

# Using Youth Voices

A newsletter based on a Cornell Cooperative Extension Administration Innovation Grant, *Using Youth Voices to Transform New York State 4-H into a Nationally Recognized Antiracist*

February 2022

## Introducing our guest columnist

This edition of *Using Youth Voices* features Oluchi, as our guest columnist for *In Their Own Words*.

Oluchi came to 4-H through the Act for Change Anti-racism Program that was offered virtually statewide in spring 2021, and is now participating in National 4-H Council's True Leaders in Equity program <https://4-h.org/true-leaders-in-equity-institute/> looking forward to connecting with CCE Suffolk County's 4-H programs in the near future.

Do you know a 4-H'er or a 4-H alum with ideas about what NYS 4-H needs to do to transform 4-H into a welcoming, nurturing and nationally respected antiracist organization? We're looking for guest columnists to share what they believe needs to be done to improve 4-H.

Please let one of the *Using Youth Voices* project team know if you want to recommend a young person as our next *In Their Own Words* columnist! See the project team's contact information here.

## Using Youth Voices Project Team

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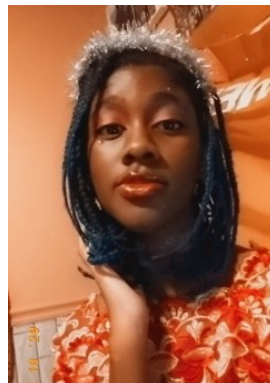
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## In Their Own Words

Oluchi, Guest Columnist



There are words that I think about when I look back on my experience in 4-H. The word that I would specifically like to focus on is "maverick." A maverick is a person who strays away from the orthodox and instead looks at ways that are free-spirited and independent. I started embarking on my journey in the 4-H when I joined the "Act for Change" Anti-racism Program.

What was captivating to me was that every teen in my group did not have the same ideas to fight racism. Some wanted to fight inequality through the arts, while others wanted to do it through spoken word.

But, the one universal concept among all of us was that racism existed and that we needed to find ways to fight it. This belief further branched out when I joined National 4-H Council's True Leaders in Equity Institute.

We sought to find ways to not only find racial equity, but also mental health equity, economic equity and equity in sexuality. And once again, each plan to achieve this was not the same—and that was what made it a success. One plan that I observed had an idea to develop journals that seek to develop Diversity, Equity, and Inclusivity (DEI) learning in schools. Another plan sought to establish ways the group could sharpen their Gender Sexuality, so that everyone was aware of the proper way to address the LGBTQ+ community.

Our plan of wanting to address various forms of identities through the arts, such as writing a letter, helped me connect with various people and understand their own stories—and that was what was the most important to me. I wanted, and still want, everyone to share their story.

In my opinion, 4-H has been doing a sufficient job of seeking diversity within its programs. There has not been a program that I joined in which everyone is the same race or where people share the same experiences. Each experience has a unique aspect to it. I would like to suggest the inclusion of 4-H clubs in schools. I know that many schools may lack the resources to increase diversity in their classes with resources such as personal experiences, pamphlets that describe DEI learning in detail, links to petitions to sign, etc. Additionally, these same schools may lack the resources to correctly identify what microaggressions look like and how we can fight them. Based on this, I think that 4-H should continue working to share various perspectives from different people and should focus on developing a booklet to send to NYS schools that give examples of what racist tendencies can look like in broad daylight.

My experiences in 4-H have been a crucial representative of my desire to spread resources dedicated to mental health and racial equity. I believe that 4-H is creating a group of changemakers and I can only hope that others feel as passionate as I do to make a difference.

## Resources, research & more!

### ACT-ING FOR CHANGE: A PERSONAL RECKONING, AN ANTI-RACIST YOUTH PROGRAM, A GRASSROOTS CALL TO ACTION



In this blog by Melanie Forstrom, CCE Ulster, made possible through Cornell University's David M. Einhorn Center for Community Engagement, Melanie reflects on her personal journey, leading to creating, Acts for Change, an anti-racism program for teens, 14 and older. <https://medium.com/rippleeffect/act-ing-for-change-f5264dff4072>

### ELEVATING YOUTH VOICES—INSPIRING FUTURE STEM LEADERS: MILLION GIRLS MOONSHOT



The Million Girls Moonshot seeks to re-imagine who can engineer, who can build, who can make. It will inspire and prepare the next generation of innovators by engaging one million more girls in STEM learning opportunities through afterschool and summer programs over the next 5 years. The Moonshot will be active in out-of-school programs in all 50 states, leveraging the Mott-funded 50 State Afterschool Network, which has access to more than 10 million youth and 100,000 afterschool programs across the country. [https://milliongirlsmoonshot.org/moonshot-flight-crew?utm\\_source=sendinblue&utm\\_campaign=MGM%20Flight%20Crew%20Announcement&utm\\_medium=email](https://milliongirlsmoonshot.org/moonshot-flight-crew?utm_source=sendinblue&utm_campaign=MGM%20Flight%20Crew%20Announcement&utm_medium=email)



### About Using Youth Voices

The objective of the *Using Youth Voices* project is to create a series of mechanisms to give youth a vehicle for sharing their ideas for transforming NYS 4-H into an antiracist organization.

These are the mechanisms being used:

- **In Their Own Words:** Youth will be invited to be guest columnists in e-newsletters to share their ideas.
- **Where Are They Now?:** interviews with 4-H alumni will be conducted to give these young people an opportunity to reflect on what helped them most to be successful in 4-H and what recommendations they have for transforming 4-H into an inclusive organization for all youth.
- **Youth Voice:** A series of podcasts featuring interviews with 4-H alumni, current 4-H'ers and community members to share what they believe is needed to happen to transform 4-H into a respected antiracist organization.

All suggestions will be culled from these efforts to identify how to create a transformative antiracist NYS 4-H organization.

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### Using Youth Voices Project Advisory Committee

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