Shelby YPAR: Shelby County YPAR Update 6: Working on Getting Ready for Research
4 messages

Matt Bernius <mbernius@codeforamerica.org>   Sat, Oct 21, 2023 at 11:36 PM
To: shelbyYPARnewsletter <shelbyyparnewsletter@codeforamerica.org>

This week's Shelby County Youth Participatory Action Research Update is a little later than usual because it's been such a busy week for the project. Not only did our researchers complete their YPAR training, but four of them are currently on the road representing the project and Shelby County at the William Julius Williams Institute's Power of Place convening in New Orleans! Learn more about these things and meet folks from our third Local Research Coordinating organization, The Collective Blueprint, in this email
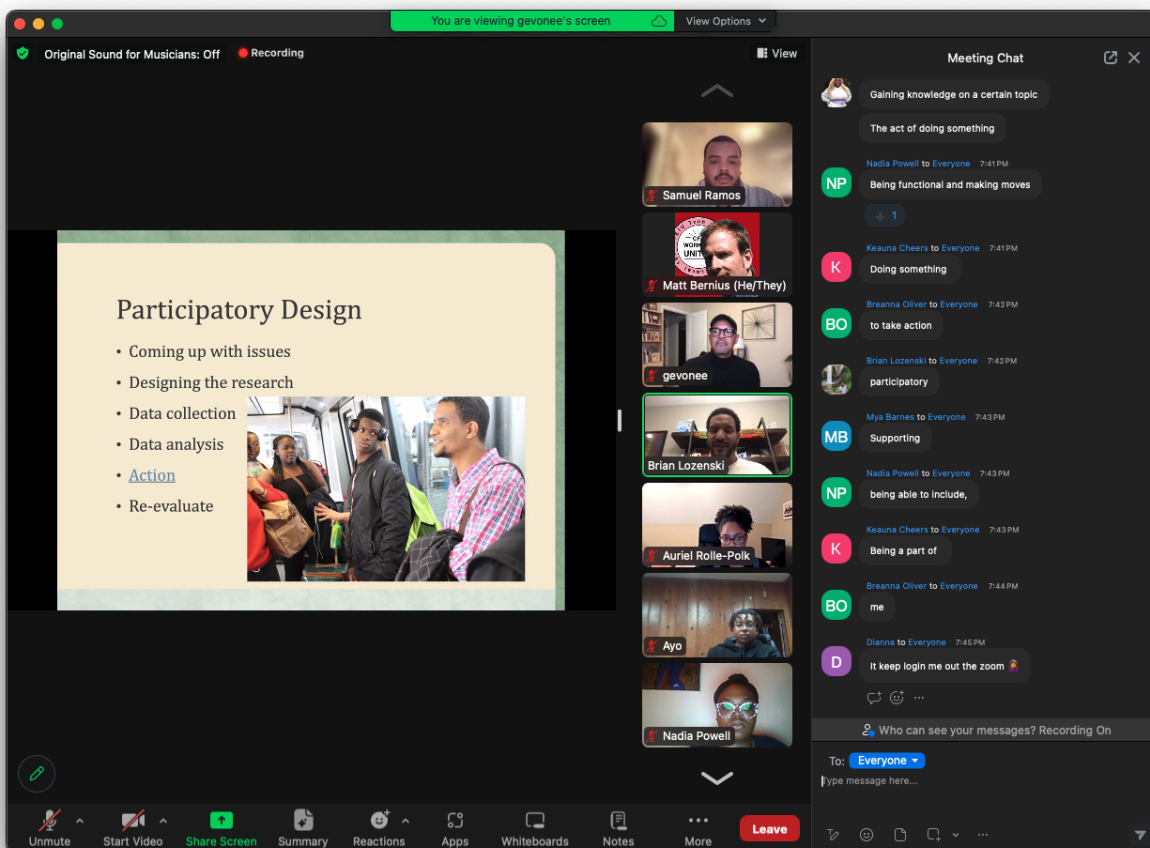
YPAR Training: Week 2

Once again, Tuesday and Thursday nights of this past week were spent with Gevonee Ford, Samuel Ramos, and Dr. Brian Lozenski from the Network for the Development of Children of African Descent (or NdCAD for short). Things started with our youth researchers sharing the results of their first mini-research project.

21 STANDARDS FOR A HEALTHY AFRICAN COMMUNITY

1. Parents, grandparents, children, friends, and neighbors take care of each other.
2. If you see someone in trouble, find a way to help.
3. Give love, support, and guidance to every child.
4. Greet every member of the community with love and respect.
5. Learn to ask for help before there is a crisis.
6. Be willing to offer help to others before being asked.
7. Share your knowledge and experience with others.
8. Acknowledge the help you have received with gratitude.
9. Celebrate each other's successes.
10. Even during challenging times, keep your connections to family and community.
11. Find solutions to problems together.
12. Hold each other accountable to what is right and good.
13. Inspire each other especially the children and Elders.
14. When success comes, share it! By sharing your success, you help others succeed!
15. When you are not successful in achieving a goal that you have set, be willing to receive support and accept responsibility.
16. Be good to one's self in order to inspire others.
17. Be an active member in building and maintaining your community.
18. Respecting Elders, family, and community is the path to having a good life!
19. Nurture your curiosity, always desire to improve yourself and be a life-long learner.
20. Acknowledge the presence of Spirit as essential to community life and cultural heritage.
21. NEVER GIVE OUR CHILDREN UP and NEVER GIVE UP ON OUR CHILDREN!

**"21 Standards for a Healthy African Community (2008),
shared with permission from the Saint Paul African American Leadership Council."**

On the previous Thursday, the team from NdCAD introduced our researchers to a set of 21 Standards for Healthy Black Communities that were the output of a Participatory Action Research project done in Minneapolis. Over the weekend, the researchers interviewed family and friends about these standards and how they applied (or could apply) to the Shelby County Community.

On Tuesday night, the researchers discussed how those conversations went and reflected on how conducting those interviews led them to start thinking about their communities in different ways. For example, researcher Jerissa shared: *"I really learned a lot from interviewing several people about the 21 standards. It was interesting hearing how people felt about our community and what we should be doing to make it better. I know I'm going to try to use the standards in my life."*

After those discussions, the rest of Tuesday's class from this week featured Dr. Brian taking everyone through what Participatory Action Research is and how it's done. The group also watched an excerpt from [a video about a YPAR project that Dr. Brian helped facilitate in Minneapolis](#).

Thursday night, we reviewed and discussed past YPAR projects from across the country, gathering ideas about how what they saw might be applied in Shelby County. The rest of the discussion was about the "Action" part of YPAR and how important it is to make sure that the results of their work can be used to help bring change to the community. The team from NdCAD also got the researchers thinking about finding different ways to share their results with Government Stakeholders and people within their communities and neighborhoods.

Things wrapped up with some group reflection about the four training sessions. Here are some of the things that our researchers shared with the group:

"I really appreciated how this helped get us into the right headspace for this research. It's important for us to tell our stories rather than letting other people do it for us. What's in the history books isn't always correct, and I didn't start to realize that until I got to talk to people who lived through some of those events and times."

"This helped remind me that we, as Black people, have a community where we can keep learning together and make results happen. We are in this together, and we can make things happen for ourselves."

"I'm just starting my career as a teacher, and I learned a lot from these sessions. I'm already trying to integrate ideas we've discussed in my classroom."

Sneak peek for next week: Shelby YPAR on the Road

As we mentioned up top, some of the team is currently in New Orleans. A last-minute opportunity came up for us to send representatives from this project to the William Julius Wilson Institute's *Power in Place* convening. So Keauna Cheers from Beyond Educating and four of our researchers got in a van and headed down to the Big Easy to participate in training sessions and share what they are doing. We'll have a lot more details about the event in next week's update.

🙌 Meet our Local Research Coordinators, Ayo McKinney and Virgnia Carr Schneider of The Collective Blueprint 🙌

Ayo McKinney is a recent graduate from Xavier University of Louisiana, where he studied psychology, history, and theology. During his undergrad, he researched Black identity and representation in the media. His research culminated in the publication of "Black Identity, Representation, and Identification in Comic Book Movies". Recognizing that research is best when in service to others, Ayo has committed to completing research that leads to tangible, lasting, and empowering change. Ayo currently works for TCB through AmeriCorps to help research and support advocacy pathways for program participants. Ayo grew up in Memphis, and he aims to give back to the city that gave him so much.

Virginia Carr Schneider is a doctoral student in Public Management and Policy at Georgia State University's Andrew Young School, where she studies poverty governance and administrative burden. Prior to beginning the PhD program, Virginia worked as a Project Coordinator for The Collective Blueprint, where she led the organization's measurement and evaluation (M+E) efforts, oversaw their admissions processes, and wrote grants. Virginia currently serves as an evaluation consultant and grant writer for TCB. Virginia firmly believes trusting relationships are a crucial part of effective anti-poverty work, and for this reason, she is committed to a mode of research that emphasizes the humanity of and is accessible to those at its center. Virginia is originally from Camden, Arkansas, and graduated from Rhodes College, where she majored in Political Science.

Important Upcoming Dates

- **Tuesday, October 24** – The Shelby County Youth and Education Subcommittee meeting. Join the meeting for an in-depth update on how the project is going, when research will be starting, and opportunities to watch recordings of all the NdCAD training sessions.

Comments or Questions?

We want to hear from you! If you have any questions or comments about how the project is going, please reach out to the Shelby County YPAR Team at shelbyYPAR@codeforamerica.org. We'd also LOVE feedback on how to improve future newsletters!

If you would like to unsubscribe from this newsletter, please respond with "unsubscribe" in the body of your email.

👀 Be on the lookout for the next update a week from now! 👀

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Matt Bernius
Principal Researcher, Local Initiatives, Code for America
he & they
twitter & LinkedIn

Join us at Code for America and work to improve the delivery of services to the folks who need them most.

Interested in civic work, careers in UX research, alternatives to design thinking, trauma informed methods, and more? Check out this crowd-curated resource: https://bit.ly/CivTechTransition

Matt Bernius <mbernius@codeforamerica.org>   Sun, Oct 22, 2023 at 3:13 PM
To: Mellina Stoney <mstoney@codeforamerica.org>

I cannot remember if you are receiving these, but this is an example of the weekly updates. If you share those Microsoft emails I'm happy to slip them a copy. ;)
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Mellina Stoney <mstoney@codeforamerica.org>   Mon, Oct 23, 2023 at 1:09 PM
To: Matt Bernius <mbernius@codeforamerica.org>

I'm not! Please add me to the list. Is there a way to also send me the Update as an attachment? (So that I can add it to my follow-up email)

Thanks,

Mellina Stoney | she/they

Senior Partnerships Manager

Code for America | **Join our email list!**

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Matt Bernius <mbernius@codeforamerica.org>   Mon, Oct 23, 2023 at 1:12 PM
To: Mellina Stoney <mstoney@codeforamerica.org>

Sure... Let me work on that. It's been on my to do list for a while.
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