groups that The Dialogue was reaching. Figure 4 presents the age range that had the highest frequency of attendance: those between the age of 16-30. The second most frequent answer were those who were 45 years or older. The 0-15 age group had the least frequent representation.

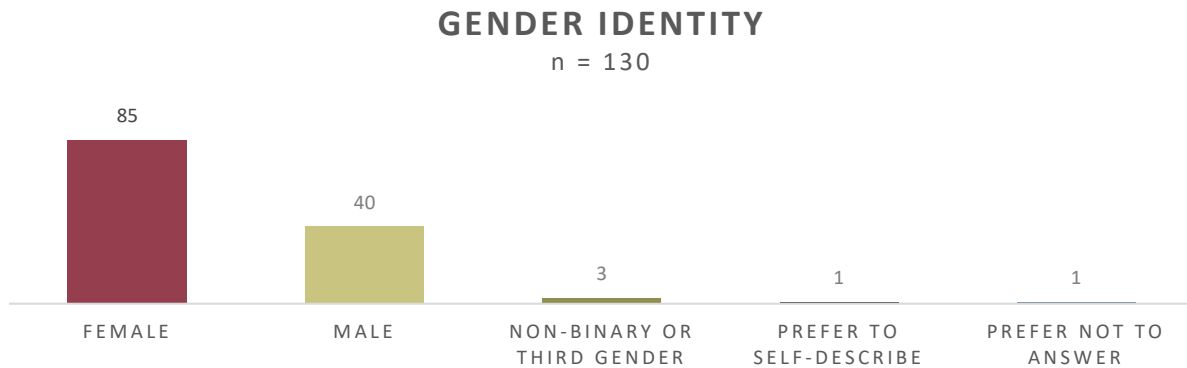
Figure 4



## Gender identity

As seen in *Figure 5*, the majority of participants identified as female. Of those who responded to the question, 31% (40) identified as male. There were also three participants who identify as non-binary or third gender. This means either they do not identify with a female or male identity. It could also mean that they identify with both and picking just one would not be correct. One participant preferred to self-describe. They wrote, “V”. There was one participant who chose to not answer.

*Figure 5*



The six highest frequency responses were participants from Genesee county. That was to be expected for the conversations specifically discussing Genesee county. There was not an abundance of diversity within the participants. For gender, those who identified as female comprised 65% of the participants. When it came to race, the dominant races were 48% white and 43% were black. Only 7% of the participants included other races. The most diversity of the participants came from age groups. Of those who responded to the question regarding age, 62% were between the ages of 16-45. Those who were 45 years or older, encompassed 36% of the participants.

## Jamboard Responses

From the four Jamboards there was a cumulative of 40 slides that were analyzed. Each facilitator wrote the participants responses to the questions on Google Jamboard. The overall number of comments was 776. Each of them was recorded and analyzed. Of the 776 comments:

1. 247 comments were analyzed for the question, “*when you are fast asleep, a miracle happens, and racism is eliminated. But since the miracle happened overnight, nobody tells you that the miracle happened. When you wake up the next morning, what will you notice?*”,
2. 218 comments, were recorded for the question, “*for your point of view and in your honest opinion, why does racism exist?*”,
3. 124 comments for the question, “*on a scale from 1 to 10, 10 being perfection and we live in an anti-racist county, where would you as a group, rate Genesee County?*”, and
4. 134 comments were documented for the question, “*from where you and your group rated Genesee County, what would need to happen to move the rating one point higher towards 10?*”
5. 53 comments were made during the session that were not categorized or specifically connected to one of the questions.

The following presents findings based on the questions asked during the facilitated sessions.

## The Miracle Question

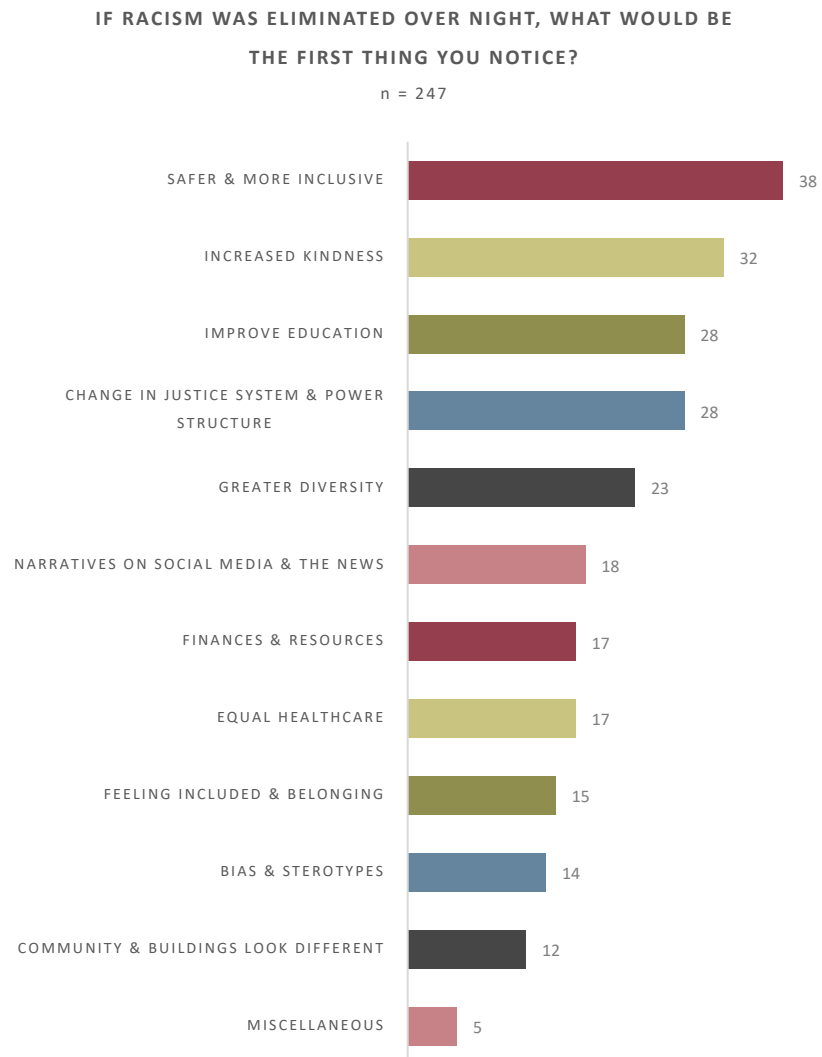
Participants at The Dialogue were asked to reflect on one thing they would notice if racism magically disappeared while they were sleeping. *Figure 6* displays 11 specified areas and miscellaneous category participants believe they would notice first. The five most frequently identified themes were: safer and more inclusive community, increased kindness, change in the justice system and power structure, improved education, and greater diversity.

**Safer & More Inclusive Community.** Participants frequently shared comments related to feeling safer and more included in their neighborhoods. One individual stated they would notice movement through their community explaining, “traffic through the neighborhood, walking in the neighborhood is done without fear”. Another participant shared, “everyone would feel more comfortable. No more anxiety. Race would not be a determinant of how we interact with one another”.

**Increased Kindness.** Participants indicated there would be a visible difference in the amount of kindness community members show to each other. For example, a participant commented, “there would be more love. We would smile at each other”. While another participant stated, “People would not ignore others on the street”.

**Improve Education.** Many of the participants believed that the community and schools would discuss and teach the history of America differently. The history of the country would be depicted accurately and there would be a change in schools to include more equity and equality. One participant discussed how, “history class would be different. Inclusive of all cultures”. Another participant added, “Kids would have a school in their neighborhood (well resourced). There would be equality across all school[s]”.

Figure 6



*Change in the Justice System & Power Structures.* Several participants spoke about evident change in the justice system, along with the change in how power is structured. As for one participant, they explained, “when you see an African American pulled over, we no longer think the worst. We no longer have to videotape the interaction”. An additional participant expressed there would be, “equal distribution of power and control”.

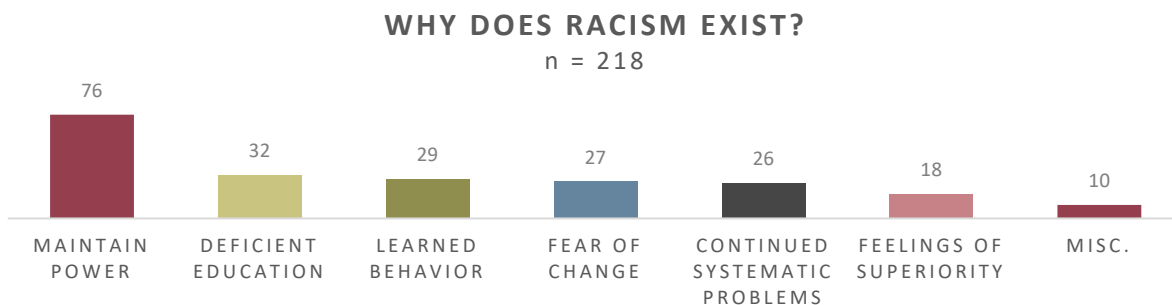
*Greater Diversity.* Participants shared comments related to diversity. Numerous participants discussed having more diversity in all settings and situations would be a sign that racism has been eliminated. One individual stated, “leadership would involve everyone who wanted to be involved and represent the diversity, more specifically governmental leadership”. Another participant shared, “When you leave your home to go to a public place, things will begin to look different. There will be diverse people enjoying life together”.

Participants felt they would see and feel changes if racism were eliminated while they slept. These changes would impact their daily lives and their perceptions of the world around them. Specifically, they would have different experiences in their home communities and with people with whom they regularly interact. The main difference participants would notice is feeling safer and more included in their communities. Additionally, they would observe neighbors being kinder to one another.

### *Why does racism exist?*

Out of the 218 comments, six themes emerged from responses to the question, “from your point of view and in your honest opinion, why does racism exist?”. Those responses to that question were grouped into themes and included maintenance of power, deficient education, learned behavior, fear of change, systemic problems, and feelings of superiority. *Figure 7* displays these top issues that arose regarding why racism exists or what was standing in the way from racism being

*Figure 7*



eliminated.

*Maintain Power.* The most frequent response discussed was the maintenance of power. Racism has continued for so long because those with power and control do not want to lose their positions. One individual explained, “power structure, people don’t want to lose power”. Another participant indicated that, “in order to maintain racism, people find justifications”.

*Deficient Education.* Participants repeatedly shared comments related to a lack of education and knowledge around oppression and racism. One individual described that racism had endured because, “a lack of knowledge and understanding. Fear linked to knowledge and understanding”.

Another participant expressed there was, “no diversity in history. We need to learn about the real history from every perspective”.

*Learned Behavior.* Several participants consider the root problem of racism was a learned behavior. Racism can be directly taught from family members, friends, or the media. It can also be reinforced by examining others’ behaviors. One participant discussed, “Racism is taught. We know this. If you come from a place that teaches love you operate in that way. If you are taught racism you function in that way”. Another participant added, “Racism is a learned perspective. Children are not born to be racist”.

**“Racism is a learned perspective. Children are not born to be racist”.**

*Fear of Change.* Many participants communicated their belief that racism was perpetuated because people dislike change. There is a fear of the unknown. For example, a participant commented, “humans are afraid of being uncomfortable. We don't want to make a change”. Furthermore, another participant described the, “unwillingness to see that there might be something wrong with me as a person”.

*Systemic Problems.* Participants believed that the reason racism still exists is because of the entire structure of systems and policies. This is not because of a specific individual or single factor. One participant explained, “we buy into the notion of inferiority. Based on how the system is set up. Based on only seeing one or two minorities to fill a quota”. Another participant spoke about, “[racism] is woven into all of our systems. It's not just an individual's personal responsibility”.

**“[Racism] is woven into all of our systems. It's not just an individual's personal responsibility”.**

*Feelings of Superiority.* Another theme that arose throughout the responses, was racism stemming from a need to feel superior. For example, one participant stated that people have, “needed a way to justify superiority of one group over another”. Additionally, another participant explained, “racism comes from people who like to belittle others”.

Participants believed racism exists and continues because people either do not want to give up something they have or do not question information given to them. According to participants, many people who have power want to maintain it, are afraid of change, and can have feelings of superiority. This leads to those in power being less likely to take part in solutions; they are comfortable where their lives are and do not see a reason to change. Because racism as a systemic problem is tied to learned behavior and leads to a need for reframing. Systemic racism is larger than just a handful of individuals, and it is caused by a lack of education. Participants shared that the school system continues to fail students, and ultimately society, by deliberately not teaching accurate information about the United States of America’s past and present.

### ***Genesee County Racism***

In breakout groups, participants were asked to rate Genesee County on where they believed it ranked being anti-racist. The scale was from one to ten with ten being completely perfect and anti-racist. *Figure 8* displays how the participants scored Genesee County. Out of the 66 responses, the average score was a three. Three was also the most common response. The lowest number given was one, and the highest given was seven and a half.



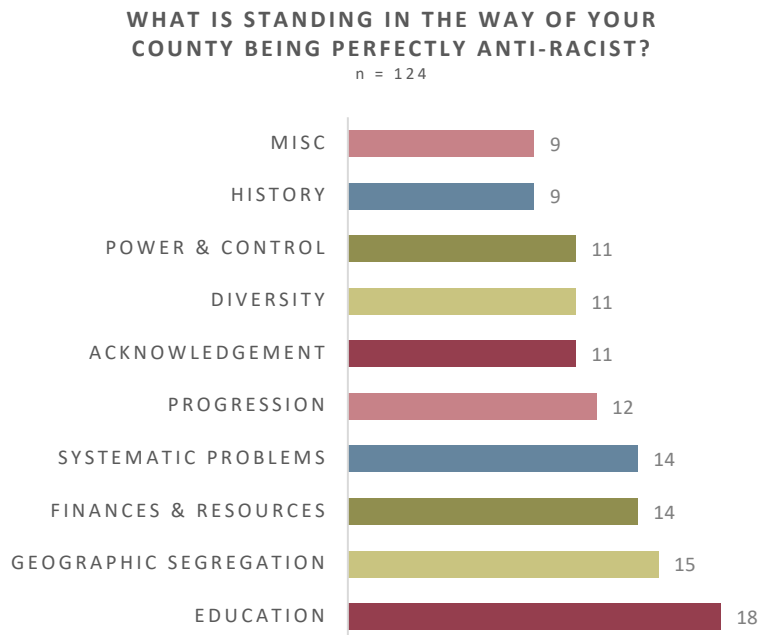


Figure 8

In addition to the ratings, participants commented why they picked a particular number. Out of a total of 124 responses, there were nine categories and miscellaneous responses. All of the categories that arose are presented in *Figure 2*. The themes were education, geographic segregation, finances and resources, systemic problems, progression, acknowledgement, diversity, power and control, history, and miscellaneous. Below is the highlight and description of the top five frequently discussed themes.

**Education.** The most commonly shared comments, of the participants, related to lack of education. In addition to lack of

education, discussed above, people believe there is a lack of accurate history education. Furthermore, many believe that community members do not have enough knowledge and understanding of racism to actively try to be anti-racist. One individual explained, “I see dialogue. But if we need to have a conversation about it, it’s a problem. We are still struggling with this county wide”. Another voiced, “there is a lack of understanding about racism. Many people are convinced that if you are nice you are not racist”.

**Geographic Segregation.** Racial residential segregation happens all over the country. It is also prominent in Flint, Michigan. This affects housing values, taxes, school of choice, and many other areas. Several participants believe this is one of the main reasons why racism is present in their community. One participant explained, “one of the things that stands out about the county is the way that race is grouped within the county”. Furthermore, the reason that another participant rated their county as a two was due to segregation. They noted it was, “Because of segregated city and housing”.

**Finances & Resources.** Several participants discussed the shortage of funding and resources for the African American community reinforces direct or indirect racist practices. One participant called attention to local policies stating, “policy decisions that differently advance various neighborhoods (devaluing Black neighborhoods). [Also, a] disinvestment in education”. In relation to the Flint Water Crisis, one participant discussed, “the settlement we got from the water crisis would have been higher if we were a white community”.

**Systemic Problems.** Another theme that came out of the discussion around racism in the participants’ community was the problem of systemic racism. Many of the participants believed how the systems are structured causes the continuation of racism. For example, one participant explained, “racism is about systems. Systems create the need for community foundation to exist . . . Systems create barriers for people. Systems allow racism to continue”. Racism occurs in every

aspect and situation for people of color. One of the participants discussed, “We might look at outcomes - housing, education, poverty, socio-economics, employment - people of color are falling short”.

**“Racism is about systems. Systems create the need for community foundation to exists. Systems create barriers for people. Systems allow racism to continue.”**

*Progression.* On a more positive note, there were many participants who believe their county is currently progressing toward being an anti-racist community. For instance, one participant described, “there is hope because there is work happening”. Another participant articulated, “we need to keep the passion in the community issues”.

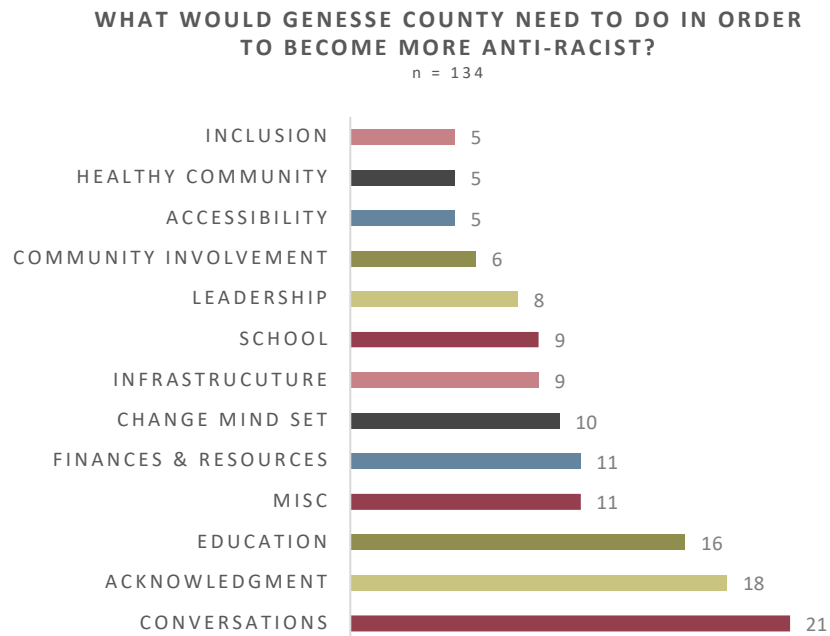
Participants felt one of the main reasons for racism in their county was the misinformation and lack of education community members have around racism. The thought behind this is that if people had proper information around the history of racism and where racism is today, there would be more people fighting for change and a solution. However, there were 12 participants who believe their county is starting to do the work and is on their way to moving in the right direction.

**Steps Toward Anti-Racism**

After participants rated their counties on how close their communities were to being anti-racist, the facilitators asked, “what would need to happen to move the rating one point higher towards 10?” Participants provided 134 responses. There were many ideas that came up during the conversation. More specifically, 12 topics and miscellaneous comments emerged. See *Figure 9* for the complete list. The following section focused on the five areas with the most frequent responses.

*Conversations.* The most common response for this question was the need and desire to continue conversations like The Dialogue. There were also several comments about having conversations with people who were outside of people’s normal group. Participants thought community members needed to reach out to people different than themselves, to have real dialogues about racism. One participant explained, “For a problem to stop we have to be

*Figure 9*



uncomfortable. We need to have conversations like this”. Furthermore, another participant shared the need to, “include people in these dialogues that are not normally in these groups, not normally

participating. Moving outside of the usual suspects and branch out to other citizens and even broader to have those conversations”.

*Acknowledgement.* When the participants talked about acknowledgement, they meant individuals accepting and acknowledging where their community and society are with racism. There needs to be a recognition of what people’s part is in continuing racism. Participants shared that we, as a society, cannot change what we do not acknowledge. For instance, one participant expressed, “a lot of the problem is awareness. Understanding from people who never experienced [racism]”. Another participant added the need for, “knowledge and accountability. Speak truth to power and acknowledge that power has perpetuated racism”.

**“A lot of the information around race is misinformation. Get people to understand race more thoroughly.”**

*Education.* Out of the 134 responses, 16 (12%) discussed the importance of community members having proper education about history and racism. There was one participant who spoke about misinformation stating, “a lot of the information around race is misinformation. Get people to understand race more thoroughly”. Another participant communicated the need for, “equal access to quality education throughout the county”.

*Finances & Resources.* The fourth highest frequency of responses was finances and resources. Participants thought there was a disparity in economic support and resources for communities. The communities of color are getting underfunded and lack the resources they need. One participant articulated the necessity of having, “more equitable resource distribution”. Additionally, another participant included the desire to, “increase the tax base. Change the structure of taxes for schools”.

*Change Mind Set.* Similar to acknowledgement, there were comments about community members needing to change how they see race and racism. People need to start being more open minded about the problem racism causes and the solutions to eliminate racism in communities. One participant discussed the need for, “being more open minded to change. Be willing to face fears. Teach people from a young age about different cultures, teaching more about our actual history. By recognizing the truth, we can change and move forward”. Its businesses and organizations that also need to expand and change how they see race. For example, one participant expressed desire for, “corporations would no longer support racist ideals”.

**“Being more open minded to change. Be willing to face fears. Teach people from a young age about different cultures, teaching more about our actual history. By recognizing the truth, we can change and move forward.”**

Participants believed that it was a community effort to eliminate racism. In order to do that, there needs to be difficult and deep conversations around racism. Additionally, people need to start educating themselves and others on accurate depictions on racism. White community members need to acknowledge their privilege and open their eyes to the experiences of those around them. Similarly, if people start to change how they see race and racism, it can help the community be one step closer to eliminating racism.

### ***Additional Comments***

During the Dialogue, participants made comments that were noted that did not specifically belong to any of the four questions previously discussed. Overall, 53 responses were recorded during the session that were not categorized or exclusively connected to one of the questions. The responses were regarding education, awareness, communication, investment in the community, community task force, perception, empowerment, and systemic racism. One participant explained the need for, “more conversations with decision makers. Additionally, we need accountability. We cannot heal until people take responsibility for what has existed”. Another participant stated, “dramatically increase funding for Flint schools. The Flint schools are terribly underfunded. This impacts the education & awareness outcomes”.

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## Participant Survey

The following summarizes the online exit-survey that obtained information about participants’ experiences at The Dialogue. The results were from 135 participants. Of the 165 participants at the four sessions, 82% completed the survey.

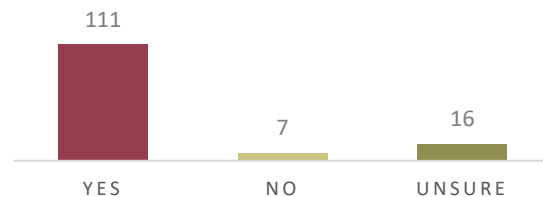
### *Can racism be eliminated?*

Figure 10

Figure 10 displays the participants’ responses to the question, “did the Community Roots conversation help you know what you can do to eliminate racism?” The most common response was “yes”, the participants did know what action steps they can take to eliminate racism. Meanwhile, only 7 or 5% responded “no”.

#### DID THE COMMUNITY ROOTS CONVERSATION HELP YOU KNOW WHAT YOU CAN DO TO ELIMINATE RACISM?

n = 134



Out of the 165 participants, 109 responded to the question, “what steps will you take to eliminate racism?”. Figure 11 displays the themes that were identified from the participants’ reactions. The most frequent answers were, conversations, education, involvement and advocacy, community investment and development, relationships, and mindsets.

**Conversations.** Several participants shared that they believe continuing having difficult conversations, like they had during The Dialogue, will be beneficial to eliminate racism in their community. For example, one participant stated, “Starting off by simply having a conversation with others. There is so much that we can learn from each other to make a change”. Another participant explained, “Continue the courageous conversations outside the meetings. Through dialogue and connection racism can be reduced because my white brothers and sisters need to hear about the reality of what our ignorance to our privilege does to nonwhite people who have every right not to be thingified”.

*Education.* Participants shared that they believe continuing to educate those around them will help bring further awareness to racism which will help increase anti-racist behavior. One of the participants disclosed they want to, “continue to push my organization to

**“Continue to turn the wheel of the Titanic to try and push it in the right direction before it hits the iceberg”**

acknowledge its role in perpetuating systemic racism. Continue to turn the wheel of the Titanic to try and push it in the right direction before it hits the iceberg”. Furthermore, one participant shared they will, “continue to educate myself on the disparaging gap in our community, recognize that the power to create change is in everyone and there is no “useless case” that cannot be taught how racism affects all of us poorly”.

*Involvement & Advocacy.* Out of the 109 responses, 16% (17) responses discussed the desire to be more involved with the community to assist in eliminating racism. For example, one participant expressed, “treat everyone equally, involve the community in decision making and seeking justice, don't transfer your biases unto someone else”. Another participant wrote their actions will be, “having more community meetings, coming together and sharing our ideas to influence policy that impacts our community and how we can reach out to organizations to create a collaborative change”.

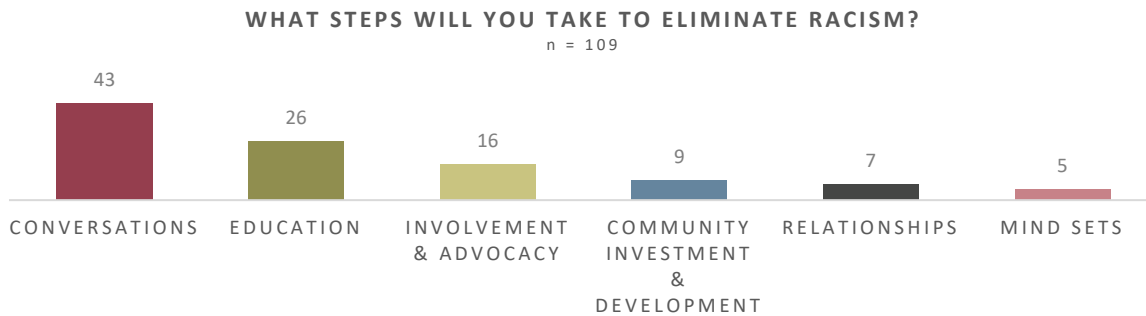
*Community Investment & Development.* Nine responses were regarding the need for more investments and developments for the community. For example, one of the participants communicated the need to, “continue to advocate for community led investment and development”. Another participant expressed the importance of the community, “continuing to germinate environments for others to experience life outside of their comfort zone because to evolve apathy to empathy, one must engage in experience”.

**“Continuing to germinate environments for others to experience life outside of their comfort zone because to evolve apathy to empathy, one must engage in experience.”**

*Diverse Relationships.* Several of the participants discussed the need for the community to build relationships with people with different experiences and points of view. For instance, one participant described that they will, “continue to build relationships with people of other races and backgrounds...look for further engagement into parts of the community that will help this to happen too”. Additionally, one participant expressed, “being more open to meeting new people without being judgmental from what I see without knowing them”.

*Mind Sets.* Finally, participants explained the significance of people changing their mindsets. Community members need to be more open minded, patient, and kind. There are not enough people seeing others for who they are. One participant shared, “Always having a mindset that we are whole no matter the color of our skin. We all matter, and I will act upon that”. Another participant stated, “I believe eliminating racism will require us to change our hearts, so that we see African Americans as real people, regardless of what the constitution stated”. A common theme of the responses is the need and desire to engage with others in the community to eliminate racism. The majority of participants expressed that in order to have anti-racism practices in the community, members need to continue having difficult discussions with others, educating themselves and the community, and putting investments and resources back into the community. One of the participants commented the need to, “View the weaknesses I see in our community as areas that can be rehabilitated into strengths”. Racism is a systematic problem, and it takes the entire community being engaged to try to eliminate racism.

Figure 11



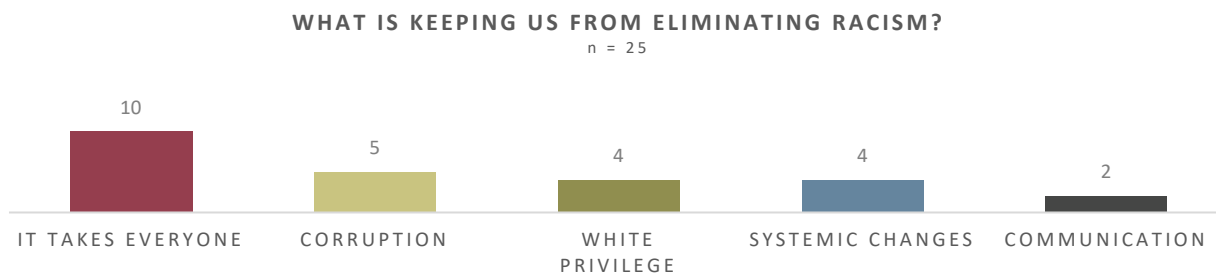
Of the survey participants, 83% believed that The Dialogue helped them know what to do in order to eliminate racism. All while 17% of participants were not confident or were unsure, they knew what to do in order to eliminate racism. This information makes it clear that the conversations during the Dialogue helped individuals come up with action steps they can take to help the community be one step closer to eliminating racism. Participants stated that first steps we can do as a community to eliminate racism are conversations, education, involvement and advocacy, community investment and development, relationships, and mindsets .

### Perpetuation of racism

Because of The Dialogue the majority of the participants were asked if they believe that racism can be eliminated from Genesee County. Combining the responses to strongly agree and agree, overall, 106 participants out of 165 believe that together we can eliminate racism. Of those who disagreed or strongly disagreed are the number of participants to respond to the question, “what is keeping us from eliminating racism in Genesee County?”.

For those who responded disagree or strongly disagree 25 participants shared why. These responses fell into five distinct themes displayed in Figure 12. Participants believed that it takes everyone to eliminate racism and not everyone has stepped up and were ready to tackle such a huge problem. The other responses regarded corruption, white privilege, systemic changes and communication.

Figure 12



*It Takes Everyone.* Since racism is so much larger than one individual, it takes everyone to be ready and willing to start taking action steps to eradicate something that has been a part of this country since the beginning. Because not everyone acknowledged how big of a problem racism is, or were not willing to do their part, racism will not and cannot be eliminated. One participant expressed, “a lot of people don’t feel like it is a necessity to participate in eliminating the issue”. Furthermore, a

separate participant described the need for, “openness to doing the hard work”. There needs to be this openness for everyone, not just those who are being oppressed.

*Corruption.* Out of the 25 responses 20% (5) stated that corrupt leaders and those in power who want to maintain control was what prevented the elimination of racism. For example, one of the participants explained how current leaders, “lack honest, [have] fear of losing power, [and are in] denial”. Corrupt leadership comments are from those who believe that those in leadership positions are doing what is best from them as an individual, and not what is best for their constituents. Another participant added the need for, “people in power acknowledging and accepting responsibility for change to happen”.

*White Privilege.* As for white privilege, many discussed that white people may have blinders on when it comes to white privilege and how damaging racism has been in society. Since they are not getting oppressed by the color of their skin, it is hard for them to see it. For instance, one participant expressed, “people with privilege do not see the value in eliminating racism”. Another participant added there was, “unwillingness to sacrifice the benefits of white privilege and fear of sharing the power with those we do not know and do not understand”.

*Systemic Changes.* Racism is deep rooted into American history. It has continued to be woven and intertwined within systems in this country. Several participants described that racism cannot be eliminated until it is addressed at the systematic level. There needs to be systemic changes first, before anything can move forward. One participant articulated, “The system is not set up to erase the divide”. Additionally, one participant commented, “justice seems like it is elusive”.

**“The system is not set up to erase the divide”**

*Communication.* Finally, two participants discussed, what has stood in the way of Genesee County eliminating racism, is communication issues. One participant stated what is perpetuating racism seems to be, “communication, conversation, understanding, and ignorance”. The other participant explained that there is a lack of transparency.

The majority of participants believe racism can be eliminated from Genesee County. In order for that to become a reality, it will need to be an entire community effort. First and foremost, leaders and government officials need to put their duty and their constituents in front of their personal agenda. Participants believe it is dishonest leadership and the lack of representation being the reason racism is perpetuated. Corrupt leadership also stems from racism being a systemic issue and being deep rooted in almost every aspect of our systems and organizations. One way all of these aspects can be changed is communication and acknowledgment of the reality of racism.

### *Strengths of The Dialogue*

Out of the 165 participants, 78% (128) of the participants responded to the question, “what worked well in today’s conversation? *Figure 13* displays nine specific aspects that the participants enjoyed about The Dialogue. Attending breakout groups received the highest frequency of responses. The other areas were participation, hearing other peoples’ point of view, honesty, using the World Café Model, being in a safe space, dialogue and dialogues that were happening, active listening from the participants, focused questions to answer, and selected facilitators. The following delves into the top five frequent answers.

**Breakout Groups.** Breakout groups were a great tool during The Dialogue. Of the 128 responses, 36% (46) described the breakout groups being very beneficial and one of the things that worked well in the conversation. One of the participants stated, “break outs were a great idea. Less intimidating environment...it also broke up the 2 hours well”. Another participant explained, “breakout rooms are awesome for conversations as it allows for group discussion where everyone can participate”.

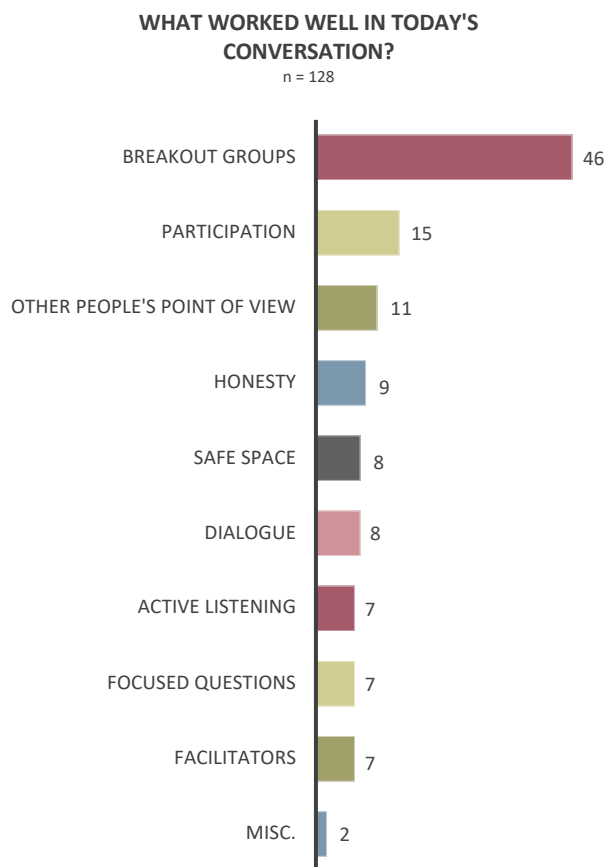
**Participation.** Several of the participants identified the participation from fellow participants helped enhance the experience at The Dialogue. Additionally, they appreciated the opportunity everyone had to share their thoughts and feelings in the conversation. One participant expressed, “everyone was given a chance to participate”. Another participant appreciated, “the openness of everyone”.

**Other People’s Point of View.** There were 11 (9%) participants who believed that hearing others’ points of view was the most beneficial part of The Dialogue. For example, one participant communicated, “everyone being vulnerable and speaking on their point of view and the hosts were very helpful”. Another participant expressed, “the root of empathy is learning another person’s perspective and what struggles they deal with”.

**Honesty.** The authenticity that the participants shared with each other was a valued part of The Dialogue to many participants. Various participants commented how they appreciated fellow participants being very open during the discussion. One participant stated, “I think that everyone was very open and honest with each other and I loved how everyone kept bouncing ideas off of each other”. Another participant appreciated, “all the honesty of each individual, and the respect”. Describing the honesty and respect the participants had for each other was one aspect that they believed went well in The Dialogue conversation.

**Safe Space.** One of the reasons the participants were able to be so open and honest with each other is because of the safe space Community Roots provided. For one participant explained, “people were able to share their thoughts and ideas freely”. Another participant stated, “the ability to voice your opinion, and knowing that it will stay with the group”.

The highest frequency response to what went well during The Dialogue were the breakout groups. There is an overwhelming amount of support and appreciation for having the breakout groups. Many said that smaller groups made it easier to participate. The environment Community Roots set was welcomed by the majority of the participants. Specifically, the safe space that was created. It



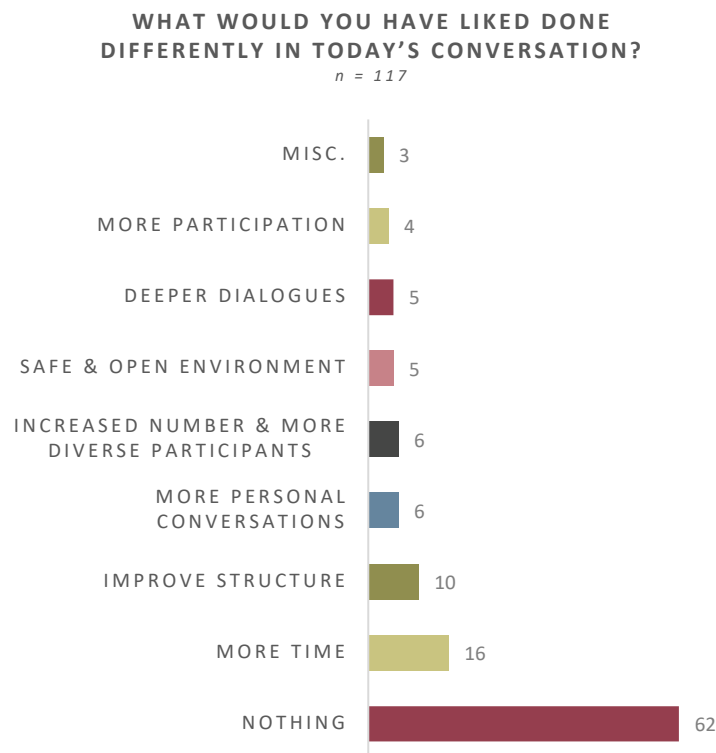


assisted participants to talk about their thoughts, opinions, and experiences. Having a safe space to speak, also promoted participants to have honest conversations.

### Opportunities for Future Dialogues

Like any evaluation, Community Roots wanted to know what their opportunities were for future conversations. They wanted to shine light on what can improve and what to focus on to improve any future sessions. *Figure 14* displays eight areas of opportunities participants discussed. The majority of responses (53%) stated they would have not changed a thing during the session. Other participants responded they would like more time, improved structure, more personal conversations, increased number of participants and more diverse attendance, safe and open environment, deeper dialogue, more participation, and miscellaneous. The section below highlights the five themes with the highest number of responses.

Figure 14



**Nothing.** Out of the 117 responses, 62 were regarding not wanting or needing anything to change in The Dialogue. The most frequent responses were nothing needed to change, or they loved everything that happened.

**More Time.** Several participants stated they wished there would have been more time either in general, in their breakout groups, or in regard to entire group conversations. One participant reported they would have liked, “a little time for a group report out to hear what happened in the other groups”. Another participant expressed the desire for, “A little time for a group report out to hear what happened in the other groups”.

**Improve Structure.** Along with more time, some participants thought the structure for The Dialogue could be improved. For example, one

participant stated they would have liked to see, “More prompts to keep the conversation going when people don’t have anything to share and there is still time available in the breakout sessions for discussion”. Another participant requested more focused questions. They responded, “I would have wished there were more questions to build off of to answer”.

**More Personal Conversations.** Participants reported wanting more connection with fellow participants and facilitators. They would have liked more time devoted to meeting those they were about to have a deep conversation with. One of the participants suggested having, “more of an introduction at the start or just before the final question to help focus thinking”.

*Increased Number & More Diverse Participants.* With an average of 41 individuals at each session, some participants voiced they would have liked a higher attendance rate. Additionally, participants wished The Dialogue had more diversity among the participants. One participant mentioned they hoped there would have been, “more intentional mix of small groups. I am white and was often in all white small groups and had some of the same people in multiple small groups”. Another commented on the benefit of having a larger number of participants stating, “I would have liked to have more people attend tonight's session”.

The majority of the participants enjoyed The Dialogue so much, they reported they would have not changed a thing or have done anything differently. Other participants responded about timing and structure. Many wished there would have been more time with the breakout groups, discussion as an entire group, or just more time in general. Several participants also wished there would have been time allotted to get to know the facilitators and other participants. They believe having a more personal connection would have enhanced the conversations.

## **Conclusion**

The following conclusion is meant to assist Community Roots in understanding what the participants believed would assist Genesee County in eliminating racism. Understanding how the participants processed The Dialogue is important because it can help know what community members believe should be implemented for future conversations regarding eliminating racism and, ultimately, action steps to do just that.

*The following are the overall conclusions from the data analyzed.*

- Participants believed that racism is a systemic issue. It is rooted into most systems and organizations
- Comments supported the idea that racism is perpetuated by those in power or who have privilege. They want to maintain power and are afraid of change. People in power or have privilege are comfortable where their lives are and do not see a reason to change.
- Shared responses thought that a lack of education about racism continues to support racist attitudes and beliefs. Participants shared that the education adults have about race and racism are inaccurate, which may be due to schools teaching students an inaccurate depiction of history when it comes to race, racism, and privilege.
- Attendees commented that racism cannot be eliminated until people are willing to acknowledge the experience others have and the part they personally play in perpetuating racism. Community members need to shift how they think and see racism. One of the best ways to help raise awareness and acknowledgement is through conversations. Participants believed that it is a community effort to eliminate racism and will require difficult and deep conversations.

Participants believed that since racism is a systemic problem, one of the first steps to do in order to eliminate racism is having deep conversations regarding the reality and experience minorities have with racism. Another issue that was discussed frequently is improving the education system and the need for history and racism to be taught correctly and accurately. Education and conversations will help those with white privilege understand and acknowledge what is happening in their community in order for change to begin.

## Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the conclusions identified above. They are broken into two categories: recommendations for similar events and recommendations for advocacy-oriented work.

*Recommendations for similar events.* During future facilitations:

- Continue to incorporate breakout groups. There was an overwhelming amount of support and appreciation for having them. Many said smaller groups made it easier to participate.
- Resume setting a welcoming and safe space for participants. It assisted in conversations regarding the participants' thoughts, opinions, and experiences. Having a safe space to speak, also promoted participants to have honest conversations.
- Increase time for more discussion with the breakout groups, the entire group, and time for personal conversations with fellow participants and facilitators. Additionally, needing more time in general.
- The majority of the participants enjoyed The Dialogue so much, they reported that they would have not changed a thing or have done anything differently.

*Areas of opportunity for Genesee County.* When prioritizing action items for future work, consider the following:

- Increase community involvement with community events and conversations directed to confront racism.
- Invest in the community and in schools. School districts that are predominately people of color, are extremely underfunded. There also needs to be more funding for community development.
- Increase acknowledgement and understanding in the community around racism through conversations and education.
- Elect those in leadership positions that reflect the community. It is important to have diversity and representation in leadership.
- Hold those in power, accountable.

## APPENDECIES

Appendix Survey

## Appendix

### Survey



#### Community Roots Participant Survey

Thank you for your time and dedication!

Thank you for completing this survey. It will only take you a few minutes to complete. We are collecting this information so that we can prepare ourselves to have more of these conversations in Flint to eliminate racism. If you have questions about this survey, please contact Patrick McNeal at pdmneal76@gmail.com.

1. Did the Community Roots conversation help you know what you can do to eliminate racism?
  - Yes
  - No (Skip to question 3)
  - I am unsure

2. What steps will you take to eliminate racism?

3. State your level of agreement with the following statement.  
Based on the conversation, I think we can eliminate racism in Genesee County.
  - Strongly agree (Skip to question 5)
  - Agree (Skip to question 5)
  - Disagree
  - Strongly Disagree

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4. What is keeping us from eliminating racism in Genesee County?

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5. What worked well in today's conversation?

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6. What would you have liked done differently in today's conversation?

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7. How do you describe your gender identity?

- Female
- Male
- Non-binary/third gender
- Prefer not to answer
- Prefer to self-describe \_\_\_\_\_

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8. What is your age range?

- 0-15
- 16-30
- 31-45
- Over 45
- Prefer not to answer

---

9. Are you Hispanic, Latinx, or of Spanish origin?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to answer

---

10. Are you of Middle Eastern or North African descent?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to answer

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11. What is your race? (Select all that apply.)

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Black African American
- Native Hawaiian or another Pacific Islander
- White or Caucasian
- Prefer not to answer
- A race not listed above (Please describe) \_\_\_\_\_

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12. What is your zip code? \_\_\_\_\_