

# **Report: Community Conversation on Diversity & Inclusion in Crawfordsville**

May 2021



*Wabash Democracy and Public Discourse*

*Noah Miller, Adam Brookman, Will Sawyer, Sam North,  
WDPD Democracy Fellows  
Sara Drury, Ph.D., WDPD Director  
Hayley Blonsley, M.A., WDPD Program Associate*

*contact: [drurys@wabash.edu](mailto:drurys@wabash.edu)*

In partnership with the Mayor's Special Commission on Racial Equality, Humans United for Equality, and the League of Women Voters, the Wabash Democracy and Public Discourse Initiative hosted two community deliberations, one virtual and one in-person, to discuss diversity and inclusion in the Crawfordsville community. The virtual deliberation was held on Thursday, April 15, 2021 from 6:30pm-8:30pm via Zoom, while the in-person event was held on Sunday, April 18, 2021 from 2:00pm-4:00pm at Pike Place in downtown Crawfordsville. The community conversations were supported by the Lilly Scholars Network, which awarded a Lead Forward grant to Wabash Democracy and Public Discourse and Wabash College.

This report is a thematic analysis of the two conversations. It is not meant to be representative of the entire community, but rather of the community members who came to the events and expressed their views on the topic of diversity and inclusion in Crawfordsville.

The events were organized by Wabash Democracy and Public Discourse (WDPD). WDPD is an organization at Wabash College that partners with community organizations to hold conversations and public forums about current issues. The WDPD has trained facilitators who serve as impartial guides to the conversation. These trained students moderate the event, ask questions during small group sessions, and take notes on the conversation. After the event, the WDPD analyzes notes to consider key themes from the conversation and assembles them in a report for the community. WDPD is directed by Dr. Sara Drury, a Wabash College faculty member.

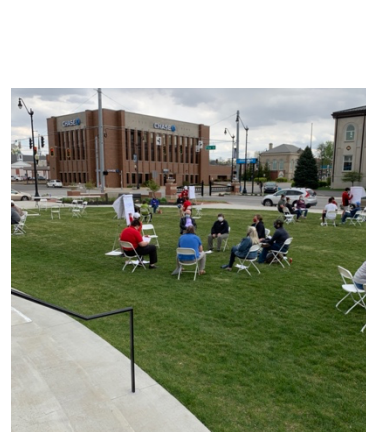
Both events followed a similar format, featuring a panel of community member's experiences with racial injustice and inequality within the city of Crawfordsville, an interactive, large group activity to understand differences and common ground, and small group conversations led by a WDPD facilitator and notetaker. These conversations focused on sharing experiences and working collaboratively to identify action steps for making Crawfordsville a more diverse and inclusive community.

## Community Conversations Agenda

Welcome and Introduction Opening Small Group	<i>Explanation of agenda Community members share why they came to the event</i>
Listening to Panelist Stories	<i>Pre-selected members of the community shared their experiences as people of color</i>
Calling In Activity	<i>Large group activity</i>
Small Group Discussion	<i>Small breakout group discussions on experiences and understanding of racial injustice, the current state of diversity and inclusion, and the future needs of the community</i>
Closing Statements	<i>Community members share what they've learned and what they are taking away from the event</i>

During community conversation events, WDPD tries to standardize questions and format in small group discussions, time constraints and impromptu discussion may take place, diverting the conversation in robust and wholly novel directions. That being said, some groups may have progressed past the template used and others may have taken more time discussing certain aspects. The goal of these community conversations was to offer the community an opportunity to share their experiences regarding diversity and inclusion in Crawfordsville, and to generate a list of potential next steps for the community and organizations across the community.

Adding together the virtual and in-person events, 92 members of the Crawfordsville community attended a conversation. Of those in attendance, 53 opted to take the post event survey (n=53).



## **Exploring Themes from the Community Conversations on Diversity and Inclusion**

The sections that follow overview the goals of each conversation section and provide an analysis of the conversation that followed. This analysis draws on a compilation of notes taken by the WDPD facilitators and notetakers during the events. To draw greater conclusions from the data, we do not differentiate here between the in-person and virtual conversations. Where possible, we note the total number of groups that discussed a topic, noted a particular insight, or prioritized a certain action; the total number of small groups across the two events was 14.

### ***Opening Small Group***

At the beginning of each event, WDPD ask community members to share, why they decided to come to that day's event. Three key themes emerged from the reasons participants provided: they wanted to be educated about the issue of racial injustice, they were part of a/an organization(s) sponsoring the event, and/or they wanted to be part of and support diversity and inclusion efforts in Crawfordsville.

Community members shared their reason for attending on post-it notes; in the virtual event, these notes were put onto a Google Jamboard and in person, they were hung on a large banner for everyone to view. A sampling of these post-it notes is representative of the three themes noted above, and also showed enthusiasm for the event. For example, on the theme of education, some of the post-its shared included that community members came “[to] learn from others;” they “wanted to learn more and see what they could take from the conversation;” and “to learn more about how to help students learn about diversity.” Several community members shared they were representing an organization, such as schools, Wabash College, the Boys and Girls Club, the library, and other nonprofit organizations in the community. Finally, many of the post-it notes reflected community members’ desire to be a part of positive change to support inclusion: they came because diversity and inclusion is a “Long time issue. Vital issue;” because they wanted to learn “New ways to be hospitable to every person in

community;” “how to be a better ally;” and “explore the shortcomings of our community to foster unity.” Images of the post-its shared at both events are in the Appendix of this report.

### ***Listening to Panelist Stories***

After the opening discussion, the group gathered together as a single large group for a listening panel. Panelists were suggested by members of the Mayor’s Special Commission and were asked to participate by WDPD. At each event, panelists shared their experiences of growing up and/or living in the Crawfordsville community as people of color. Each panelist had approximately 4 minutes to speak, and spoke on one of the two prompts below:

1. What experiences in your upbringing shaped your understanding of racism and systemic inequality? How has that understanding impacted your life moving forward.
2. As a member of the Crawfordsville community, share a story about a time where you witnessed or experienced racial injustice. This could be during your childhood, in school, at work, and/or in the broader community setting.
  - How, if at all, did you or others address those issues?

At the Zoom event, 2 panelists spoke. At the in-person event, 5 panelists spoke. WDPD commends the panelists for the courage and vulnerability they showed at both events. The stories they shared enriched the activities and discussion that followed.

### ***The Calling In Activity***

Following the panel, all participants engaged in an interactive Calling In Activity that invited them to share their lived experiences with the large group and learn from others. This activity followed a “calling in” model of discussion, namely asking participants to raise their hand (using the “raise hand” feature in Zoom, or physically raising their hand in person) if they identified with the statement being read. As participants were “called in” to show that they identified with or had experienced the statement, the gathered large group was able to gain greater understanding of diversity and inclusion in Crawfordsville.

Some example statements utilized during this activity included:

- If you identified with a story you heard from our panel today, raise your hand.
- If you were surprised by any part of what you heard from our panel, raise your hand.
- If you feel nervous talking about racism, raise your hand.
- If you have felt guilty or saddened by your position in society, raise your hand.
- If you studied the culture or history of your ancestors in elementary school raise your hand.
- If you have ever felt targeted because of your race or ethnicity, raise your hand.
- If you wish you knew more about the history of discrimination, raise your hand.
- If you have been taught by someone in school with your race or ethnicity, raise your hand.
- If you have been followed in a store by a security officer, raise your hand.
- If you have felt uncomfortable about a joke made about your race or ethnicity, but felt unsafe to confront the situation, raise your hand.
- If you are here because you care about the Crawfordsville community, raise your hand.

The Calling In statements had a variety of goals. Some statements worked to create a sense of unity, such as “If you are here because you care about the Crawfordsville community.” Other statements such as “If you feel nervous talking about racism” served as opportunities for participants to be vulnerable and share their feelings, while statements such as “If you have ever been followed in a store by a security officer...” provide opportunities for community members to share their personal experiences with racism. The variety within these statements allowed for participants to express vulnerability, share their personal experiences, and show their faith in the community all while visually receiving feedback from other participants.

### ***Small Group Discussion***

After the Calling In Activity, community members returned to small group discussions. The WDPD facilitators led the group through three topic areas: experiences of racial injustice, the current state and needs of the community, and how to move forward.

### **Experience & Understanding**

When asked where they have seen or experienced racial injustice in Crawfordsville, groups’ responses generally fell into two different themes: racist imagery and racist experiences. Three groups drew attention to the Confederate flag and racist bumper

stickers around town; several other groups recalled the 1980s KKK march in Crawfordsville. Six groups discussed past acts of racial injustice that they have seen or experienced, noting that these experiences happened in different locations in the community (such as stores, educational institutions, traffic stops). Some groups noted past examples of racial injustice from individuals, or past actions by law enforcement (for example, one group discussed the Immigration & Customs Enforcement actions in the community during summer 2020). Most conversation focused on the experiences of Black members of the community, with a few groups also noting the racism experienced by Hispanic/Latino or Asian community members.

When asked how racial injustice is managed or addressed within the community, five groups emphasized issues are solved through open, honest conversations. Three groups mentioned how these issues are managed in schools through disciplinary action. Three groups felt that issues are ignored and there is a culture of looking past problems. Members of the Mayor's Special Commission shared work that has occurred since summer 2020, in partnership with organizations, including a review of policies. All groups in both conversations expressed appreciation for what is happening, but that there was a need for continued, concentrated efforts from more people.

### **Current State of Crawfordsville and Needs**

Next, the groups discussed the topic of current efforts to address racial injustice, the effectiveness of those actions, and how to engage more people around diversity and inclusion. During this section, all discussion groups highlighted the leadership of the Mayor and the local government as well as the creation of the Mayor's Special Commission on Racial Equality. Some community members praised the efforts of the Mayor, City, and Special Commission; but they also cautioned that the efforts are a starting point. Additionally, community members in three groups noted about the recent efforts of the Crawfordsville Police Department to update their policies (for example, the Mayor's Special Commission worked with the police department to review and update the use of force policy). All groups also pointed to the work of the nonprofit organization Humans United for Equality (HUE) as a critical organization in the community around equity and inclusion. Community members shared that HUE has

held many events and they have a great potential to lead on this issue moving forward. Other community organizations were also noted as working to address racism and promote diversity and inclusion in the community, including the Youth Service Bureau, the Collective, and the Black Lives Matters rallies in the summer and fall of 2020. Additionally, there was some discussion of efforts at educational institutions, such as school corporations and Wabash College.

Many groups pointed to the ongoing conversations in the community, but they wondered about their effectiveness. The events—including this community conversation—could be beneficial and effective, but several groups noted that there needed to be greater attendance, active conversation, and action to change after the events. Some groups noted that communication regarding current efforts needs to improve to draw greater engagement. All groups agreed that improving diversity and inclusion within Crawfordsville would take time; the conversations needed to continue, and that would require long term investment and effort. When asked what might hold people back from engaging these events, groups cited the perceived divisiveness and polarization of the topic, a lack of education on the severity or significance, and that many still do not believe racial injustice is an issue in the Crawfordsville community.

### **How to Move Forward**

During the final discussion section, participants were asked to think about what they saw as necessary steps to take as the community moves forward to improve the state of diversity and inclusion. Five groups specified the importance of continuing conversations about diversity, equity, and inclusion, with two groups specifically mentioning the importance of speaking with groups already in existence and people familiar to you. Participants mentioned the need to engage with minority groups, especially the Hispanic and Asian communities, who can be left out of conversations and focus of anti-racism efforts.

Another major theme was the necessity of diversifying various parts of the community, including commissions, schools, and companies. Several groups identified a need for companies to seek diverse applicants. Four groups mentioned the importance of being

aware of your own position and the comments you make, with three groups stating that it is important to increase education and include schools and children in this process. Finally, two groups specified an importance of supporting Black and minority owned businesses within the community.

When asked who should be involved in these efforts, three groups said everyone should be involved. Three groups named schools and educators as key; three groups shared that the government should be a part of the efforts. Three groups wanted to see organizations and businesses involved. Finally, one group mentioned that it was important to get people not currently involved in these conversations to come, as it is important for their input to involve as much of the community as possible.

Finally, participants were asked what immediate action steps could be taken in the next six to twelve months. Four groups mentioned the importance of organizations, business leaders, and politicians prioritizing diversity, equity, and inclusion; the groups saw many ways this could be enacted, including hiring practices, workshops, offering support and encouraging attendance of leaders at community events. A couple groups stated the need to increase the marketing and exposure surrounding events that promote community unity. One group mentioned that the library would be a good place to host conversations, while a couple groups noted that Wabash College has resources to add to efforts to improve diversity and inclusion.

As a final part of the event, participants were asked to share something that they would take with them—an item of learning, a need, or an action step. The Zoom meeting participants shared these on digital post-it notes on the Google Jamboard. These comments were live-sorted into themes by WDPD Director Sara Drury during the final ten minutes of the event. At the in-person event, the weather threatened rain, and so community members were asked to share their final takeaways within their groups. WDPD members posted them on the large banner for people to view as they exited the event. WDPD team members thematized these post-it notes after the event. Across the two events, six themes emerged.

First, community members expressed a desire to reach across the community. Examples of comments included “bring people together who want to enact change so that numbers will grow,” “reaching out across the aisle and bringing in those who are less willing to be a part of the movement,” and “meet people where they are at. The second theme was “create connections amongst those promoting diversity and inclusion,” and community members expressed comments such as “have better conversation across community entities” and “increase awareness of community events.” Third, comments focused on the need to raise awareness, highlighting that “Crawfordsville is small enough for change to happen,” and that diversity and inclusion is a “work in progress; will take a long time to address.” Fourth, comments stressed the need for education, both in “resources” such as books and guides, and one-on-one conversations. The fifth theme was actions that community members felt should be taken, including listening more, actively seeking different perspectives, promoting unity, and being willing to “say something even if it is hard.” Finally, the sixth theme was around “good things happening” in the community. Participants expressed their gratefulness for community members taking part in this event, that the conversation was difficult but “hopeful,” and that this was the community “getting in the starting blocks.” Images of the post-its shared at both events are in the Appendix of this report.

At the end of each event, Dr. Sara Drury thanked everyone for attending and reminded them that WDPD would be analyzing the themes of the conversation and publishing a report.

### ***Post Conversation Surveys***

Community members were invited to take an optional survey about the event. The Zoom event had n=24 completed surveys and the in-person event had n=29 completed surveys (total n=53). The surveys asked the same questions, which included open-ended questions, rating questions about participant experiences, and demographic information. The open-ended questions resulted in common themes whether online or in-person, and so the themes are reported here comprehensively.

**Open-ended question: “What was the most important information you heard or learned today?”**

Most responses to this question referenced the panel or speakers, and hearing experiences of people of color in Crawfordsville, for example:

- Personal testimonials were the most meaningful
- Stories of those impacted by racism. Say something! (even when it's uncomfortable)
- I learned so much from the panel of speakers

Another common theme reflected learning that there are others who care about this issue, perhaps even more than expected. For example, one response reflected “there are actually members of the community who care and want real change,” and another said “there are many people who are as concerned about this issue as I am.”

Lastly, other answers referenced that this conversation was only a start (and more effort would be needed) and that advocacy was also important.

**Open-ended question: “Is any other feedback on the event that you would like to share?”**

Many of the responses here noted that they felt it was a “great event” or similar positive feedback. Several responses here noted the importance of trying to get more people involved in the conversation, especially moving beyond those who are already involved in anti-racism efforts. Three surveys expressed that the event focused primarily on diversity from a Black perspective, and encouraged that other factors of diversity (e.g., racial, religion, sexual orientation, and/or socio-economic status) should have been equally explored. Another common response to this open feedback section was expressing a desire for future events like this one.

Over 90% of those who took surveys reported that they were either satisfied or very satisfied with the conversation. Of those surveyed, 98% reported they had sufficient opportunity to express their views; 100% said they considered what others had to say, and 98% said that they felt they were treated with respect.

The surveys represented a range of demographics, as shown below. The percentages listed below are from both events, n=53.

<i>Gender</i>	
Male	33.96%
Female	62.26%
No answer	3.77%

<i>Age</i>	
18-29	11.32%
30-39	18.87%
40-49	15.09%
50-59	16.98%
60-69	13.21%
70-79	15.09%
80+	3.77%
No answer	5.66%

<i>Political Affiliation</i>	
Extremely liberal	13.21%
Liberal	33.96%
Slightly liberal	15.09%
Moderate	15.09%
Slightly conservative	7.55%
Conservative	5.66%
Extremely conservative	0%
Other / no answer	9.43%

## Concluding Notes

WDPD would like to thank all those who contributed to the event, including:

- Jeremy Wentzel, Wabash alumnus and member of the Lilly Scholars Network, for sponsoring WDPD's grant application to the Lilly Scholars Network;
- The Lilly Scholars Network and the Lead Forward grant opportunity for supporting this project;
- Mayor Todd Barton, Mayor of Crawfordsville;
- Members of the Mayor's Special Commission on Racial Equality; and
- Community Conversation co-sponsors the City of Crawfordsville, Humans United for Equality, and the League of Women Voters.

**Most importantly, we would like to extend our thanks to the Crawfordsville community members who participated in the events.**

It is our hope that this report provides the City of Crawfordsville, the Mayor's Special Commission on Racial Equality, and community members with insight on needs and avenues for positive change.

## Appendix

The images on the next few pages are digital representations of the Jamboard at the virtual event and the post-its shared by community members at the in-person event.

### Question 1: Why did you decide to come to today's event?

*Post-it responses from Zoom event, part 1*



## Question 1: Why did you decide to come to today's event?

*Post-it responses from Zoom event, part 2*



## Question 1: Why did you decide to come to today's event?

*Post-it responses from in person event, part 1*

**Diversity  
is the  
future**

**Protect  
Crawfordsville**

**For my  
grandchildren's  
future**

**Wants to learn  
how to  
support, and  
is passionate  
about the  
issue.**

**Interact  
and  
deliberate**

**Explore the  
shortcomings  
of our  
community to  
foster unity.**

**Important  
to talk  
about**

**Believes  
this is  
important**

**Work at CPD,  
important to  
be involved**

**Believes in  
equality, but is  
seeing a lack  
of  
commitment**

**Inclusion. How do  
we get more people  
of color in these  
conversations? This  
is a huge challenge.**

**Curiosity**

**Concerned  
with the state  
of our country**

**To foster  
inclusion**

**It is a priority  
to address  
diversity and  
inclusion.**

**Community is  
not to diverse,  
especially the  
schools**

## Question 1: Why did you decide to come to today's event?

*Post-it responses from in person event, part 2*



## **Question 2: After today's event, what is one thing you will take with you?**

*responses are transcribed as written*

### **Theme 1: Reach across the community**

- There are more people who want to get involved they just don't know how. How do we get them to the table?
- Is there a way to extend this out to a student group?
- Bring together the people who want to enact change so that numbers will grow?
- Reaching out across the aisle and bringing in those people who are less willing to be a part of the movement.
- Reach out more.
- Meet people where they are. Tailor our conversations to people to ensure that they understand your point.
- Reaching out to people of color.
- More efforts to get a diverse perspective.
- Find ways to continue engagement with participants.
- We need Crawfordsville to be one big safe place.
- Hope for open communication with Wabash students about diversity.

### **Theme 2: Create connections amongst those promoting diversity and inclusion.**

- Increase awareness of community events
- Do enough people know about community groups and the work they do?
- What are different groups in the community doing? Better communication
- Have better conversation across community entities so they can work collaboratively

### **Theme 3: Need to raise awareness.**

- Thinking about how some people of color don't feel safe and comfortable in the community.
- Work in progress. Will take a long time to address.
- Things happening in our community and some of them we are unaware of and it is good that we uncovered some of them today.
- Crawfordsville is small enough for change to happen
- Panelist stories
- The intentionality of CPD

### **Theme 4: Need for education.**

- Educational resources requiring cultural competence education
- Having an educational conversations with someone about these issues and teaching anti-racism
- Book suggestions on this issue
- Need for children to teach parents
- Can do better (being kind, aware, educated)

### Theme 5: Actions We Can Take

- Practice more empathetic listening
- Supporting Black and brown businesses
- Hold election officials accountable
- Importance of listening
- Keep an open mind and don't have preconceptions
- Think of phrasing to use when people make comments that are not inclusive
- Regardless of intention, we need to recognize how our actions make people feel
- Bringing in people to help us understand; make sure we have diverse teachings to help the community understand their values. We need leadership and work actively to get there
- Ask friends of communities of color about their experiences
- We need people to bring different perspectives
- Try to see how we can put a billboard up that talks about unity around Crawfordsville
- Be more mindful of everything I say and do
- Being open to talking about diversity and inclusion to people they meet in Cville community.
- Continue our efforts
- Desire to make new friends with like minds.
- There is still a lot to be done.
- Encourage conversations.
- Open-mindedness and be willing to listen.
- Trying not to avoid issues
- Stand with me. Don't be afraid to speak up.
- Say something even if it is hard. They're your friend/colleague.
- Ensure our personal education with issues of my community.

### Theme 6: Good things!

- People in the community want to make a change
- Being excited that this is happening—getting in the starting blocks
- There are good things happening
- Appreciative of our community and the Wabash community for having an opportunity like this one
- People are willing to admit they do not know but they are willing to listen and learn
- Celebrate the little victories
- Appreciate the opportunity because it was away from the norm and a good “coffee shop” conversation
- We have power as individuals to bring change
- Hope
- Hopeful that change is possible
- Hope that we can correct the past and get to the truth