

Pilot Conversation Report – April 25, 2019

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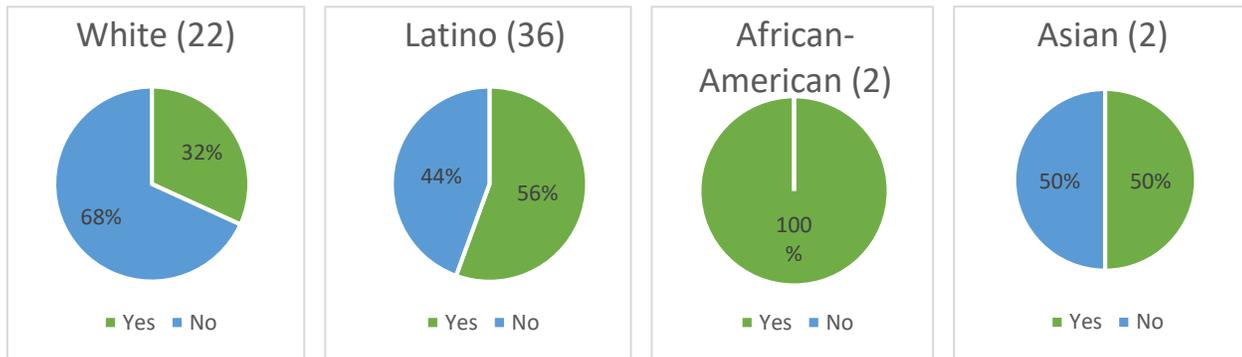
Introduction

The Goshen Community Relations Commission (CRC) and the Goshen Community Schools (GCS) hosted a community conversation, *Growing Goshen Together*, April 25, 2019, held at Goshen High School, with the goal of bringing diverse groups together. The conversation was facilitated in World Café model¹ with the intention of informing future community conversations. The following report provides a brief, overall view of the results.

Perceptions of Goshen

Of 67 pre-conversation responses, 65 people said that it is very important for Goshen to welcome diversity² in the community. However, a mere 40% of those responses named Goshen as very welcoming to diversity. Most people (58%) believe Goshen is *somewhat* welcoming, noting that certain kinds of diversity may be welcome while others not, or certain pockets of Goshen may be welcoming but others not. Discrimination plays a large role in this perception. Half of the respondents affirmed that they have experienced prejudice or discrimination from other Goshen community members and a breakdown of the data gives further insight to what this discrimination looks like in Goshen community, as can be seen in the graphs below.

Graphs 1-4: Experienced discrimination by race/ethnic category.



Graphs 5-7: Experienced discrimination by gender.



Table Conversations

Three rounds of conversations were established, each with its own question to generate dialogue, as follows:

-  Round 1: What do you appreciate about our community and where do you feel at home in Goshen?
-  Round 2: Where is there healthy interaction happening between diverse populations in Goshen currently, and what are your dreams for how the community might flourish amid its diversity?
-  Round 3: Where is there still room for bridge-building across divides in Goshen and what factors might contribute to positively overcoming those differences, so that it can become the community we dream of?

From the conversations generated around these questions, various themes arose worth noting:

¹World Café is a method for dialogue that helps groups have healthy conversations around issues that matter.

²It was made clear in written and verbal communication that participants were encouraged to reflect on diversity in multiple dimensions, such as political, racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, religious, gender, orientation, age or others.

- **Good Education** was heavily named as an important and affirmed aspect of Goshen community. Multiple conversations mentioned education as a place where positive interaction is currently happening between diverse populations in Goshen.
- **Safety** was a topic touched on by many. Many named the friendliness and small town feel that Goshen has, however several comments noted that it is also a place that does not feel safe to everyone. Specifically related to the Police force were comments about helpfulness and anxiety both.
- **Diversity** was a major theme of conversation, noted as a strength and as a weakness of Goshen community. Some reported experiencing Goshen as warm, open, kind and helpful, creating a real sense of community for residents. At the same time, multiple comments referred to missed opportunities in bridging divides and a recognition that judging and stereotyping between races still exists.

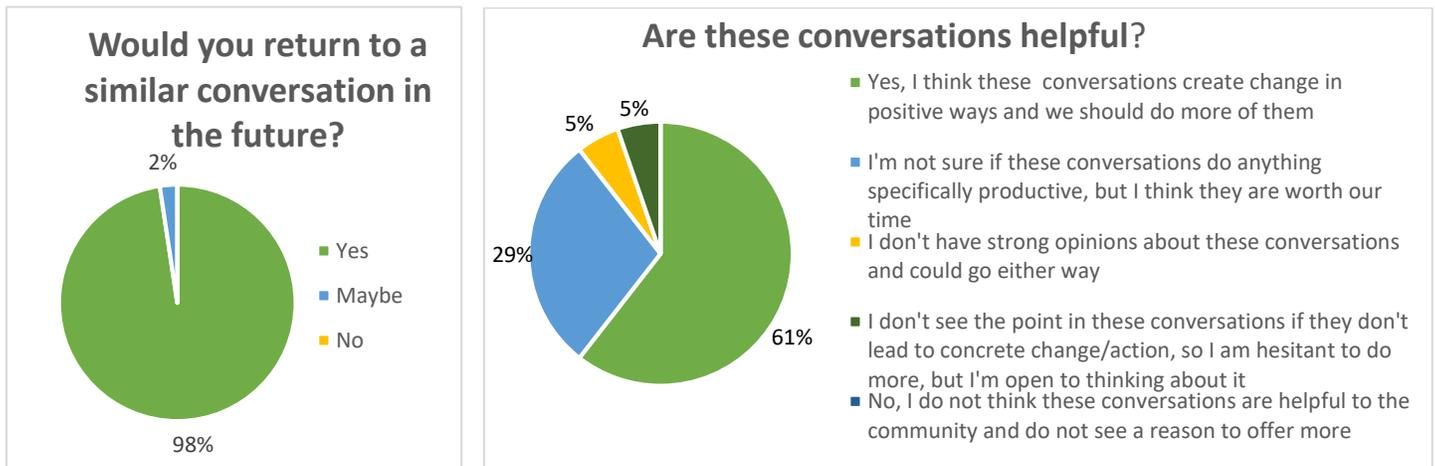
Where to go from here

Table conversations also provided suggestions for ways the Goshen community might strengthen.

- **Language learning** was repeatedly named as a way to build bridges.
- **Power sharing** was an idea repeated at multiple tables. There is a desire to hire a more diverse representation of Goshen community into government positions and teachers specifically.
- **Fostering relationships** was a goal of many. There are not many spaces where people talk together and learn about each other, so creating opportunities for relationship building is key.
- **Action steps** were requested from many. There was excitement around the conversation, but there was also expressed hope that changes would result from the conversation.

Future conversations

There was an overwhelming sense that these kinds of community conversations are helpful in creating spaces to listen and know one another. In table conversation, **having more of these conversations** was frequently highlighted as one solution moving forward. The conversation was affirmed as a way of understanding differences, hearing one another's experiences and interacting with different people from the community. The following graphs summarize the responses from a post-conversation survey, which provide insight into the interest and energy behind these kinds of events.



Themes were highlighted as potential topics for future conversations, including but not limited to the following:

- Welcoming African Americans
- Police and the Hispanic community
- Housing needs
- Addressing covert discrimination in Goshen
- Political and socioeconomic divides
- Employment
- How institutions and businesses can better serve marginalized groups
- How the school system is serving the population
- National patterns and our local community
- Systems in place that need to be changed