Talking and Listening but Mostly Listening: Building Trust in Difficult Times

Presented by:
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From playgrounds to politics, interactions often become shouting matches and exchanges are quickly reduced to name calling and personal insults. Rather than coming together around a common experience or to examine an issue, lines are quickly drawn and separate camps emerge. Have we lost the ability to talk and listen respectfully to one another?

In this session, we will explore the state of conversation in public spaces in U.S. society. This discussion will be followed with an introduction to the practice of “civic reflection.” Civic reflection, broadly defined, means “reflecting on the work you do in the world.” This practice is a way to involve people in discussions that allow them to think about their work and or common experience in a deeper and richer way.

The session will allow participants to engage in civic reflection and meaningful conversation that will be: Reflective, Deep, Object-driven, Questioning, and Inclusive.

As a result, participants will have the opportunity to practice listening to each other...
Because listening is a skill that takes practice
Because people are thoughtful if they are given a chance
Because talking across difference is critical to any social change
Because leadership requires good questions, not just answers
Because it builds and sustains people and communities
Because it is time for deeper civic engagement

Our presenters . . . .

Cynthia B. Struthers has a Ph.D. in Sociology from Michigan State University. She is an Associate Professor with the Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs (IIRA) at Western Illinois University where she also teaches in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology. As manager of Health and Housing Programs with the IIRA, she conducts research on rural housing, community health, and quality of life issues. She is a member of the Illinois Housing Task Force and the Illinois Rural Health Association. She is currently working with Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) to complete a statewide consumer satisfaction survey. Cindy is supervising the 2013 Illinois Rural Life Poll and is developing a Rural Youth Survey to be conducted Fall 2013.

Karen Mauldin-Curtis served in the Dominican Republic with the U.S. Peace Corps and is a graduate of the Peace Corps Fellows (PCF) Program, at Western Illinois University (WIU). Karen now manages the PCF program and is responsible for all aspects of its administration, including design and supervision of training activities, internship site placement and support, and development of program partnerships. She has incorporated the use of Civic Reflection into student and staff development and retention efforts, and is in the process of sharing the practice with colleagues across the WIU campus and with community groups in Macomb.