

Stories are the oldest form of passing on both knowledge and human experience. We see ourselves in each other and come to know something about ourselves that was often hidden prior to hearing someone's story. We can grow with each other through stories.

BACKGROUND & PURPOSE

The effort to host community conversations with women of color around Utah is part of an effort led by Dr. Susan Madsen, Founding Director of the Utah Women & Leadership Project (UWLP) at Utah State University, and Nubia Peña, Senior Advisor of Equity & Opportunity in the Governor's office and Director of the Utah Division of Multicultural Affairs. Madsen and Peña co-lead the Equity and Opportunity arm of Governor Spencer Cox's "One Utah Roadmap." This effort is aligned with both the UWLP's mission to strengthen the impact of all girls and women in Utah and the Cox-Henderson administration's commitment to expand opportunities to communities that have unique historical socio, cultural, and economic barriers preventing them from participating fully in our state.

In the spring of 2022, the UWLP—Marin Christensen (Associate Director) and Lillian Tsosie-Jensen (Consultant & Executive Director of Olta' Leadership and Development)—convened 11 community conversations with women of color in Utah, specifically, two groups per race/

ethnicity category in various areas of the state (Black, Latina, Asian, Pacific Islander, and Indigenous), plus one group of New American women (refugees and immigrants) representing various countries of origin.

The purpose of these groups was twofold: (1) to supplement the data snapshots of each race/ethnicity category with personalized experiences that represent the various cultures and ethnicities embedded within the US Census categories, and (2) to foster ongoing relationships with these communities to ensure their voices are heard, especially regarding the issues that specifically affect them as women of color.

RESEARCH METHODS

UWLP hired a community member from each race/ethnic category and area to help convene women in their community, and we would like to thank each of them for their valuable contributions. These events were two hour-long conversations over a provided meal, and participation ranged from 5–30 participants, with an average of 15 per group.

Each group was asked to consider 14 topics: accessing services, awareness of resources, caregiving, education, employment, health or mental health, housing, inclusion/belonging, language support/multilingual services, legal services, safety, technological, transportation, and other. Participants each voted for their top three concerns or issues. Each group identified priority topics, and the conversation began with the ones that received the most votes. However, the conversation was not limited to those topics since they were introduced by UWLP and not the communities themselves.

The sessions were recorded, transcribed, and summarized for major themes and subthemes. Direct quotations illustrate personal experience and stories that suggest common experiences. The community convener was asked to read the summaries to validate accurate representation of what was heard. The end results consist of six two-page summaries focused on Utah women who are Black, Latina, Asian, Pacific Islander, Indigenous, and New American.

