

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 Organization*

November 2021

Introducing our guest columnist

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

Kenyetta joined the 4-H Youth Community Action Network (4-H Youth CAN) in 2018 at Tapestry Charter High School, Buffalo. She quickly jumped into the role of club secretary and volunteered for a leadership role at the Community and Police Speak Out, hosted by her 4-H group.

Kenyetta contributed in numerous way to the Erie County 4-H Program, leading community projects and participating in the National 4-H True Leaders in Equity Institute, 2020-2021. Today, Kenyetta is a freshman at SUNY Brockport, where she is majoring in psychology and sociology.

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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Cornell Cooperative Extension



In Their Own Words

Kenyetta Plummer, Guest Columnist



When I joined 4-H, I was looking for an afterschool activity to attend. A friend of mine recommended Youth CAN to me in 10th grade.

For two years, we worked on projects that really gave me the opportunity and taught me to share my ideas and speak up for my ideas. By working on different projects, I learned to speak clearly about my ideas—and I got lots of public speaking experience.

My 4-H leaders always encouraged me to try new things—things that I had never done before. I began to deeply understand the disadvantages that some people have experienced in certain areas—such as what *is* and *is not* accessible to them. And I began to learn what people can do to help their community.

One important thing I learned through 4-H Youth CAN is the importance of bringing awareness to issues that affect a lot of people. For instance, during my time in 4-H, our group worked on a homelessness project, the Community and Police Speak Out and a Black Lives Matter project.

Through these projects I learned to handle conflicts much better, and how to think creatively and solve problems more effectively. Most important, I learned to care more about my community—and what I could do to help my community.

I believe NYS 4-H should reach out to smaller, unnoticed clubs to share what we do and how others can contribute.

I also think that NYS 4-H should work on becoming more diverse. NYS 4-H clubs need to be accessible to everyone and let others reap the benefits of learning how to bring prominent issues to the community's attention. I think this will help all young people build life skills that will benefit them in the future.

Resources, research & more!



CHANGING THE ODDS FOR YOUTH: A COMMUNITY DIALOGUE ON WHAT IT WILL TAKE

The Readiness Projects seek to change the odds for youth. Together, the Forum for Youth Investment, the National Urban League, & the American Institutes for Research commit to upend inequities, embrace science-informed strategies, and accelerate progress.

<https://medium.com/changing-the-odds>

FOR YEARS, BLACK GIRLS HAVE BEEN STUCK ON THE SIDELINES OF TEEN DRAMAS: A NEW WAVE OF SHOWS IS CHANGING THAT

Say hello to Puleng, Fikile, Wendy, Rue, Julien and Zoya. They are the characters riding a new wave of teen TV told from the oft-ignored point of view of Black girls. The shift isn't seismic yet, but it is a change deeply felt for both those behind the scenes and audiences watching at home.

According to Valerie Adams-Bass, University of Virginia and formerly Cornell University, NYS 4-H, young Black audiences are "looking to see themselves." As Dr. Adams-Bass explains. "It's super important to see people your age who look like you. To see how they're managing these encounters, how they navigate the racial tensions, the class tensions that have to do with your identity."



Read more in this article from Helena Andrews-Dyer, *The Washington Post*.
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/arts-entertainment/2021/10/28/netflix-black-teen-drama/>



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.

United We Learn

Honoring America's Racial and Ethnic Diversity In Education

THE ASPEN INSTITUTE
EDUCATION & SOCIETY PROGRAM
Danielle Gonzales, Managing Director,
Aspen Institute Education & Society Program
Francesca López, Professor & Waterbury
Chair of Equity Pedagogy at Penn State
Ross Wiener, Executive Director, Aspen
Institute Education & Society Program

Research shows that teaching students about the history and current manifestations of racism has overwhelmingly positive effects for all students. While it's important to address other inequities, such as poverty and disability status, a national debate has erupted about speech codes limiting teachers' ability to teach about race and racism. Teachers need support to improve their practice in this area, but avoiding teaching about race and racism is detrimental to students' learning and healthy development.

UNITED WE LEARN: HONORING AMERICA'S RACIAL AND ETHNIC DIVERSITY IN EDUCATION

State and local policymakers are making consequential decisions about the treatment of race and racism in schools. It is crucial, right now, to slow down, consider the evidence from research and experience, and apply that knowledge to improve teaching about race and racism.

Authored in partnership between the Aspen Institute Education & Society Program and Dr. Francesca López, Professor & Waterbury Chair of Equity Pedagogy at Penn State University, *United We Learn* looks at empirical research on teaching about race and racism, across more than 40 studies on child development, beliefs about academic ability, positive ethnic-racial identity, and sense of belonging.

<https://www.aspeninstitute.org/publications/united-we-learn/>

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