



Ubuntu Storytellers Presents: Building Bridges of Understanding

July 6, 2022 Storytelling Concert - "Building Bridges of Understanding"
July 13 Discussion



Introduction

As part of our ongoing **Collective Action for Equity (CAFE)** program, in which member artists and cultural organizations come together to acknowledge and respond to racism in our personal lives and in the work that we do in arts and culture, the Cultural Alliance organized a "storytelling concert" with the Ubuntu Storytellers. This is a group of experienced black, brown, and biracial performers who tell stories that "open our collective hearts through empathic listening, to engage in respectful honest dialogue to be moved to change."

35 people gathered at The Norwalk Art Space for the concert of stories that reflected the performers' joys, triumphs, and disappointments: encounters with racism, prejudice, and micro-aggressions. 13 later also attended a discussion, moderated by the storytellers. Insights reported by attendees included "that people are still unaware or in denial about racial bigotry existing today" and "that it's always good to face the issues and have a discussion rather than being afraid." Takeaways from the discussion included "listening to other's ideas and responses is very valuable, [and made me think] about measuring/evaluating the 'doorways to interrupting' habitual patterns of behavior," that "We have so much to learn from one another," and that "part of learning is taking risks and speaking up."

Details

Of 35 attendees, 13 completed an evaluation.

7 heard of it through CAFC, 4 through The Norwalk Art Space, 1 from an event at The Darien Library, and 1 from Facebook.

For 3 of the 13, this was their first DEI-related event; for 4, this was their first CAFC event. These responses indicate that equity-related events draw new people to CAFC, broadening the audience, and that CAFC is addressing some of its inclusion goals by drawing CAFC audience to equity offerings.

7 of the 13 said this event opened up new insights for them. These insights included:

- “that people are still unaware or in denial about racial bigotry existing today”
- “that it’s always good to face the issues and have a discussion rather than being afraid”
- “that storytelling is a valid approach, thoughts about measuring/evaluating the 'doorways to interrupting' habitual patterns of behavior”
- “The importance of positive feedback each storyteller experienced in an atmosphere of racial prejudice”
- “With so much still to learn about equity and inclusion, I will engage in conscious conversations--with ears, mind and heart wide open and ready to be out of my comfort zone.”

7 of the 13 attended the follow-up discussion and takeaways included:

- “Having voices from many allows for a more inclusive community”
- “We have so much to learn from one another.”
- “listening to other's ideas and responses was very valuable, plus thoughts about measuring/evaluating the 'doorways to interrupting' habitual patterns of behavior.”
- “Realizing how white privilege is perceived by people of color.”
- “Main takeaway was how much I have to learn still, and how part of learning is taking risks and speaking up.”

7 of the 13 were “extremely likely” to attend another equity-focused event presented by The Cultural Alliance; 4 were “very likely” and 2 were “likely” to do so.