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The Truth, Racial Healing & Transformation initiative (TRHT), was developed and supported by the WK Kellogg Foundation, and designed to confront the harm, fractures, and barriers faced by people of color due to racial divisions and structural oppression. Children who face these detrimental impacts are born into an environment where they are forced to navigate its tumultuous terrain, leaving psychological and often indelible scars. These wounds come from both interpersonal slights as well as structural harm by systems (e.g., criminal justice, education). The TRHT seeks to “jettison the belief in a hierarchy of human value,” thus creating an environment that is more conducive to the health and well-being of all children. The American Library Association (ALA) invested in this initiative through its own lens of library science and expanding a love of literature and learning. Marrying the goal of the TRHT with the strategy of literature, ALA built on its existing Great Stories Club (GSC) program model designed especially for, and with, youth struggling with issues such as addiction, poverty, academic probation, or incarceration to focus on race through the TRHT framework – the TRHT GSC.

In partnership with BECOME: Center for Community Engagement and Social Change, ALA evaluated its pilot TRHT GSC project across 25 sites (libraries and partner organizations) to explore areas for improvement and determine its impact on racial healing, supporting narrative change of youth participants, and building capacity within the sites to implement the program.

The TRHT seeks to “jettison the belief in a hierarchy of human value,” thus creating an environment that is more conducive to the health and well-being of all children.

Components of the pilot TRHT GSC project included:

1. **Facilitated sessions**
   - Facilitated book discussions used books that reflect the diverse identities and experiences of young adults. The book discussions were coupled with suggested discussion questions specific to each reading.
   - A racial healing circle was led by a professional and skilled racial healing facilitator. These sessions are designed to support the emulation of an optimal and just social reality where people recognize and respond to the humanity in one another.

2. **Grassroots partnerships with community organizations that serve high-need youth**
   - The purpose of this component is to provide young people with vital connections to sites and other nonprofits that can be important to success after detention, graduation, or during other periods of change.

3. **Capacity building for library project directors to facilitate book discussions.**
   - At these workshops, library project directors were provided training in facilitation skills and a racial healing circle experience.
To evaluate the pilot project, the following activities were completed:

- Interviews with 11 library project directors
- Surveys of 3 library project directors
- Interviews with 3 racial healing facilitators
- Surveys of 9 community partners
- Review of staff reflection logs and youth responses from 22 sites that uploaded data
- A focus group with 8 youth participants
- Informal small group interviews with 10 youth participants

Findings

Overall, the most notable changes for young people were increased interest in reading, expanded support, and disclosing sensitive or traumatic experiences and thoughts.

There is no evidence that the program as a whole had an impact on youths’ narrative change as it relates to society. However, library project directors reported that reading materials selected contributed to encouraging youth to explore issues of race, class, and identity in a safe, well-structured, and respectful environment.

Library project directors reported that youth participants in their TRHT GSC experienced moments where they saw the capacity for narrative change in their own lives as well as opportunities for building intersectional equity in their schools and communities.

Racial healing circles also had the consequence of challenging adults’ preconceptions about youth and understanding their lives more. What library project directors learned about the youth’s lives deepened their own understanding of the youth.

Library project directors for the sites felt that they experienced an increased capacity to be effective not only as the TRHT GSC program implementers, but also in their other work as library professionals and educators.

“It’s like everyone is a piece of paper with two sides and when there is enough ink on one side the weight of it bleeds through to the other side and that side is also changed.”
- Participant

Recommendations

Participating libraries should understand the mechanisms of change and what needs to happen initially and in the long-term for sustainable shifts in personal identity and narrative. The figure below presents a model for the process of change, rooted in the lessons learned and logic of the pilot libraries for the TRHT GSC model.
Additionally, the program staff should operate with an expanded view of community partnerships. While the community partners were initially designed to help students reach their next phase of growth or solve current issues, some library project directors learned over time that they can be agents of change in their communities. Through partners’ increased awareness about insidious racial dynamics, they can use their role to further racial equity as well as better serve the young people.

With regard to training and capacity building, the program should keep:

- Training on facilitation
- Racial healing circle participation
- Discussion questions

The program should add:

- **Theory of change/principles** - Sites need to understand the mechanisms of change for the racial healing circles and narrative change, personal identity, etc. If they understand these essential elements, most can infuse them in programming from the beginning and make more progress.

- **Deeper dialogue and understanding** - Conversations should focus on racial equity, racial healing, structural racism and discrimination, and the ways in which each of us contributes with our own power, privilege, and biases. Some library project directors did not have a robust understanding of structural racism and racial equity, nor were they able to describe the underlying theory of change for the racial healing circles.

- **Tutelage and discussion around being an ally** - Implicit bias is common due to the human condition. It is especially prevalent for European Americans who state they are not racist or are “color blind.” One library project director described her own journey through the program, initially believing that she was not “racist” and learned through the process that she too had blindly adopted racist language and ideology. This type of training should be incorporated into the workshop with a focus on ongoing critical self-reflection and what it means to be an ally to people of color.

- **Time for developing strategy** - This includes strategies for programming (e.g. time, staff substitutes, building other staff members’ capacity), community capacity building, and sustainability of work.
Introduction & Context

The history and present context of the US is characterized by racial divisions and structural oppression, creating barriers for the success of people of color. Children are born into this environment and are forced to navigate its tumultuous terrain, leaving psychological and often indelible scars. These wounds come from both interpersonal slights as well as structural harm by systems (e.g., criminal justice, education). The Truth, Racial Healing & Transformation initiative (TRHT), developed and supported by the WK Kellogg Foundation, was designed to directly confront the harm and fractures of this pernicious situation. The TRHT seeks to “jettison the belief in a hierarchy of human value,” thus creating an environment that is more conducive to the health and well-being of all children.

The American Library Association (ALA) invested in this initiative through its own lens of library science and expanding a love of literature and learning. The mission of ALA is to: “provide leadership for the development, promotion, and improvement of library and information services and the profession of library professionalism in order to enhance learning and ensure access to information for all.” Marrying the goal of the TRHT with the strategy of literature, ALA built on its existing Great Stories Club (GSC) program model designed especially for, and with, youth struggling with issues, such as addiction, poverty, academic probation, or incarceration to focus on race through the TRHT framework – the TRHT GSC.

Program Description

Components of the pilot TRHT GSC project included:

1. **Facilitated sessions**
   - Facilitated book discussions used books that reflect the diverse identities and experiences of young adults. The book discussions were coupled with suggested discussion questions specific to each reading.
   - A racial healing circle led by a professional and skilled racial healing facilitator. These sessions are designed to support the emulation of an optimal and just social reality where people recognize and respond to the humanity in one another.
For the pilot implementation, three books were provided:

1. **The Hate U Give** by Angie Thomas
   - A novel focused on the effects of police brutality and its impact on communities of color, shown through the psychological journey of an African American female protagonist who loses a friend to murder by a police officer.

2. **Ms. Marvel Volume 1: No Normal** by G. Willow Wilson, Adrian Alphona
   - A graphic novel centered on a superhero that is a teenage, Muslim, female and her unfoldment of her powers and confidence.

3. **March: Book One** by John Lewis, Andrew Aydin, Nate Powell
   - A graphic novel about the civil rights era, nonviolent training, and experience of overt and often violent racism shown through the life of John Lewis.

The goal of the book discussions is fostering youth engagement with critical questions of identity and personal narrative within the framework of human equity and structural racism. Through a desired enhanced consciousness, the young people would gain a sense of agency and see a role for themselves in shifting structural racism within their communities and beyond.

Grassroots partnerships with community organizations that serve high-need youth.
- The purpose of this component is to provide young people with vital connections to sites and other non-profits that can be important to success after incarceration, graduation or during other periods of change.

Capacity building for library professionals to facilitate book discussions.
- At these workshops, library professionals were provided training in facilitation skills and a racial healing circle experience.
The evaluation partner for this initiative is BECOME, which is a nonprofit organization with a mission to nourish communities affected by poverty and injustice and to help make their vision of a thriving community a reality. We do this through program evaluation and research, capacity building, facilitation, strategic planning, and community organizing.

Purpose of Evaluation

- Identify indicators for capacity, support, and buy-in for narrative change and racial healing as part of the work of sites as agents of community innovation and change.

- Understand the effectiveness of the hybrid model of the GSC and the TRHT in terms of:
  - Fostering youth engagement with critical questions of identity and personal narrative within the framework of human equity and structural racism.
  - Building library project directors’ capacity to manage and facilitate the hybrid model and further see themselves within structures of human equity and structural racism.

- Learn the strategies, activities, processes, and content (i.e., books) that work well for supporting narrative change with participants and integrate lessons learned into future iterations of the TRHT GSC.

- Disseminate implications and recommendations for sustaining the work in the field.

- Understand the level of institutional impact of these efforts on ALA.
Evaluation Questions

Out of this charge, several evaluation questions (along with sub questions) were developed that guided the pilot evaluation and this interim report:

**Overarching Evaluation Questions**

- How were the racial healing circles implemented?
- What was the perception of youth participants in the racial healing circles?
- For staff and youth, how effective was the TRHT GSC in shifting narrative change and expanding an understanding of personal and structural racism and human equity?
- To what extent has the self-perception of young people and library project directors as agents of change shifted over the course of the grant program period (May 2018-April 2020)?
- What are strategies, activities, processes, and content that engage youth and support youth participation in all four sessions (in their library) of the TRHT GSC?
- What were the most helpful strategies in building meaningful relationships with the youth participants?
- What was the structure and process of community partnerships for assisting youth in their process of racial healing?
- What is needed within ALA and beyond to support the sustainability of this work in sites?
- What can be improved in future iterations of the program for young people and library project directors?

**Interim Report Questions**

- Was there capacity, support, and buy-in for narrative change and racial healing as part of the work of the pilot sites, as it related to the TRHT GSC project?
- Was there buy-in and capacity in a more general sense (e.g., interest in pursuing racial healing facilitation/training and applying it in non-TRHT GSC settings)?
- How effective was the TRHT GSC model in terms of:
  - Fostering youth engagement with critical questions of identity and personal narrative within the framework of human equity and structural racism?
  - Building the pilot sites’ capacity to manage and facilitate the TRHT GSC model and see themselves within the structures of human equity and structural racism?
- What strategies, activities, processes, and content worked/didn’t work well for supporting narrative change with participants?
- What, if any, impact did participating in the project have on the site’s relationship with community organizations (their partner organization and/or other(s) if applicable)?
- What recommendations does BECOME have for the national implementation of the TRHT GSC?
- Do sites generally plan to participate in the next round of grants? What are the factors driving that decision?
Methods

To answer the questions, the following activities were completed:

- Interviews with 11 library project directors
- Surveys of 3 library project directors
- Interviews with 3 racial healing facilitators
- Surveys of 9 community partners
- Review of staff reflection logs and youth responses from 22 sites that uploaded data
- A focus group with 8 youth participants
- Informal small group interviews with 10 youth participants
- Observation of program sessions (N=2)
The two main components of the facilitated sessions were the book discussion series and the racial healing session. Book discussion sessions were implemented in a variety of ways, depending on the structure and routine of the library or partner institution (sites) and the purview of the library project director. For example, one library partnered with a work program and TRHT GSC was a key component. Another TRHT GSC was integrated into a school’s routine. Programs varied by frequency of meetings, time in session, and consistency of attendance.

A young man who participated in the program shared this sentiment in his reflections after reading *The Hate U Give*, and it serves as an appropriate metaphor for the multi-layered effects, dynamics, and potential of the TRHT GSC. The program serves as the ink and for various library project directors, racial healing facilitators, and sites. The ‘weight’ varied depending on strategy, person, skill, and rapport with the young people.

The following subsections focus on the core components of the model and are organized by overarching evaluation questions referenced above, with the analysis guided by the interim evaluation questions where relevant.

**The TRHT GSC Programming**

The two main components of the facilitated sessions were the book discussion series and the racial healing session. Book discussion sessions were implemented in a variety of ways, depending on the structure and routine of the library or partner institution (sites) and the purview of the library project director. For example, one library partnered with a work program and THRT GSC was a key component. Another TRHT GSC was integrated into a school’s routine. Programs varied by frequency of meetings, time in session, and consistency of attendance.
How were racial healing circles implemented?

The racial healing circles were implemented as 90-minute sessions, where the book content was used to move the youth into a deeper conversation about their own lives via storytelling in pair-shares. While there was some variation on the implementation of this model, most racial healing facilitators invited students to reflect on times in their lives when they were courageous and to listen deeply to the stories of others. The format of racial healing circles consisted of guiding questions and pair-shares where individuals discussed the answers to the questions in dyads, alternating which person spoke and which person listened deeply to their partner. One session did not have pair-shares because there were only two youth attendees. This session involved an open discussion about the book topics between the students and the racial healing facilitator.

Racial healing facilitators noted that the adults were more reluctant, especially ones like juvenile justice facility guards, who were there to monitor youth in detention facilities. Library project directors mentioned that teachers were sometimes skeptical of the racial healing format and did not allow their students to come. The only barrier that was identified in great detail was the rate of attendance, as the only racial healing circles that were harder to implement were at two sites in which there were only two youth in each circle. It was difficult for youth to disclose in such a small group in the presence of several adults including authority figures within their institutions. A similar dynamic was observed in a TRHT GSC session observed by TRHT GSC evaluators for a site in which the town mayor and councilman were invited to participate in a discussion of The Hate U Give. Including the library project directors and adults from the partner institution there were seven adults present. Though there were ten youth participants in the discussion, they did not participate freely in the presence of the adults. Though library project directors reported that in an earlier session with a different group of youth participants where all adults were present, the students were engaged and freely participated in the book discussion.

What was the perception of youth participants in the racial healing circles?

Several library project directors mentioned that students were unusually open and contributing richly, that they were surprised to see youth either stay or want to stay longer, and that youth were more respectful and open to each other than they had ever been. One library project director noticed that during the racial healing circle, the youth directed jokes and jabs at one another that were very common in other TRHT GSC meetings.

Racial healing circles also had the consequence of challenging adults’ preconceptions about youth and understanding their lives more. This consequence can be extrapolated to the TRHT GSC goal of relationship building. Many library project directors commented on learning something about youth’s lives that they would have never imagined, such as a group of youth were on a bus for three hours every morning to get to school, or that youth were struggling with their families being undocumented. One library project director at a detention facility shared the remarkable experience of realizing that the most “difficult” youth had significant trauma in his life:

I have to say that a student, who is a Native American student and he’s, oh I mean he’s a tough cookie. He’s been here a long time. There’s no place else for him to go. He’s burnt all these bridges and he really opened up and talked a lot [in the racial healing circle] about some of the pretty traumatic exper-
Overall, library project directors reported that the reading materials were well-selected and contributed to encouraging youth to explore issues of race, class, and identity in a safe, well-structured, and respectful environment. The book clubs created several opportunities for youth to touch on different aspects of narrative change and express their experiences of racism. However, the sentiment in the quote to the left was shared by various sites and the effect of the program in large part depended on the library project directors’ level of skills and awareness in the areas of racial healing, equity, and youth.

As most youth in the TRHT GSC program were people of color, library project directors of European descent thought youth were becoming more introspective when they were expressing their experiences with personal racism, but it was not clear from youth reflections whether this was true. It is likely students were able to express these experiences that they were very aware of to begin with once there was a safe-enough space to do so. The focus group with youth confirmed this. For instance, a participant shared, “they think we don’t understand what racism is - we understand what racism is, we deal with it all the time. And we deal with it as kids. As for structural racism, students increased their awareness through the reading of *March: Book One* and *The Hate U Give*, which, together provided opportunities to see both how much has changed and how much has not.

As for a shift in narrative, both in terms of personal identity and the roles they take on in relation to the world (e.g. victim, hero, perpetrator), there is no evidence that the program as a whole had an impact on youths’ narrative change as it relates to society.

A few library project directors reported that youth participants in their TRHT GSC experienced moments where they saw the capacity for narrative change in their own lives as well as opportunities for building intersectional equity in their schools and communities. These moments widely varied.

Some program participants experienced these moments while discussing the books in comparison to their lived experiences, specifically *The Hate U Give*. Others reported that art-based activities aligned with *Ms. Marvel* and *The Hate U Give* supported self-reflection in this way.

Several library project directors and racial healing facilitators also shared that other participants began to exhibit buy-in for narrative change and racial healing later in the program process, during the racial healing circle.
There was an example of a slight narrative change in one group: after a long conversation with her classmates of color, a European American youth realized that saying the n-word, even in a song, was problematic, because of her role in society. At the beginning of the group, she had taken a different stance.

Overall, the most notable changes for young people were increased interest in reading and they received expanded support from adults in a safe environment where they could disclose sensitive or traumatic experiences and thoughts. The figure below presents a model for personal narrative and identity change, rooted in the lessons learned and logic of the pilot sites for the TRHT GSC model. The outlined components are where the data indicated change for the students.

**Effect on Youth: Increased Interest in Reading**

Aligning book themes with participant experiences created a powerful dynamic. Through reading engaging books that reflected the lives and character of the young participants, their interest in reading was sparked or regained. One library project director and stakeholder noted:

*All of the boys responding to the survey and saying how they all read more now and enjoy it because of the club. We are so thrilled they got to participate and that through the course of the club they have grown into readers. We have witnessed this firsthand and it is affirming to have them acknowledge this as well.*

Feedback from both youth and library project directors indicated that many program participants strongly identified with the content and storyline of *The Hate U Give*. When stakeholders were invited to share the materials and activities that were most impactful in the TRHT GSC, this book was mentioned most. Youth expressed that they were able to identify with the story of Starr and Khalil and the struggles that they faced at school and in their larger community.

Several library project directors noted that the length of the book was an early barrier. However, engagement support strategies such as group reading out loud and review of key passages within the TRHT GSC sessions helped youth participants experience the book and express their thoughts and feelings. One student noted, “I gained my sense of loving to read back.”
Effect on Youth: Deepening Relationships with Group

Feeling a sense of respect from the library project directors and other students allowed many young people to develop bonds with one another. The book discussions, especially around *The Hate U Give*, helped deepen relationships between adults and their young participants and build community among the youth themselves. One library project director remarked:

_In the course of talking casually amongst themselves I heard a student comment on how this book group really gave them a sense of community. I asked a few follow-up questions, asked what they meant, asked if it was something about this peer group or what. In the end we talked about community in general and at the school in particular. What became clear is that the students in this particular program do NOT have a sense of community, and in fact harbor a significant jealousy of other programs within the school that do have community. Almost all of them said that what they liked about this group was that it gave them a place to come together and an opportunity to share diverse ideas with diverse people. Also, they got to feel that ‘togetherness’ and have inside jokes._

Both program participants and library project directors expressed the importance of rapport-building games and activities that complement the program themes. It is important to note that the TRHT GSC programs that regularly utilized rapport-building activities with youth reported strong participant engagement during the session. Examples include establishing a regular "check-in/check out" activity; using simple scenario questions like when youth were invited to share “if they had one superpower what would it be?”; and art-based activities built on the key themes expressed in the literature.

Effect on Youth: Becoming More Vulnerable and Disclosing Personal Narrative

What library project directors learned about the youth’s lives deepened their own understanding of the youth. Creating safe space where young people can share their feelings, think critically about the intersections of race and equity, and develop strategies that they would utilize in supporting community change is complex. Some library project directors reported that supporting and maintaining safe discussion space was a challenge when there was variation in participant attendance. Others expressed difficulty with establishing safe and brave space inside of organizations and institutions with highly structured policies and procedures (such as juvenile correctional facilities or group homes).

Those that were successful in creating this saw significant shifts within participants. In various groups, they discussed difficult and vulnerable issues, such as losing loved ones to suicide, disclosing their sexual orientation, and being a victim of sex trafficking. One library project director shared that:

_Even in a very limited time (we only had an hour) they were able to get the kids to the point of saying what hate they give the world. It was powerful to hear them openly acknowledge their prejudices. It was also powerful to hear the student from the lowest socio-economic background speak up loudly about how much discrimination she feels in her life even while surrounded by her classmates._

While these changes are powerful and integral, it appears that more needs to be done to achieve sustainable narrative change and shifts in personal identity. However, there were promising strategies used that can be expanded.
Library project directors who were trained in the TRHT GSC model stated how rewarding and beneficial participation in this program was for themselves and the young people they served. One library project director began to recognize her own implicit racism:

*I think it really made an impact on me, especially... with subtle things that I didn’t even know that I like I always say, “Oh get your cotton-picking butt in here and get to work,” and that’s racist. I didn’t know that I was completely unaware. You know there’s just so much kind of built into our language that is offensive to other people. And honestly I had no idea- I really didn’t. I never ever thought of myself as a racist person but maybe I am, you know. I just didn’t know it because they said... our skin they’re different colors, but everybody’s alike inside we are the same hopes, dreams; but now what I learned was no we’re not all alike. Society looks at us very differently and those are things that people have to be aware of and make up for, and you know use some self-reflection... to see if maybe you’ve just adopted these ways of you know speaking or acting or whatever and without even ever thinking about them probably knowing about them.*

While there were some important shifts in awareness, like the above statement, there is still a need for deeper understanding among many of the library project directors around structural racism, racial healing, and narrative change. There were varying degrees of narrative shift within library project directors. Six library project directors from the pool of those interviewed noted the difficulty with exploring narrative change and racial healing when the adults identify as an ethnic group that is different from the student program participants (specifically African American youth and a European American adult library project director). Youth sharing their different experiences sometimes enhanced the awareness of their European American library project directors who learned much more about their lives and the struggles the youth experienced.

Also, for some sites and community partners, library project directors who were not trained in the TRHT GSC model contradicted and questioned structural racism and the TRHT GSC model. Their lack of awareness in this area caused challenges to program implementation and, for two sites, overt disruption in student progress. For example, for one site, a substitute staff member facilitated a group session when the library project director was not available and contradicted the TRHT GSC’s values and did not respect the voices of the participants.

To what extent has the self-perception of young people and library project directors as agents of change shifted over the course of the grant program period (May 2018-April 2020)?

The extent of shift around self-perceptions as agents of change varied but was more apparent for the library project directors and affected by their level of awareness and big-picture thinking.

**Changes for Youth**

As mentioned previously, there was no evidence that the program had an impact on youths’ narrative change as it relates to society. Findings from the pilot program show that in art activities and conversations at the end of the program youth saw themselves in relationship to their families more so than before, particularly with those who had siblings. Many young people commented that their guidance could help their younger siblings not follow in their footsteps.
One library project director suggested that the number of sessions were insufficient for significant change around self-perception and that the program should consider expanding to more strategically incorporate this element or create expectations around short-term outcomes.

**Changes for Staff**

Some library project directors felt that they experienced an increased capacity to be effective not only as the TRHT GSC program implementors, but also in their other work as library professionals and educators. There was a significant range of how they applied their awareness and knowledge towards being agents of change. One library project director implemented components of the TRHT GSC model with adult members of a local church.

Another library project director shared that they used some of the icebreaker and rapport-building activities from the training to support youth programming at other library branches in their community. In both instances the library project directors reported using excerpts and accompanying activities from the literature used during this cycle of the TRHT GSC. Another library project director engaged the guards at a school in reading and discussing the book, and another asked the mayor and chief of police to read and engage with the youth around the books. Due to reading the books, the chief of police expressed that he developed more empathy for boys of color and

The library project directors and racial healing facilitators identified key principles of the TRHT-GSC programming that were necessary for the young participants to feel comfortable and more fully engage in the discussions as well as increase the likelihood of sustainable impact for narrative change. The key principles to be treated as essential elements in each cycle are

**Include participant input in programming.**

**Create a brave space a safe emotional space for vulnerability.**

**Build relationships among the group members.**

**Respect and include all voices in the discussion.**

**Choose books that reflect participants’ lives.**

**Have library project directors engage in critical self-reflection.**

**Build other library staff and partner capacity for racial equity.**

**Ensure sufficient time for self-disclosure, connection, and deep dialogue.**
The following tactics helped increase youth engagement, continuity, and passion for and contribution to the TRHT GSC. Guidance was provided in terms of program structure, strategies for delivery, activities, and processes.

**Program Structure**

**Design**
Library project directors found the overall the TRHT GSC design particularly useful and effective in eliciting the aforementioned changes with youth and themselves. Examples included:

- Having a trained and skilled visiting racial healing circle facilitator facilitate at least one session.
- Inviting young people from diverse communities to meet, read, and express their thoughts together.
- Supporting early interaction and communication between the TRHT GSC library project director and their community partners. This support of strong relationship building helps to ensure a cohesive well-developed program for the youth.

**Tools**
Library project directors noted that the resources and training were quite helpful in implementing the model and helped them feel prepared. Many also developed their own tools that others may find helpful in supporting engagement and creating brave space. Examples of tools that facilitators found helpful included:

- Providing library project directors with a diversity of resources and activities that aligned with the selected literature as well as making sure that adult library project directors are well-trained and supported.
- Many library project directors and youth recognized that the discussion questions for *Ms. Marvel* and *The Hate U Give* were engaging and well-developed feedback tools.
- Developing clear TRHT GSC group agreements or boundaries that every young participant helps design and agree to follow, and reinforcing these agreements at each session to support safe and brave space.

**Strategies for Delivery**

**Facilitation**
Quality facilitation of the groups was necessary in creating the outcomes that have been achieved through this pilot. Good facilitation is characterized by inclusion, flexibility, and rapport-building. Examples of this included:

- Library project director sharing their own experiences with structural inequality
- Coming back to the text when students were off-track
- Allowing youth to contribute to the decision-making about activities to do or where the conversation would go: “Do you want to go deeper or stay on the surface?”
- Maintaining a pattern and flow to each of the TRHT GSC sessions - as one library project director shared "the repeating format helped them ease into the discussion and into the book."
- Maintaining a safe, judgment-free, and brave space where conversations about difficult and complex topics could be held.
- Having some flexibility in the program sessions - so that conversation topics and discussions could flow naturally and organically. Also, if suggested program activities didn't work - having the flexibility to shift to a different activity.

**Hosting**
Hosting is an art of making others feel welcomed and comfortable. It also helps to create an inclusive environment while attracting people to return. Examples of effective hosting practices included:

- Showing genuine concern for their continued attendance
- Incentives: Having snacks every session; asking youth to choose their snacks for the next session; bringing journals and pencils (at sites where food is not allowed); giving out certificates at the end; bringing youth “presents” like magazines and other books from home
Activities

Art
Art-based activities were engaging and allowed for expression through creativity. Examples included:
- Doing the mask activity was great for students with writing or drawing barriers, journaling, vision-boards, pixel art, drawing, 6-word memoir at beginning and end, videos, collage, t-shirt making, poetry (Tupac or Shakespeare game)

Reflection
Creating space for reflection and relaxation helped both participants and library project directors expand learning and helped build comfort in a new space. Examples included:
- Intentionality around the closing activity
- Doing the privilege walk; putting thoughts in a Mason Jar; meditating; 10 minutes to meditate, or let their minds wander, or celebrate a friendship.
- Some library project directors appreciated the evaluation as a self-reflection activity

Historical
Some found that using other materials and the books was an opportunity to teach history in an engaging way. Examples included:
- Bringing in additional reading (e.g. speeches, historical photos, guest speakers)

Informational
The use of activities also was an opportunity to facilitate experiences around the library (e.g. a tour of the library).

Processes

Discussion Questions
Most library project directors commented on the value of the discussion questions in helping to connect the reading to the youth’s lives. One library project director chose the questions that most connected to the events of the prior weeks to help engage students.

Disposition
Confidentiality, consistency, and playfulness—like using a stuffed SpongeBob SquarePants as a talking piece

Relevant Questions
Asking students to identify the way in which real events connected to the issues in the books

Ineffective Strategies
For strategies that did not work, library project directors stated that they needed to do more engagement and rapport building before attempting to explore difficult topics related to racism, sexism, or inequality. Two library project directors indicated that they needed to connect earlier to their racial healing facilitator before that session to help build rapport before convening the racial healing circle. This could have possibly impacted the fluidity with which the circles were implemented and allowed the library project directors to feel more prepared to explore difficult topics with participants. Youth completing the feedback forms and surveys had very little constructive criticism to share about the sessions except for suggestions to increase the workshop session time and duration and reduce the amount of reading required.
Other barriers to effective implementation included:

- Utilizing substitute facilitators or individuals that do not have rapport established with the youth. This included allowing individuals to facilitate the group who do not value or have not been trained in racial healing or equity. One library project director reported difficulty with partnering with the classroom teacher when running the sessions. The library project director for this program shared that the teacher was critical of concepts of racial equity and openly expressed this on several occasions to the youth. It might be useful to ask community partners to review the mission and vision of the TRHT GSC model and to ask them to sign a partnership agreement around supporting session discussions and topics.

- Expecting all young people to have completed all the reading prior to the TRHT GSC meeting session is not realistic. There needs to be more group reading time and/or review of key thematic passages built into the sessions. Also, the library project director should be trained on how to meet young people at their different reading levels and build from that point. Some youth participants had difficulty completing the novels and therefore were reluctant to participate in some of the accompanying activities.

- Four of the sites reported that attempting to read three books was too much content to review and digest with young people in a six-week program. Eight of the adult library project directors and multiple youth indicated that increasing the sessions, or session time, would be a valuable improvement to the program.
What was the structure and process of community partnerships for assisting youth in their process of racial healing?

Community partnerships are an integral component of the TRHT GSC model and to the success of the young participants. This component also has untapped potential around community change. Thus, there should be more attention and strategy around this piece, based on the experiences, or lack thereof, of sites and community partners.

There were various types of community partnerships and partnership structures, from churches to city mayors. The community partner survey respondents included representation from a church, three schools, an after-school program, criminal justice/social services, a mentoring agency, a foundation, and a township.

Community partnerships and the prestige of an ALA-funded program grant allowed sites access to institutions that were usually quite hard to engage, like alternative schools and detention centers. Several library project directors said that without the legitimacy that ALA funding provides it would not have been possible to approach partnering with these institutions. Even once accessed, there were often internal challenges (e.g. teachers not letting students attend a book discussion, changes in scheduling, skipping for holidays, and summer break). There was limited support internally in most institutions around agreements on the priority of the book club and which structures of time and space could be safeguarded to protect the work. There is an untapped opportunity to deepen these partnerships at each site.

Community institution would partner with TRHT GSC again

Community partner intends to continue racial healing work within their organization

Additional feedback included:

- The program was viewed as an asset-based tool for connecting with young people in the community and other youth serving organizations.
- The partnership helped to form strong positive relationships between community groups, adult staff and students.
- Increasing the session, or session time, would help students to feel like they were a valuable part of their larger community.
At the program culmination youth were more likely to continue visiting the library and working with the library project directors who acted as TRHT GSC library project directors. Library project directors mentioned an increase in youth using their libraries because of the grant. The TRHT GSC program also piqued the interest of other students at partner organizations and they began asking questions about the program, the books, and racial healing.

On two occasions sites reported that community partners utilized the TRHT GSC materials with other members of the community - one with adults at a local church and another with youth who were not part of the TRHT GSC.

Three library project directors noted community interest in highlighting or showcasing the art projects, activities, and experiences of young people in some way.

There were some library project directors who created deep integration with the program and the partner. In one instance a high school library program paired the TRHT GSC with a summer work program which offered TRHT GSC participant’s community service and work opportunities where they could receive a small stipend. During a focus group with youth from this program participants shared that this additional opportunity was incredibly engaging.

At a site where Big Brothers Big Sisters was the partner, pairing youth with their “Big” and integrating the book and activity became a way for them to build their relationship and thus created a win/win/win for the library, partner, and participant. In these examples, there was a stronger foundation to achieve the original purpose of partnership (e.g., being conducive to success or help in a life transition), given the depth of integration.

At the site that partnered with the township and included the mayor and chief of police, they exemplified using the program as a springboard for all stakeholders being an agent of change and created macro-level potential. Through partners’ increased awareness about insidious racial dynamics, they can use their role to further racial equity as well as better serve the young people.

Regardless if the purpose was micro (around the young person) or macro (structural change), one conclusion became clear through these varying perspectives – the old adage of “it takes a village.” Seeing the community partnerships as a way of creating a “village” around youth and the goal of community level racial healing and equity will help future sites be more deliberate, communicative, and strategic with and through the community partnerships component.

What is needed within ALA and beyond to support the sustainability of this work in sites?

Capacity building is the foundation of the TRHT GSC, providing the knowledge, guidance, and resources needed to implement the model well.

Some library project directors reported that the model was effective and supportive to them developing and structuring the program. They also shared that the trainings, technical support, curriculum, and evaluation tools helped in the successful administration of the program. Many expressed that the trainings offered were also
valuable to supporting youth engagement. Several library project directors noted that this was their sites’ first
time participating in the program. Multiple library project directors stated that these were tools that they would
not have had if they had not participated in the program opportunity. Books, worksheets, group discussion ques-
tions, and experiential activities were all useful to building positive group dynamic, supporting a safe and brave
learning space, and helping young people to align main themes from the books with their lived experiences.

Five library project directors who ran the TRHT GSC program expressed the complexity of partnering and explor-
ing concepts of structural racism and equity with youth of color as European American adult allies. They
expressed that, though difficult, this experience was incredibly worthwhile and rewarding. They also shared that
they learned something new about themselves as they grappled with these concepts within the group. One
Library Project Director remembered:

*We had very powerful sessions last spring that involve students and staff. In the [TRHT] GSC, 
all points of view and experiences are honored and respected, so the [TRHT] GSC helps 
remove the hierarchy and allows us to interact with each other at the same level.*

It is important to note that several library project directors expressed difficulty with fully implementing program
activities and plans during the TRHT GSC. Some of these challenges centered on the need to build rapport and
help participants feel comfortable enough to join in conversations and activities. Other challenges with implemen-
tation aligned with the time and number of sessions. In two instances, challenges with implementation occurred
because of the structure or rules of the partner organization hosting the club. One library project director report-
ed that “it was difficult to coordinate and plan with the racial healing facilitator.”

The images below present the sum of the capacity needed for achieving narrative change.
The majority of library project directors indicated that they plan to participate in the next round of grants. Only two indicated that they would not be able to participate.

**Factors That Support Continued Participation**

+ The ALA sponsored trainings, video conference series, and visiting practitioners for technical support
+ The opportunity to work with different youth serving community partners
+ Having additional funding and tools to offer high-quality, innovative programming to young people
+ Running a program that aligns with the school/library/community partner mission and vision
+ Building excitement and engagement with the program participants
+ The support of supervising administrators to prepare for and implement the program properly

The two sites declining to renew their grant arrived at this decision because of two different issues. One explained that the program was positive; however, the library has a policy of not applying for grants that small. The project director at this library also shared that an exception was made for this cycle but would probably not occur in the future. The second site stated that they had difficulty working with their community partner and would want to change partners before reapplying for the grant.

In addition to these reasons to consider for improvements, there are opportunities for iterations, improvements, and expansions in the areas of TRHT GSC programming, overall programming, community partnerships, and capacity building.

**Factors to Maintain and Improve TRHT GSC Programming**

The program implementors noted strategies that worked particularly well that should either be reinforced or added as essential elements to program implementation:

+ The book selections, especially The Hate U Give, were engaging and inspired a revitalized or even initial interest in literature and reading.
Use good discussion questions.

Use multimedia (e.g., supplemental video or media that tie the content to greater contexts and lessons).

Facilitate activities with participants (e.g., creating art).

Pre-teach/discuss some of the material before reading and book discussions.

Read aloud (note: some students either did not read the books or did not have sufficient literacy).

Use various engagement and facilitation structures (e.g., paired share, group discussion).

Materials: Create a list of activities that have been done with students in the pilot, so TRHT GSC programming for each site will be easier and faster to prepare.

Healing circles: Keep doing them! Two hours minimum if possible, and more frequent.

Overall structure: Have conversations with administration on what is needed to support the TRHT GSC, and how to make-up sessions when they are canceled. Stress the importance of completing the whole series.

Publicity/Legitimacy: Increase publicity, popularity helps buy-in from teachers and staff.

Funding: Increase flexibility on how funding can be used. For one school getting books was essential, because the school would have never done so. For another, the school could have provided books and they would have preferred to have those funds for an additional racial healing circle.

Program cycle: Shift program cycle to fit the school year so that summer break doesn’t disrupt the group – many had whole new groups by September, or significantly fewer youth.

Paperwork: Reduce paperwork, streamline process.

To support expanded capacity building for narrative change and racial healing, program planners should consider developing a best practices/capacity building toolkit to share with library project directors and visitors to the ALA Great Stories Club website. These best practices page would highlight events, activities, and programs that expand the mission, vision and goals of the TRHT GSC work into the larger community.

Community Partnerships

The purpose of the community partnership component is to support the success of the young people after incarceration, graduation, or during other periods of change. This component was well-liked by both library project directors and respondent community partners. They were able to create a mutually beneficial partnership towards supporting the young participants in their life journey.

Moving forward, the program should promote an expanded view of the purpose and service of community partnerships and provide resources for sites about how to engage various types of community partners.

The program should also emphasize and reiterate the importance and potential of community partnerships. One institution did not have community partners, and this was a significant missed opportunity for student growth and success. Also, given the TRHT GSC book discussions need additional institutional, community, and familial support for narrative change and long-term shifts, community partners can be an integral part of achieving sustainable change.
Several library project directors commented on how critical this funding has been to gain access to partner institutions and youth facilities that are typically quite closed. ALA support also brought legitimacy to creating space for conversations that are extremely relevant to youth’s lives.

**Tips for engaging partners**

Sites that made progress on building or furthering their relationships with other community organizations and leaders reported how they were able to promote changes and their working alliance. They recommend to:

+ **Cultivate communication.** Be in communication with the partner about the purpose of the program and the books they are reading. Create a Community Partnership Agreement for each partner that includes the mission and agreements towards service to the youth participants as well as racial equity and healing.

+ **Provide the books to the partners.** Partners who also read the books gained insight into racial equity and the injustice the young people were experiencing. For example, the chief of police developed more empathy for boys of color and what they experience when stopped by the police.

+ **Create opportunities for interaction with youth.** While some partners were deeply engaged with the young people, other partners had more distance. Creating opportunities for the participants and partners to interact (be it within the principles of change discussed above) bolstered more social cohesion and understanding. Allow partners to participate in additional, separate discussions and racial healing circles, as many adults understood youth’s lives more after they told their experiences in the racial healing circles.

+ **In the training, create time and space for developing strategy for various community partners.**

**Training and Capacity Building**

ALA has been effective at building the sites’ capacity when sites already have staff with a certain level of awareness of racism and human inequity. To be most effective going forward, ALA may consider creating an assessment tool to discern the best match for sites and the program. There are some critical questions that sites must ask themselves and that ALA must ask of sites if they are to fully engage with the TRHT GSC:

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- Does the site and personnel have enough time to dedicate for each session and the frequency of sessions needed to have vulnerable and deliberative dialogue around the issues, in additional to allowing students time to read the books?

- Do we have the right team (personality, motivation, diversity) in place who should implement this model with the population of focus?

- Is the team motivated to develop awareness and critical consciousness, do the hard work around internal racism and implicit bias, and provide a safe space for the young people to disclose and heal?

- Is this the right time for my team if the motivation is not present for those who will interact with or make decisions that could affect young people?

- Do at least two people have the skills (or at least the motivation and resource to build them) on our team or within our partnerships to provide trauma-informed, healing-centered facilitation? Note: there needs to be a back-up person who can facilitate a session if the main library project director is absent.

When designing the process for building capacity in the next iteration of the TRHT GSC, consider the above model in planning and structure.
Recommendations for Training Workshops

Several library project directors praised the training they received through ALA. The most valuable components of the training were: the facilitation components, racial healing circle participation, and the discussion questions.

Even with these strong components, the following additions are recommended to support the program to be more cohesive and consistently effective across sites.

+ **Align theory of change/principles and curriculum.**
  Sites need to understand the mechanisms of change for the racial healing circles and book discussion in fostering narrative change and building personal identity. If they understand these essential elements, most can infuse them in programming from the beginning and make more progress. Once there is a cohesive framework of how to reach our goals, all programming materials and structure should be revised for the project to be more effective in having an impact on how youth and adults see themselves in relation to structural racism and their own narrative change. For instance, book discussion questions can be revised specifically for the goal of narrative change.

+ **Facilitate deeper dialogue around racial equity and intersectionality.**
  The training can engage participants in more conversations about their own experiences of racial inequity, racial healing, structural racism, and discrimination and the ways in which each of us contributes with our own power, privilege, and biases. This experience can help inform how they facilitate youth. Some library project directors did not have a robust understanding of structural racism and racial equity, nor were they able to describe the underlying theory of change for the racial healing circles. As a result, there were lost opportunities to question both their own racism and sexism or their students’ racism and sexism.

+ **Provide specific tutelage and discussion around being an ally.**
  Implicit bias is common due to the human condition. It is especially prevalent for European Americans who state they are not racist or are “color blind.” One library project director described her own journey through the program, initially believing that she was not “racist” and learned through the process that she too had blindly adopted racist language and ideology. This type of training should be incorporated into the workshop with a focus on ongoing critical self-reflection and what it means to be an ally to people of color.

+ **Designate time for teaching strategies and support.**
  Library project directors would benefit from deeper conversations with other participants problem-solving different challenging areas: program challenges (students not interested in the book or the activity), scheduling (time, staff substitutes, building other staff members’ capacity), partner buy-in (internal sabotage, community capacity building), and continuity (sustainability of work). Integrate in training specific ways to allow youth to participate in the TRHT GSC design and adapting to youth preferences and needs.

+ **Expand training to include community partners.**
  Consider inviting key community partners to this training so they too can build capacity around their critical self-reflection, implicit bias, and process for racial healing and equity. Building community capacity through the TRHT GSC model.

+ **Create specific tools for youth in institutional settings.**
  Library project directors and racial healing facilitators might also benefit from a workshop that focuses on working with vulnerable youth placed in institutional settings like foster homes or correctional facilities. The rules, policies and procedures and such facilities should be reviewed along with the TRHT GSC structure prior to meeting with the youth.

+ **Develop a community of practice.**
  The library project directors could benefit from the creativity and lessons learned from other sites and community partners. While the listserv is a current platform through which to facilitate such a network, consider building on the online discussion format, both through video (e.g., Zoom video conferencing) and a social media group.
Appendix A:

Zion-Benton Township High School
TRHT GSC - Case Study
Introduction

Zion-Benton Township High School (ZBTHS) facilitated two Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation Great Stories Club programs (TRHT GSC) from June to September 2018 for youth between 14 and 17 years of age. The library project director utilized the design of the program along with additional aspects that are not typical of TRHT GSC experiences, including a summer work program in partnership with a local community organization. Books used in this program for reading and discussion included The Hate U Give by Angie Thomas, Ms. Marvel by G, Willow Wilson, and March by Andrew Aydin and John Lewis. Youth that participated in the Zion-Benton TRHT GSC shared that the program provided job training skills, community service activities, and were paid a small stipend for their participation in several planned work activities. From the two groups, 12 youth participated in a focus group on November 16, 2018. Four participants identified as young men and eight identified as young women. All participants appeared to be youth of color.

The focus group began by collectively constructing group agreements. The agreements they shared included speaking one at a time, being yourself, sharing supplies, not saying negative things about other’s comments, staying open to listening to others, and the Vegas rule – what is said in the group stays in the group. Following that, participants were invited to design their book cover while listening to music. Several participants chose to explain that their book title meant to them. Their titles suggested that their books were “unfinished”, that their story is complex and interesting, and other suggested their story was about making the right choices.

Two library project directors were also invited to participate in interviews that assessed the impact of its sessions on students’ understanding of narrative change, personal and structural racism, and human equity; to ascertain how community partnerships are being utilized and functioning, and to explore ways to improve implementation, including gaining feedback on pilot experience.
Identifying with the book characters was observed as a strength by the library project directors that were interviewed. They both suggested that seeing themselves in the characters empowered the teens to explore and create truth narratives. One library project director explained that *The Hate U Give* provided a “model for them because this is a narrative of about younger black woman; it’s about the narrative about a young black family, and I think the students can relate to it.” Finally, the other interviewed library project director included that, “it gives voice and opportunity to hear diverse voices in books that maybe were not incorporated into a traditional curriculum and I think that’s very important.”

One of the ways in which participants have been able to find commonalities to build relationships with each other may have been through exploring their own identities and the characters in the books. For example, participants explored commonalities when sharing personal experiences that resonated with the characters in *The Hate U Give*. Several participants shared that they or their family members had experienced negative interactions with the police and two of the young women identified strongly with Starr, the main character, during the focus group, youth expressed that the program gave them an opportunity to socialize. Four students shared that they really liked meeting new people. One young man shared that he was shy and didn’t know anyone prior to the program. The student next to him agreed. She stated that she got to meet new people in the program as well. They also mentioned that they had fun going on trips, acting silly together, and acting as a team, suggesting that the program goal to offer emotional benefits by reducing feelings of depression and isolation, and encouraging empathy through peer-based discussion groups was a strength at ZBTHS. Additionally, all of the young men agreed that the program helped them meet new people, gave them new resources, and helped them to navigate to school and community better.

One student shared that her story was called *Jada’s Life Full of Adventures*. She drew a beautiful book cover with hearts, flowers, happy faces, and lots of color.

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Challenges

A weakness that the Zion-Benton TRHT GSC participants stated was their lack of engagement with some of the literature of characters, particularly in the book, *March*. The lack of relevancy to their lives may have made them less likely to read it. As one participant said that they had a hard time reading *March* because it happened a long time ago and her peers nodded their heads in agreement.

When asked if they identified with *March*, almost every participant shook their head no and five participants expressed that their story was not relevant at all to the story of *March*. One participant shared “Yeah we didn’t like that one so much.” Another student said, “I am tired of hearing about Dr. Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, and Rosa Parks. We have our own story and our own issues to deal with nowadays.” Another participant concluded, “like we said before the past is the past. We learn about that stuff in school every day.”

Library project directors should consider strategies to deepen personal exploration of universal themes that are central to the TRHT GSC mission and vision. Some participants had a difficult time describing themes such as structural racism and human equity. Furthermore, the majority of the students (8) felt that the participation in the TRHT GSC did not influence the way that they interpret racism or inequality. For instance, a participant shared that “they always think we don’t understand what racism is - we understand what racism is, we deal with it all the time. And we deal with it as kids.” Several other students explained that they had a firm understanding of racism and prejudice prior to the program from personally experiencing it in their communities and schools.

TRHT GSC Core Themes

Library project directors should consider strategies to deepen personal exploration of universal themes that are central to the TRHT GSC mission and vision. Some participants had a difficult time describing themes such as structural racism and human equity. Furthermore, the majority of the students (8) felt that the participation in the TRHT GSC did not influence the way that they interpret racism or inequality. For instance, a participant shared that “they always think we don’t understand what racism is - we understand what racism is, we deal with it all the time. And we deal with it as kids.” Several other students explained that they had a firm understanding of racism and prejudice prior to the program from personally experiencing it in their communities and schools.

Theme: Racism

Participants had different opinions about personal and structural racism. Participants gave most of their examples from *The Hate U Give* to explain personal racism. Several students shared that they see racism in the way that police and other law enforcement officials treated Khalil, Starr, and the protesters. Participants agreed that the racism explored in *March* was unique from the racism in *The Hate U Give*. One participant shared that structural racism meant that there were rules to follow and to obey and that the rules were approved of, but they were still racist. A different participant shared that racism was in your face, stating that, “the black people couldn’t do everything that white people could do.” Another student shared that that type of racism was in the past - “we don’t have to deal with stuff like that anymore.” However, one participant disagreed by asserting that black and brown people continue to deal with that type of racism now.

Theme: Sexism

During the focus group, male and female participants appeared to identify differently with the characters, but expressed a strong understanding of sexism, specifically through Starr’s character in *The Hate U Give* and Kamala in *Ms. Marvel*. For instance, one participant said that “Seven was allowed to do things that Starr wasn’t,” which
was met by agreeance with several female participants nodding. When the males in the group were asked if they saw any examples of sexism in the lives of the characters, one said they saw examples while reading *Ms. Marvel*. The other boys didn't acknowledge seeing or talking about any concepts of sexism. Likewise, the male focus group participants indicated that they did not identify with the characters in terms of facing challenges. Despite that, they agreed that they identified with the way that Ms. Marvel and Starr set and achieved goals.

**Theme: Human Equity**

When asked to discuss human equity several students had difficulty responding to the phrase and shook their head no when asked if they understood what equity meant. One young woman asked, “is equity similar to equality- having the same resources?” to which the focus group facilitator nodded yes and stated that equality and equity are very similar. Several students stated that both the *Ms. Marvel* and the *March* stories had strong stories about equality and equity. One student stated that in *March*, the walkers and protesters were fighting for human equity and for their right to have equal rights. Several students nodded their head in agreement. One other student said, “It’s like they were being beaten, hit, and punished just for wanting their basic human rights!”

**Areas for Improvement**

Two suggestions shared by participants were the economic challenge of making it to the program and language. One participant expressed the desire to earn a larger stipend and two other participants said that at times they had a hard time getting to the program due to lack of travel funds. Additionally, some students had difficulty describing vocabulary close to the TRHT GSC humanity themes- specifically structural racism, narrative change, and equity despite sharing personal experiences and themes from the books that illustrate these core themes. The focus group facilitator expressed having to pause to discuss language which may indicate that the program should allow time to make sure participants understand the vocabulary.

**Extending time**

Program participants suggested creating more time for the group. Several students recommended extending the group during the school year while other participants nodded in agreement. Similarly, both library project directors that participated in the interviews mentioned they would like the program to be longer. One stated that, “I wish we had more time because there was more that we could do, more questions to ask, more topics to explore.”

One participant shared that his book title was called *Choosing the Right Path*. On his book cover he has the image of himself with a curly Afro standing in front of two paths. One path had an image of books and school, while the other path had an image of some friends hanging out on the street and a video game console. He shared that his life story was about trying to make the right choice to go down the right path.
Fostering a brave space

Increasing participation was desired by both interviewed library project directors. They both suggested using a partnering strategy to increase participation in discussions. A library project director described the strategy as “having them talk with their partners before talking to the larger group in case they’re on the quiet side.” Important to note, many of the responses from participants included nodding during the focus groups. The lack of verbal communication may suggest that the students may not have felt they were in a brave space to speak up.

Referring back to the group agreements created by the participants may provide insight as to what they expect from the group and each other. Their agreements included speaking one at a time, being yourself, sharing supplies, not saying negative things about other’s comments, staying open to listening to others, and the Vegas rule – what is said in the group stays in the group. Holding themselves, library project directors, and community guest accountable to agreed group guidelines may improve their comfort and trust especially while discussing difficult concepts and identities.

Further exploring what the youth participants need to transform the space from a safe space to a brave space may be helpful. This may include exploring their boundaries and making sure the goals of the program align with theirs. An example of a way in which participants may feel safe, but not brave is demonstrated in the way male participants believed they were safer by refraining from dialogue. One interviewed library project director affirmed this by sharing that, “unfortunately they have been conditioned that if they stare at the table and they don’t say anything they won’t get in trouble and they’ll make it through the next 47 minutes. And gradually, I hope we will get them out of that conditioning and help them recognize their voice and how important it is and how necessary it is.”

Conclusion

The TRHT GSC program not only provides youth the opportunity to, in their terms, “get out of the house” or “having something to do during summer” but also discuss books, key intersectional issues around race and equity, develop positive relationships, and gain work experience.

Overall, the Zion-Benton TRHT GSC contributed to improved literacy and positive attitudes toward reading for the participants. For example, one student said that the program allowed her to read and learn about the past. Furthermore, when asked if they would have read the books on their own time, only two participants raised their hands as a yes, while other students shook their head no. One student said “but we did get paid to read the books” then further explained, “well we got paid to read and discuss the books and I really enjoyed that. I think the program should have stories, but make them shorter and make them more relevant in current to what we’re dealing with today.”
Appendix B: 
Theory of Change Draft
TRHT GSC Theory of Change

The participants in the TRHT GSC program become powerful agents of change by affirming human equity through storytelling and being valued in the context of structural inequity.

Participants experience narrative change, becoming empowered, self-reliant, and autonomous; thus becoming powerful agents of change. Program staff and stakeholders develop deeper understanding of their own roles as agents of change in the context of social equity.

Participants and stakeholders read relevant books and engage in discussion, reflection, and literary analysis to connect the text to life. Through privilege assessments for staff, and access to outreach for youth, they experience enhanced awareness of social inequity.

Participants experience being valued by being heard and respected. High need youth are placed at the center of the program. Program staff deepen their understanding of high need youth. Participants and stakeholders build relationships and they receive access to support networks.