



**Community Activation Network: CAN
October 28, 2021, Meeting Notes**

Participants in the Community Activation Network (CAN) gathered via Zoom on October 28, 2021.

The agenda for the meeting was as follows:

- Welcome
- Introductions
- Interview, Discussion, and Q&A with:
 - Darryl Young, Executive Director, Coalition Supporting Young Adults (Moderator)
 - Imani Smith
 - Jailen Leavell
 - Kenneth Rhodes
- Closing

Welcome

Ann Coffey, CNPE CEO and CAN host, opened the meeting, welcoming both new members and previous participants. She noted that CNPE had recently hosted two listening sessions to help establish CAN's future direction. Next month's CAN meeting will address how public safety is experienced by other groups, including differently abled persons and the LGBTQ community.

After conducting a brief poll to capture the demographic profile of the participants gathered, Ann introduced Darryl ("Colonel") Young, Executive Director of the Coalition Supporting Young Adults, noting his extensive community connections.

Darryl then introduced panelists Imani Smith, Jailen Leavell, and Kenneth Rhodes, and engaged them in a discussion prompted by specific questions:

(Note: Questions and responses have been paraphrased and edited for clarity.)

What is your view of public safety? Does it align with other people's views?

- Imani Smith: Conversations involving reimagining public safety; center the concept of "The Beloved Community" of The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Accounting for everyone, keeping everyone accountable. What does transparency and inclusivity mean? Center mental health and trauma response – the Louisville budget needs reallocation.
- Kenneth Rhodes: Personal experience with public safety has not been positive. Just surviving daily struggle of feeling unsafe, of having no public safety. "2020 confirmed for me how much my life doesn't matter to the people who are supposed to serve and protect me." Need to reimagine "public safety" – much more than police presence. Personal vision is the opposite. Would like to be able to live his life, navigating public spaces safely without fear of profiling or fear for his life. Can identify what we don't need more easily than what we do need.

- Jailen Leavell: Who is safe? How are we identifying them? East End vs. West End. On West End, public safety is not a norm. It's the opposite. Definition needs to come from a structural view. Did not feel safe when seeing law enforcement while growing up.
- Public safety is NOT just surveillance and a police presence.

What is your background? What things need reimagining?

- Kenneth Rhodes: Cities United. Striving to create a safe world for Black men and boys. Focus on root causes rather than on police presence.
- Jailen Leavell: Fellow with Cities United, active at UofL. Graduated in May, just moved to Jackson, Mississippi, working as a reporter. Start with investment in community. We need more than prayer walks and invitations to town halls. Need seats at table helping to make allocation decisions. Investment, trust, and representation.
- Imani Smith: Civilian Review Board service. Last year revealed lack of transparency with police departments. What does autonomous safety for each community look like? Focus on root causes, systematic issues that create dramatic differences across the city. Center youth voices and what a safe environment looks like to them. Participatory budgeting.

Louisville is center stage in discussions of police brutality and personal liberation. How did last year's events shape you?

- Jailen Leavell: Tough to relive 2020. Understanding the power that people have, from all walks of life, in downtown Louisville, a very positive experience. As a 21-year-old, new respect for ancestors and allies striving to be on the right side of history. Seeking change on a structural level. Black people keep getting killed at the hands of police. How do we lobby? How do we get legislation to help protect the community better?
- Imani Smith: Hard to answer without addressing the trauma that youth activists had to suffer and still suffer as a result of 2020's experience. Highly traumatizing to march out in the field. Youth were not prepared for what happened in confronting LMPD. Mike Brown Day had specific focus, but by end of protest, youth leaders were being followed by National Guardsmen. Memory is still traumatizing (she is 20), and will continue to be. Inherited a racist system and trying to forge a path out of it. Found a lot of purpose, but trauma requires continual healing. Dangerous disconnect between LMPD and the community it serves.
- Kenneth Rhodes: Agree with the other speakers. Breonna Taylor is his age, really triggered him. Structures need reconstructing. Embarrassed by the way the city handled the Taylor case. My life doesn't really matter to the people charged with protecting it. Labeling of protestors is not fair – but neither is murdering a young woman. Compare "violence" when a team wins a game and cars get flipped over. Both traumatizing and motivating to be a fearless leader. Translating fear into action. Really, really triggering to young Black people. Need support from white allies, from organizations, from the whole community. Casual murder of Black people could make you go insane.
- Work is not easy. Takes a real toll on those participating in it.

What went well? What needs to happen?

- Jailen Leavell: Opportunity to heal was provided. Support from people like Darryl provided an authentic space. Consistency is important. But need to follow up with action items, including after this meeting. Now what? How are we going to push this generation forward? Nonprofits need funding to get and keep young people at the table.

- Kenneth Rhodes: Need a steady presence. This call is helpful, but not sufficient. Again, consistent elevation of young people is needed. Conversations twice a month would help. Our voices do matter and need to be heard. Leaders like Anthony Smith walk the walk; he keeps commitments that lift up others.
- Imani Smith: Darryl and Miriam provided a lot of support to youth, corralling them into one space and making sure they are feeling OK and can devise next steps. Centering the young perspective brings light, help to see the world more clearly. Louisville still needs to have adults who support youth to realize some of the social challenges young people face, make sure next generations move to create a beloved community that embraces the entire community and recognizes their trauma. We still have challenges with which voices get heard, including fem and trans voices, not just cis folks. EVERYONE's perspective is important. Intersectionality in healing and liberation. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. Gen Z constantly hearing about racism that weighs down communities, also global issues. Everything seems urgent. Consistent funding and educational programming for youth is essential. Need more integration among groups across the state, youth network.

Questions from chat:

What specifically do you want to see funded?

- Kenneth Rhodes: Mentorship. It changed the course of my life without an agenda.
- Jailen Leavell: Mentorship is important. Programming to address youth violence prevention, including research and study of structural racism. Catch youth in their teens while their world views are being formed.
- Imani Smith: Education, including education houses with pedagogy, libraries, BIPOC-centric content to give context and consider what needs to come next. Intentionally reshape academia to be less Euro-centric. How do we teach BIPOC minds to help them appreciate their skills and gain independence?

Darryl had to leave at 10:00; handed off to CAN co-host Ashley Parrott. Chose to continue discussion in large-group setting.

Ashley highlighted how the idea of trauma resonated with her. Does it immobilize you? Or motivate you? Where is the space and time to heal? The need to speak one's truth – or harm your soul. Also would like to address legislation, legal structures to make a change. Need to encourage more people who "get it" to run for office.

Healing: What did you do to deal with trauma? Self-care?

- Kenneth Rhodes: Lifelong experience with dealing with trauma. Prayers of mother and grandmother. Ask friends to check on him. Meditation, yoga, daily workout schedule to build mind and spirit. Work is heavy. You don't really heal, you just bear it. Let yourself feel emotion, challenge it to inform the work.
- Imani Smith: Prayer support, too. Getting introduced to organizing space was traumatic. Her dad passed suddenly from COVID last December. Always do daily check-ins, including with yourself. How is what I did today aligning with what I know needs to be done. Not every day has to feed that progress; some days, just existing is good, too. Journaling, seeking intersection of faith and moral capacity of leading, trying to envision a better future can be healing.
- Jailen Leavell: Give people flowers while they can smell them. Center yourself around like-minded people who will listen and give you helpful suggestions.

Linda Engel: Where would you want to enter the system structurally that you are not?

- Kenneth Rhodes: Prioritize mental health and self-care. If you haven't had a meal, you can't be in your right mind. Need to seek wholeness to improve your walk.

What programs need support?

- Kenneth Rhodes: [THRIVE Fellowship](#) helps get Black men on a stronger footing
- Jailen Leavell: [Steve Hartman story on Dads on Duty at a school in Shreveport, Louisiana](#), helped cut suspension rates, fighting. Get civilians involved at schools, at bus stops. [Original story viewed more than 50 million times]
- Imani Smith: Grass roots organizing at colleges. At Centre, group has been working for a year to try to get Confederate statue down. Other groups work on food justice or support for the homeless. [Youth Resistance Collective](#) to organize statewide network.

Matthew Bradley, pastor of white church (Christ Church Episcopal Cathedral) with few youths wants to know how to help.

- Imani Smith: Most denominations have their own associations. But not aware of any that bring together white and Black churches to discuss important issues. Need help to support programming for youth; share resources and support social spaces.
- Kenneth Rhodes: Ditto to Imani's idea.

Action items for CAN:

- Kenneth Rhodes: Don't wait too long on next step, whatever it is. Be intentional. Maybe have a follow-up meeting to brainstorm after a little time to think?
- See chat for details on mentoring, Big Brothers, Big Sisters.

Closing

Host Ann Coffey thanked the guest panelists for their participation and the participants for their thoughtful and candid engagement and encouraged participants to invite others to be in this space. Offered to help the panelists. See books mentioned in the comments, including one on dealing with trauma.

Learning is action. Relationships are critical in this space. Some beautiful solutions are out there. We encourage everyone to understand how to support current efforts and not spend time generating new ones.

She also reminded participants that CAN will next meet earlier than normal November and December.

[RESOURCES FROM CHAT COMMENTS:]

- Indirectly, teaches how within history how culture has been embedded to include biases, police presence, definitions, conditioned fear, etc., recommended reading, "[On the Run: Fugitive Life in an American City](#)" 2014 by Alice Goffman
- Check out the book "[Trauma Stewardship: An Everyday Guide to Caring for Self while Caring for Others](#)" by Laura van Dernoot Lipsky.

- From Gary Friedman Big Brothers Big Sisters to Everyone: We are here at Big Brothers Big Sisters and would love to help more young people and be at the table. 89% of our youth report that their mental health in the last year has been stable or improved by being in our program.
- From Jill Seelmeyer - Neighborhood House to Everyone: Neighborhood House has seen the impact we are able to have on our youth members when we were able to offer a much lower student to staff Youth Advocate ratio (1-10 max) during NTI and our summer program. The funding hasn't been there in the past to make this type of staffing possible, but we are determined to keep this ratio going. 82% made measurable improvements in reading and math during our NTI program and our social-emotional outcomes improved dramatically, as well.
- From Zara Macias to Everyone: Education-program-wise, the cultural center at UofL empowers many young students of color, and the Global Citizenship Program at the World Affairs Council is equipping young high school students all across Louisville to be more competitive in a global market.
- From Demond Bush to Everyone: I am happy to speak to the work that The Young Adult Opportunity Campus with KentuckianaWorks/Goodwill that is doing for all youth, but we are finding that more black male youth are attending. It is available to 16- to 24-year-olds.
- From Imani Smith to Everyone: Here's my email! Chat sometime if you have something to share!: smithimaninicole@gmail.com. Connect w me via LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/in/imani-smith-5b6798178
- From Eva Snadon to Everyone: We are working with the Baptist Fellowship Center to create a parent engagement program for parents of the youth involved in violence. And one of the main focus is going to be mental health... I can be contacted at eva@aspire2becounseling.com or 502-345-0033
- From Demarco Harris to Everyone: Demarco Harris, Maryhurst Renewal - Outpatient Services, dharris@maryhurst.org 502-271-4671
- From Jill Seelmeyer - Neighborhood House to Everyone: Thank you Imani! My email is jseelmeyer@nhky.org if anyone wants to connect. Thank you so much to you and Kenneth for giving us your time and being so generous with your responses.
- From Zara Macias to Everyone: Happy to connect with folks on LinkedIn and help in any way I can, and focus on holistic and proactive problem-solving. <https://www.linkedin.com/in/zaramacias2021/>
- From Demond Bush to Everyone: DeMond Bush "The Spot" Intern and Job Development Specialist demand.bush@kentuckianaworks.org
- From Felicia Young to Everyone: Felicia Young, BLOCS - (Building Louisville's Out of School-Time Coordinating System), Felicia.Young@metrounitedway.org
- From Kenneth Rhodes to Everyone: please contact me at - kenneth.rhodes@citiesunited.org
- From Matthew Bradley to Everyone: Here is my contact info for anyone who wants to connect: matt@christchurchlouky.org, 270-227-9109
- From Linda A Engel to Everyone: Linda Engel LCSW. ECHO. Exploited Children's Help Org board Lengel@iglou.com, 502-387- 3942. Also part of community impact group -Community Shield. (exposure of children to violence)
- From Ashley Parrott to Everyone: Thank you all - my heart is overflowing from your words. Thank you - Ashley@jgbf.org