Event Report: “Aridity and the Desert” (Part 1)

November 14, 2017

Phoenix Public Market

25 attendees

Summative Highlights:

- Attracted individuals who had never been to Project Humanities events before
- Individuals admitted rethinking their personal biases based on interactions with other participants
- Participants represented 14 religious worldviews
- Participants were nationals from 3 countries other than America
- Positive experience for most to see place and identity in a new way
- Participants were able to establish “aridity” as a new metaphor for desert dwelling politically, socially, and personally.
- Participants brought topic/ theme-related stories, poems, family photographs, and artifacts to share
- Participants were very creative in the opening exercise of experiencing Arizona through the five senses.

Event Challenges:

- Attracting individuals from diverse political backgrounds (Mostly Independents an Progressives)
- Facilitating dynamic, meaningful conversation within such a short window of time (some feedback indicated that program felt "rushed")
- Participants left with hard questions that they didn't have an answer for or a clear "next steps" after the event
- Making sure participants talk to as many people as possible, not just one group of people the entire night ( a restriction based on the physical event space with stationery benches than chairs)
- Having more attendees; ideally 40

Feedback Survey Results:

What three words describe your experience from this event?

- thoughtful, connecting, sharing
- rushed, intrigued, interested
- hope, commonality, profound
- inviting, kind, understanding
- hope, isolation, sharing
- diverse, interesting, thoughtful
- inspirational, education, connection
What new awareness did you gain, or what is your takeaway from this experience?

- Understanding of how our sprawling Valley keeps people separated
- Although I felt rushed, I enjoyed hearing the experiences and connections of other people.
- Recognition of similar concerns across the attendees
- Some just do not know and you cannot be mad. Educate.
- Views about the re-write of history
- History of sharecropping and that others feel the aridity that I do in culture and diversity
- That there are people who are conscious and motivated to make change
- The discussion about obstacles hindering tolerance and civility brought up more thoughtful topics.
- Meeting new people and sharing real conversations. Need more!
- Distance creates ability to stay segregated.
- Connections with people and their stories
- People are frustrated by inability to connect; we are using this to connect. This group can do wonders to solve the connection issue—it ought to continue beyond this event.
- Everyone is challenged living here.
- How are we checking privilege and bias when creating dialogue
- I am sad that so many people feel disconnected in Arizona. I appreciated one person’s comment and insight about taking action to create connection instead of waiting for it to come spontaneously.
- We all live in the same place and we all experience it differently.

How might this impact your life and work?

- I hardly get the chance to talk to white people so this was very different.
- Deep listening as a daily practice
- Dialogue without discussion
- It gave me a new viewpoint.
- I will share my experience.
- I want to be a better listener.
- Being more motivated to become more proactive
• Cultural awareness
• I feel compelled to be more open to challenging conversations.
• Understand urban design and connection to segregation
• More thoughtful and connected to Arizona even though I have only lived here 4 years
• Ability to connect with community causes inclusion may increase dialogue and productivity at most
• I will continue my community awareness work and helping people understand this and what can grow here and what medicines grow in the desert.
• Prepare for good intentions.
• I believe art and cultural expression are essential tools to bringing people together. I will continue to look for ways to create spontaneous opportunities for connection with others
• I made a connection that will help me with finding community engagement and outreach.

**Did the context of this event inspire out to change your behavior or to take action toward change? If yes, please clarify.**

• Yes, inspired me to get out of my comfort zone and listen to stories
• I think I am inspired to engage in more conversations about place and how connection to the land and the people of land
• Yes, how to cultivate, reproduce, recreate, ripple it all
• Yes, to look at what I do in terms of bias
• Take action toward changing attitudes and be the change that I would like to see in the world.
• To seek out diversity and intellect and arts I want in my life
• Yes, be more mindful of people and their background and life experiences
• Connect with more individuals from more diverse backgrounds
• Re-opened my desire to engage in more of these conversations
• Yes. I need to check my bias against white people. They frustrate me. But the people I spoke to tonight who happened to be white were very kind and easy to speak with.
• No
• I would like to know more about the people that make up Arizona.
• Yes, learn more about Mexican sub-culture
• Continue to use art to awaken and inspire active change
• How do black bodies disappear under brown issues?
• I think the discussion confirmed for me that choosing to intentionally place myself where opportunities are likely. To have diverse experiences with diverse people
• Yes, it inspired me to get more involved with my community through an outreach program

**Other comments about this event?**

• I would like to replicate it with my students. I really enjoyed the activity of mining for data.
• It opened nice and organic then felt rushed with the cards being passed. I had a hard time reflecting quick enough.
• Thank you!
• Food was great.
• Good venue, good participation, excellent moderator
- Uplifting
- Keep it going.
- Thank you
- No particularly challenging conversations due to the similar views amongst our group. This is good and bad.
- Thank you for a well-organized and thoughtful program.
- I appreciated the structure and prompts given. These are really useful for people like me who are really introverted.
- Thank you!

Participant Affiliation

- ASU Student: 2
- ASU Staff: 2
- Community: 12
- Other