

Defining | US

PODCAST LEARNING COMPANION

Our podcast companions expand learning beyond the walls of schools and organizations by bringing crucial conversations to the leaders, educators and organizations that matter. Use this guide to promote critical reflection, deeper discussion and meaningful connections among adults and youth around the topics that are Defining US.

VOICES OF CHANGE

A Podcast with Darion Allen

INSIDE EPISODE 1:

“The Only Thing We Can Do Is Change The Future”

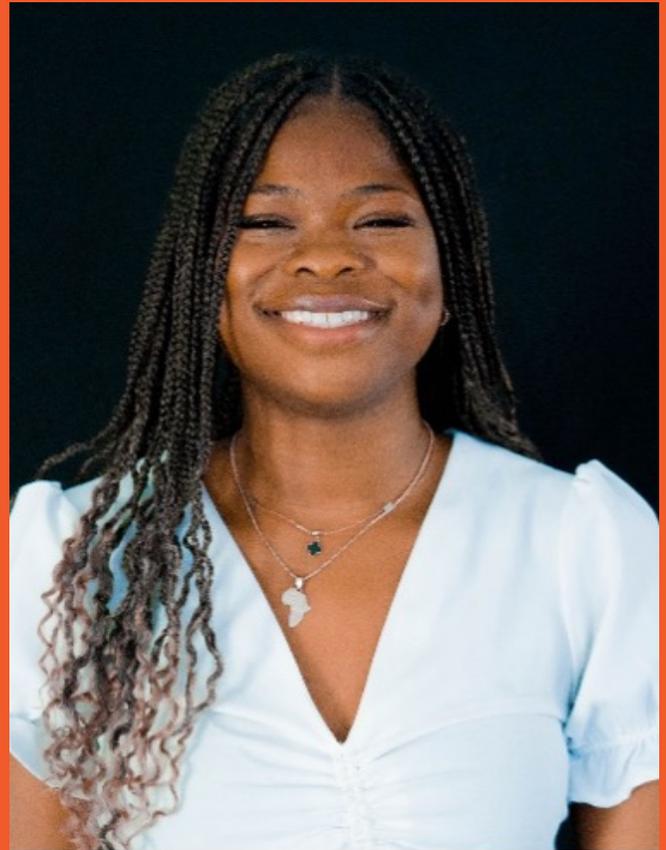
Join the conversation as Darion Allen and Sikirat Mustapha engage in a discussion about the importance of learning about and understanding different cultures, gaining knowledge that can alter the inequities in our communities and focusing on the things we can change.

[DOWNLOAD THE TRANSCRIPT](#)



MEET SIKIRAT MUSTAPHA

As a passionate advocate for equity and access, Sikirat Mustapha uses her interests in educational policy, finance and business to seek change in her community. She attends Columbia University studying Statistics, Political Science and Business Administration. Sikirat can be seen mobilizing thousands at town halls, organizing rallies, speaking on panels and constructing policies that work to eradicate inequitable practices in NYC public schools. As a high school student, Sikirat served as an Executive Board Member on the NYC Chancellor's Student Advisory Council. She is also the founder and current CEO of Sikirat Tutors, a program that offers a youth enrichment curriculum where students are taught and mentored by other students. Sikirat's love for equity also branches outside of education, where she can be seen advocating for financial literacy, fair housing and racial justice. In the summer of 2022, she spent time exploring venture capital with a boutique fund and actively investing in organizations impacting social reform for young people in NYC. With her free time, she enjoys exploring different cultures through food, music and dance.



LISTENING AND REFLECTING

Use this learning companion to dive deeper into the episode topic, with suggestions for asynchronous listening, engagement and experiences that offer opportunities for reflection, connection and commitment.

WAYS TO LISTEN

Use the podcast transcript to increase engagement by following along and highlighting words, phrases, or concepts that stand out in the conversation. Take notes in the margin of reflections, connections and questions and consider these three methods for listening:

1. Open Listening - Listen to the podcast to simply notice and note the words, phrases and moments in the conversation that spark emotion and connections
2. Focused Listening - Listen to the podcast with a focus on the Moments that Matter providing the time stamp and topics from the "Podcast Notes"
3. Reflective Listening - Listen to the podcast with a focus on critical self-reflection, using any or all the reflection questions below

CRITICAL REFLECTION QUESTIONS

BEFORE YOU LISTEN:

1. What experiences have you had that connect to this topic?
2. What do you hope to learn from listening to this episode?

AS YOU LISTEN:

1. Where does your hope come from? Why?
2. How can you change the future?

AFTERWARDS:

1. What about this discussion resonated with you?
2. What questions or ideas would you like to explore further?
3. What conversations will you have or immediate actions will you take to create change in your own sphere of influence?

EXPERIENCES THAT ELEVATE THE LEARNING

The following experiences are intended for use with youth, but also can be used with leaders, educators, parents and those working in educational or other settings. The purpose is to promote critical reflection, connection and commitment toward action. They should be used and adapted based on the individuals, group dynamics and organizational context of the learning.

EXPERIENCES TO PROMOTE CRITICAL SELF-REFLECTION

Reflect on Important Moments in the Conversation

Relisten to 12:56 where Sikirat discusses the importance of studying and understanding other cultures. Journal on your experiences studying and understanding other cultures.

- How does your identity, experiences and knowledge influence your understanding of this topic?
- Is most of your knowledge firsthand, through personal experiences or does your knowledge and understanding of other cultures derive mainly from books and media (film, TV, music, etc.)?
- How does this topic connect with your current context?
- What are the implications to your practice?
- How will you continue the conversation in your school/community/organizations?

EXPERIENCES TO PROMOTE BUILDING DEEPER CONNECTIONS BETWEEN INDIVIDUALS AND THE LEARNING

Gallery Walk Powerful Moments in the Conversation

A gallery walk is a great way to delve deeper into topics with large groups. Begin by writing the 9 categories/topics listed below on chart paper. Divide participants into groups of at least 3+ members and assign 1-2 "moments" to each group. Have each group relisten to their portion(s) of the conversation. Each group should then chart important concepts, ideas or questions for that portion of the podcast. After groups are finished charting, chart paper should be hung spaced around the room. Participants should add, emphasize, or make connections with other groups' posters by adding phrases, words or symbols to the charts. As a whole group, reflect on the connections made around these powerful moments in the podcast.

- 1:40 – Sikirat's background and her current focus
- 4:15 – Addressing inequities in marginalized communities
- 7:01 – The only thing that we can do is change the future
- 8:32– Sikirat Tutors.
- 12:56– Importance of studying and understanding other cultures
- 8:06– Students of color don't see themselves in education positions
- 23:38 – Where does your hope come from?
- 26:10 – Darion and Sikirat discuss Defining Us: Children at the Crossroads of Change
- 27:35–Darion shares his thoughts about the teacher shortage crisis and offers support

EXPERIENCES TO PROMOTE TAKING ACTION

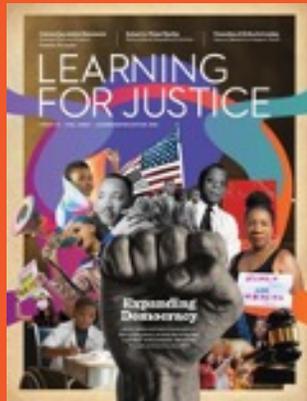
Do Something

It can be easy to feel stuck and overwhelmed by the large number of inequities that exist in education and in society. But everyone has the power to do something to change the future. Sikirat talked about the power of the community and the reasons why she continues to work hard to create change. Take a few minutes to journal about where your hope comes from and identify one or two things that you can do now to change the future and interrupt educational inequities.

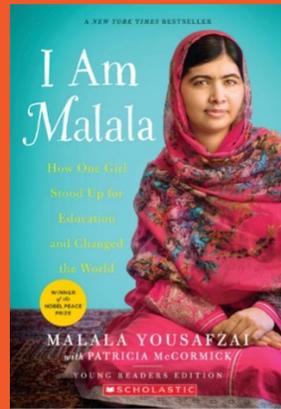
SOURCES: SCHOOL REFORM INITIATIVE, 2021; FACING HISTORY AND OURSELVES, 2009

The following book recommendations are based on the discussion in this episode. Consider selecting a suggested text below and discussion prompts to continue the conversation.

INDEPENDENT READING AND BOOK CLUB RECOMMENDATIONS



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RELEVANT RESOURCES:

- [How Racially Diverse Schools and Classrooms Can Benefit All Students](#)
- [Learn more about Sikirat](#)

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