

## Transcript of The Masthead's Holiday Party

Matt P.: Hi! I'm the Editor of The Masthead. Today's call is gonna be special, because we're going to hear your voices on this call. I will get to that in a moment, but first, let me introduce my colleagues here.

First off, we have someone who I think you all know very well at this point, Caroline Kitchener, our Associate Editor at The Masthead. Caroline, hello.

Caroline K.: Hi, everybody.

Matt P.: With us as well, a special guest on these conference calls, you know his voice from Radio Atlantic, our flagship new podcast, Matt Thompson, The Atlantic's Executive Editor. Hi, Matt.

Matt T.: Hello, hello.

Matt P.: Everybody gets to experience a little bit of the joy that I have in meetings of hearing from two Matts all the time. So glad to bring you guys inside the curtain.

So for today's call, to close out the year, we wanted to talk about a theme that's near and dear to us here at The Masthead, and that's community and the stories that left us feeling more united in what's otherwise been a pretty turbulent year. We wanna hear about what has brought you closer together with other people this year.

So we are going to hear from some members about their own stories on this call, and here's how that'll work. I would encourage everybody to join our live chat on [social.maestroconference.com](https://social.maestroconference.com). That's [social.maestroconference.com](https://social.maestroconference.com). Look for the "Chat" tab in the lower left there.

If you have submitted a story already, Andrew McGill is behind the scenes and is going to reach out to you and let you know when it's your turn to speak. Otherwise, feel free to just chat along with the conversation as usual. If you wanna share a story with us live on the air, you can just drop a comment in that chat window and Andrew will queue you up. We'll be reading out and responding to your questions as usual.

So in a minute, I'm gonna ask one of our members to go first. Kern Beare, if you're on the call here. But before Kern, to give him a minute to get ready, I'm gonna turn it over to Caroline first. So, Caroline, what's a story that left you feeling closer together with people this year?

Caroline K.: I really love this question. Thinking back on my year, there were a lot of moments to choose from, a lot of moments that left me feeling more united with the people around me.

But I think, hands-down, it has to be the #MeToo movement and how I have seen that personally manifest itself in my life and the lives of people around me. I'm usually not too big of a fan of Facebook, but I remember very clearly the day, I think in October, when I went home and I spent more than an hour just scrolling through my Facebook, reading testimony after testimony of people that I knew, people I didn't really know, then having text conversations with people that I hadn't spoken to in months or years, going back and forth about some of these things, recognizing familiar experiences and talking those things through together.

It was incredibly powerful, and it really made me appreciate social media as something that can make those connections possible. But I think another really interesting element to this, for me, was how I saw the #MeToo movement play out in China.

I wrote about this last week for The Masthead, but I have, in my adult life, cumulatively spent about two years living in China. So I have a lot of friends in China. I actually have a lot of Facebook friends, even though they can't technically get on Facebook in China. They use VPNs. But I noticed that, scrolling through all of these #MeToo stories, there weren't stories from ... my friends in China were not doing this. They were not posting "#MeToo."

That didn't really surprise me, because - I think I mentioned this in the email last week - one of the taboos that they've always had in China, there's just no conversation around sex, and there's definitely no conversation around sexual assault or harassment. I've just found this with the young people that I've taught at colleges and universities there.

But then, last week when I was there, when I was on my reporting trip in China, I asked one of my friends, "Have you heard of Harvey Weinstein?" I knew this wasn't a name that she would know from anywhere else, but she stopped me on the street, and she said, "Yes. The Hollywood director, Harvey Weinstein."

So then we talked about what had been going on in the US, and we talked about the #MeToo movement. She had purposely been using her VPN to find out as much as she could about what had been going on, because there just hadn't really been a similar movement in China. This conversation ended with her opening up to me about her own experience with sexual harassment at work in China, and that was just ...

I spent so many years developing very deep relationships with young people in China, and that's just a conversation that never would've happened before this. #MeToo really opened the door for that and opened the door for us to connect over that experience. For me, that was pretty powerful.

Matt P.:

So did the people that you talked to in China, the ones that sort of had heard about this media phenomenon over here, it was the same thing for them, for

the ones who you spoke to? It just didn't feel foreign to them, once they were able to open up to it? Is that ...

Caroline K.: Yeah, no, not at all. Yeah. It wasn't foreign at all. It's a very universal feeling and a very universal experience. It just was something that we never would have been able to verbalize and connect over before any of this happened.

Matt P.: You were talking a little bit about VPNs. I mean, is this a taboo subject, #MeToo, on the Chinese Internet?

Caroline K.: You know, that's a really good question. I think any kind of really big social media-driven movement I think makes people nervous in China. Any kind of huge hashtag that goes viral is kind of a red flag, I've found.

With China, anything that could ... you just would never see ... I mean, who knows, but I think it would be a lot harder over there to see what we have seen in terms of, particularly, government officials resigning over sexual assault and harassment. It's just, anything that is written that is in any way negative of government officials is often censored, particularly if it's coming from a Western news source.

Matt P.: Right. Well, I wanna bring in our first member here. So we have Kern Beare on the line, who told us over the weekend that he's holding workshops across the country called "Difficult Conversations: The Art and Science of Thinking Together." So he's way ahead of us on this subject.

Kern, hello.

Kern B.: Hello. Thank you. Nice ...

Caroline K.: Hi, Kern.

Matt T.: Hi.

Kern B.: Hi.

Matt P.: So tell us about this. Tell us about these workshops.

Kern B.: Well, let's see. So the genesis of the workshop actually began immediately after the election of 2016. Out of a desire to better understand what had happened and why, my son and I took a cross-country road trip for a month, talking to people and trying to get our own sense of what we thought was really at the heart of the divide, and came away with the conclusion that it has to do with a lack of connection and a lack of relationship, that we actually do want to be able to engage in the conversations that we need to have but we don't have. We don't know how to do it.

I heard that again and again, from both liberals and conservatives, that they wanted to engage but they didn't know how. So I decided that I would create that conversation workshop that you just described, "The Art and Science of Thinking Together" and got funding.

It took me about eight or nine months, I would say, to actually ... well, seven months, about, to develop it. Then since August, I had funding to go and lead it. So I've been touring the country leading it, and mostly with liberal groups until November, when I had really quite an opportunity to facilitate it with the leaders of Redding, California.

For those who don't know Redding, it's the tenth most conservative large city in the States. It's part of what's called the Great Red North. Trump got 65% of their votes, so it's quite conservative.

So not only was it a conservative audience, but it was also sort of the city's who's who would be attending. So there was the past and future mayor, the chair of the county Board of Supervisors, county sheriff, leading members of the business community, nonprofit, religious communities, etc., and about 85 folks showed up.

I would say, going into it, I had concerns and they had concerns. Their concern was that people who were coming had some longstanding animosities, and they actually were afraid that the workshop could blow up and get out of hand. This I heard, like, the night before I had to go give the workshop. Some people were concerned about even losing their jobs over it.

I would say my concern was, because this was my mostly conservative audience, I wasn't sure how they would receive the workshop. It really isn't traditional. A lot of workshops on conversation have a lot about strategy and technique. Active listening would be one of the most common examples. Mine was more about building self-awareness and building community, which really focused on understanding the role of our own story, our own experiences, and how they shape our perception, how they can distort our perception, and the need - the way I would phrase it in the workshop is - to be able to detach from our story, be able to detach from our worldview to be able to take in another.

So some could describe it as sort of touchy-feely. For example, in one segment, they pair up to share their life stories. So these sorts of things, certain elements in the workshop, I just wasn't sure how they would go over. It turns out, and this is what ... Oh, sorry. Go ahead.

Matt P.:

Oh, no. Finish your thought. Go ahead.

Kern B.:

Oh, okay. Well, I just was gonna say that it was just a phenomenal success. No one blew up. People were totally engaged afterwards, as I shared in the story that I submitted to you. People actually stood up and gave it a standing ovation.

I've heard stories since that people in that room spoke to each other who hadn't in a long time.

I think most exciting of all is they want me to come back. I'm coming back in February to lead it with the people who could not attend the first one, because the first one was capped out at about 85 people.

So, again, it was just amazing to see that this kind of material could actually cross our divides and connect, and you could actually see relationships starting to form.

Matt P.: Yeah. Tell us a little more about crossing that divide. Do you talk differently to a conservative group or do they need to hear different things than a liberal group, or is it the exact same message to the different groups of people?

Kern B.: I would say that this was ... the surprise, I didn't change it. It was exactly the same. It was exactly the same, same material. I put myself out as a very neutral facilitator, I think. One of the pieces of feedback that I got afterwards was that people couldn't tell what my personal leanings were, one way or the other, which I think was good feedback.

Because it's really about what binds us as human beings. It has nothing to do with ideology. I mean, we do listen to some ...

In one segment, I played this audio recording of a live conversation between two women who are on opposite sides of the abortion issue, and they tried to come together to build relationship. You listen to that conversation, and they try so hard, but they fail. It falls apart. No minds were changed. No hearts were changed at all.

We look at that, and we ask ourselves, "So what happened? Why didn't it work?" So one of the conclusions out of that process and one of the main points of the workshop is that we have to learn to prioritize relationship. We actually have to make the relationship more important than the topic. If the relationship is broken, change never occurs. Education never occurs. It's in no one's interest for that relationship to be broken.

So we have to stop walking away from each other and figure out how to make the experience positive. It doesn't need to end in agreement. I was reading a book. I think it was called *The Righteous Mind*, which says, "We don't need to be like-minded if we can be like-hearted." I use that quote in my workshop, and I think it really resonates with people. They simply want to treat each other better. I think that was probably a very powerful ...

Caroline K.: That's fascinating.

Kern B.: I would just say, then, that the other thing that I use, and you may have seen this - it's gained a lot of views on the web - which is a woman who was part of the Westboro Baptist Church, and her story was written up in the New Yorker. It's a fascinating story, because it shows the other approach, which is exactly what people did. They maintained the relationship with her, and then she was able to do what is the other, the second key part of the workshop.

What she was able to do was detach herself from her story. She was able to develop that objectivity, turn back and look at it, and see it more objectively and make new choices. I think that is probably the most critical skill we need right now, is to develop that objectivity about our own story, develop humility. It's unique. Our experiences are unique, and they're beautiful, but they're also unique. So you just don't have the full story.

So we do exercises where people actually have that experience of seeing their own wholes and their own story, and that is a very powerful moment in the workshop. So I'll stop talking.

Caroline K.: Well, I've got another question for you, Kern. Your workshop sounds incredible, but if people don't have the opportunity to go to a workshop like that ...

You and your son traveled across the country to connect and learn about people different from you. If people don't have the means to do that, if they don't have the means to attend a workshop like yours, what would you suggest? How can they make similar connections and understand the other side?

Kern B.: Well, I would say the need is essential. I think if you don't have the need, you won't do it. I think that was what was incredible to me about Redding. They're confronted with so many problems. Their community is so divided. They had no choice but to sign up for some workshop facilitated by someone who they don't know who'll be running some sort of workshop on material that they have no idea what it is, and they come, because they're out of choices.

To me, that's the hope of the [inaudible 00:16:26] is, I think, more and more people are coming to that realization that we are out of choices and we just simply have to learn how to get along.

So that's not a very good answer to your question, but I just think it's, for me, it's the way it is.

Matt P.: Well, Kern, thanks for starting us off on a great note here. This is the perfect story to start this topic. All right. We're gonna move on to ...

Kern B.: Oh, great. Well, thank you for asking me.

Matt P.: Thank you very much for that. Our pleasure. So I'm gonna move on in a second to Ana Maria Cardenas, but first I'm gonna turn to The Atlantic's own Matt Thompson. Matt, what's your story?

Matt T.: So I am going to say ... and both Kern and Caroline's stories resonated with me. The one I'm gonna put on the table, though, is the Great American Eclipse. When I was thinking back over the course of the year to a moment when our terrestrial concerns seemed to fade away for a minute and something just outside of our ordinary, everyday experience kind of took over, the eclipse is what strikes me.

I saw the eclipse. I went to see the full thing - totality, a word that many of us learned for the first time this year. I went to see the full thing in Columbia, South Carolina, and it was ...

First of all, my partner and I ... my partner, Brian, is a guy. We had some concerns about finding an Airbnb. We knew we wanted to select an Airbnb, in part because, by the time we decided we were gonna go see the eclipse, all the hotels within the path of totality were completely booked up. We had a little bit of a worry that, as a gay couple traveling in Columbia ... I've spent my fair share of time in South Carolina and have had not always the most positive experiences as a gay traveler. So that was one of the things that we ...

I'll go to the first sort of logistical concerns that we had to figure out for our trip. We wanted an Airbnb, but we wanted to make sure that the host would be okay that they were hosting two guys who are a couple. We ended up celebrating or watching the eclipse at the party of ...

We happened to find one of the few Airbnbs that was available still in Columbia was run by another couple, another gay couple, and they had had essentially all of Columbia over to their backyard to watch the eclipse. It was the most delightful experience. Friends and family of this couple had this giant party in this big backyard with a pool, and we all watched the eclipse together.

It was this moment, and it was a bunch of different folks from different backgrounds, different sexual orientations, and we all came together and, for a moment, were just awestruck by this ... the phrase that came to mind for me was "grotesquery in the sky," that slow process by which, through our eclipse glasses, the light of the sun faded to a sliver. Then we saw nothing, and then we took off our glasses, and a black hole had been punched into the sky.

It was a humbling moment, it was a moment of just strangeness and oddity, and it was a moment of great fellowship.

Caroline K.: So why do you think that kind of moment conjures that? I mean, hearing you describe this, I have goosebumps. It is just such an intense connection. So what is it about that moment that really connects people?

Matt T.: I think, first of all, it was just ... there was an element of it that was just the oddness of it, the fact that the light is strange, even before totality itself and after. The weird quality of the light in the sky, it feels almost like an alien invasion.

There's a theory that that is a unifying event, if anything, to bring us all together, would be the prospect of life from outer space. It did feel like that - "Oh, wait, we're all on this planet that just got blocked off from the sun."

But another aspect of it was just the anticipation and delight. This was an event without a political valence of any kind. It was a fact of nature. It was a ... Your opinions about the eclipse ... You may like eclipses. You may not like eclipses. You may have thought that the eclipse was overblown and that there was too much hype attached to it. There are ways to have an opinion about the eclipse, of course.

But the fact of the eclipse was just this thing in the sky. It's not an issue. You don't have to feel a kind of way about it. It was not concerned with you. The sun and its position, its relationship with the earth and the moon, was indifferent to your opinion of it. No votes would be had after the eclipse. It was merely a cosmological phenomenon, astronomical phenomenon, that was larger than any one of us and all of us, in some ways.

Matt P.: I didn't get to see totality, but I did go up on the roof of The Atlantic's building and watch it. Then recently, I had to move desks and found my old eclipse glasses there, and I had a brief moment of eclipse nostalgia. It was very ... I'm looking forward to the next one, I'll put it that way. I think I will go to totality for the next one. It seems like it's worth it.

Matt T.: The other thing that I've forgotten but I think is part of the story for me, at least, was that it was just a little over a week after Charlottesville, after white supremacists were marching in Charlottesville, a fatal weekend that saw a furor of protests in which one protestor died.

After such a divisive event, this event that wasn't that far away, that was much more unifying, it was a stark contrast.

Matt P.: Well, let's bring in another member here who's got another story of unity and community here. Ana Maria Cardenas wrote to me over the weekend and mentioned that she has become a US citizen this year. Ana Maria, are you there?

Ana Maria C.: Yep, I'm here. Do you hear me?

Matt P.: I do, yes. Welcome. Hello.

Ana Maria C.: Hello. Happy holidays.



Caroline K.: Hi, Ana. Congratulations.

Matt P.: Congratulations.

Ana Maria C.: Thank you.

Matt P.: So tell us your story.

Ana Maria C.: So I've been in the US since 2005, and I guess I was a permanent resident. Seeing how the election process was going, not knowing what was happening last year, I said, "You know, I'm gonna submit to be a naturalized."

So it took about five months, and in May, I got the letter saying, "Okay, please show up for your naturalization exam." So I went to the exam. It's kind of funny, because they tell you right after the exam that you passed and failed, but then they schedule the ceremony for, like, two days later.

At that particular time, my husband was traveling, I had a nine-month-old at the time who, of course, that day in daycare got a fever and was sick, and here I am trying to make it to my naturalization ceremony by myself with no family. All of my family's back in Colombia, where I'm originally from - Colombia, South America, with an O.

So I really kind of let my boss, who's the chairman at an Ivy League institution, know that I had a naturalization ceremony coming up and so I wouldn't be at work on Friday. I'm a clinical microbiologist. I work in a hospital, but I have an academic appointment, so I teach medical students, residents, and fellows. He actually turned around and said, "Oh, what time?" I said, "Oh, around 11." He said, "Okay, I'm gonna go."

I was really kinda taken aback, because I thought, "Wow, this is a person that's probably really, really busy. I'm telling him the day before that this is gonna happen in my life." It was really humbling and really special to be like, "Wow, this is my boss, but he's actually really impressed and trying to be there and support me."

Then I also had a mentor who is now professor emeritus but at the time was a professor, and he also, the next day, said, "I'm gonna go and make it, and I'll take some pictures." Again, someone else that I really wasn't expecting it, 'cause they're not really close family or friends. But they were great colleagues and mentors, and they were both there.

So even though my husband wasn't able to make it and my son wasn't able to make it, it was just amazing to see the 29 different countries that were represented at that naturalization ceremony and really feeling that part of the community and saying, "Wow, this is the United States." So it was just a very, very special experience, I would say, for me this year.

Matt P.: Congratulations. Having been naturalized myself, I know that I did not ... I was naturalized at about 20, 21 years old, and I didn't expect it to be as stirring as it was. But it really was.

Ana Maria C.: Yeah.

Caroline K.: I'd love to hear a little bit more about the ceremony and what actually happens. I've never been to one.

Ana Maria C.: So basically, they actually mention all the different countries where the people are coming from. So you get to see who's there. So they read them aloud, and then everyone that is from one of these countries actually stands up so that people recognize their heritage.

Then there is a little speech that they give us about what it means to be a US citizen and how America is proud to have us as part of their naturalization. So you have a little ceremony that goes around that, and then they actually pass out the official naturalization documents.

So one by one, everyone gets called. You hand in your permanent residency card, and then you actually get an official certificate of naturalization. So one by one, they go through everyone in the room. Then at the end, they have opportunities for pictures and all of that at the place where the naturalization ceremony occurs.

It's a really nice environment. They have an area where family and friends can come and see the ceremony as well. So you're embraced with family and friends as well that want to go and go with you.

Matt P.: Well, thank you, Ana Maria, for sharing that with us. That's a really lovely story, and I'm grateful that you were able to share it with the group. Thank you.

Ana Maria C.: Yep, thank you guys.

Matt P.: All right. So in a second, I'm gonna hand this over to Lin Tate. But first I'm gonna read a quote here, a note that a member, Larry, wrote in to us. Larry shared this story that, out of college, he writes, "I worked as an elementary school teacher for 25 years. I then retooled and reschooled and am now a licensed professional counselor. My current MO is working with military members and their families as opportunity arises" and that eventually he's going to ...

In regards to retirement, he writes he's currently schooling up to become unretired. He's going to be leaving his home next month to work with Marine children in Yuma, Arizona until the end of the school year.

Thank you for sharing that, Larry. It's always good to hear from you.

So now let me open the line here for Lin Tate, who says that she is volunteering with Syrian refugees. Lin, hello.

Do we have Lin?

Lin T.: Yes, we do. Sorry, couldn't remember how to get on.

Matt P.: Great. I am impressed that everyone is able to manage this technology. Thank you, everybody, for bearing with us. It's a grand experiment.

Lin T.: All right. No, this is great. Thank you very much for inviting me to be on. Actually, while I was listening to the three previous speakers that I heard, reminded me of another one. I would be most interested in getting Kern's contact information, because I had gone to an experience, believe it or not, with my church that has gotten ...

Everyone got very polarized. There was a lot of hate involved. People saw no reason to do reconciliation. So I think the workshop that Kern described would be pretty helpful. But that's not what I emailed you that I wanted to talk about, so hopefully ...

Matt P.: Great. Well, we'll see if we can connect you and Kern off the air, but go ahead and tell us what you wrote to me about.

Lin T.: Right. This is ... it was a little bit happenstance, and it was actually through a friend who, at that same Episcopal church here in Washington, DC, who had been working with a Syrian refugee family. As we were talking about it, she asked me if I would like to get involved with it as well.

So we're not being sponsored by the church. We're just doing it because her husband's cousin, I think, was asked to help with this family, and they kind of turned it over to us.

This is a family. It's a lovely family, and the reason that I thought it would be worth hearing, with all of you, is that it has been such an eye-opening experience for me, particularly having come out of that other situation, about how we can live in community with each other even when we don't share a language, even when we don't share experiences or cultural background or religion - that the community, our sense of community, grows to become, "Oh, okay. These people are in many ways closer to me than friends who I thought were friends, and they don't speak the same language. I don't speak Arabic, and they are just learning English."

But the other thing that has been brought home to me through working with them is how incredibly important these refugee programs are, because this family is from Syria. This is a mother and her children. The father is dead. They

had been in Jordan for several years before they were cleared to come to the US.

But they are so eager. They are so willing. They are so optimistic and so friendly and so happy. They are such happy people to be here that even all the obstacles that are put in the way of refugees ... Ana Maria, although not a refugee, would understand some of the obstacles in going through the paperwork that you deal with, with the US government. This is the Department of Homeland Security, in this case, which is not a user-friendly outfit. So that was just ...

What I wanted to share was my sense of hope in a broadening our experience with community that can happen when we overcome our fears and reach out to people who are [inaudible 00:34:04] happy to be reached out to and capable of the kind of friendship that we're all looking for and don't often find, I think. I may not be expressing myself very well there, but it's just been a great experience.

Matt P.: Lin, how did you communicate with a family that, as you said, didn't speak English? You felt like you were able to get to know them. Did you have a translator? How did you actually get across that cultural divide?

Lin T.: Yeah, we had an ... and this is an ongoing thing. They're learning English. The one has a lot of children and no husband, but her children are pretty much grown up, and the three eldest boys have jobs. Excuse me, my dog here.

Matt P.: Your dog is trying to make community. I like it.

Lin T.: Yeah, the dog is joining the community. The three sons have jobs, so they're learning English. I can communicate, text, etc. through them a little bit. In fact, they're helping me with some things with my cell phone that I couldn't figure out by myself before.

But we have another friend, another woman who is actually connected with that same church that I was talking about, who was born and raised in Palestine and speaks Arabic as her native language. So she has been doing a lot of the translating.

But the other thing is that we just, well, when we're together, which is once a month - well, once a week, excuse me - I see them. We go out and we share a meal, usually. We deal with whatever issues they have, letters that they've gotten that they don't, "Okay, what does this say? I don't know. What am I supposed to do with this? This is a letter from the Bank of America. It looks important." "No, it's not important. They're asking if you want a credit card. Pitch it."

So you figure out ways. I've got an Arabic dictionary, and when push comes to shove, we do sign language. But through the goodwill, I think, of trying to

communicate, and with the help, obviously, of this woman who does speak Arabic and her sons who speak English and a few Arabic words that I'm trying to pick up, we make it work. So it's doable, if the desire is there.

The other thing, I guess, that I really wanted to communicate that I have not said is that just because of this, it has ... partly because of the interpreter herself, who is an older woman born and raised in Palestine and so then who's broadened my awareness of the Palestinian side of the Israeli-Palestinian ongoing mess that we've got there. Which, of course, is particularly interesting given what just happened with the administration and what's apparently going to happen with the United Nations shortly, so ...

Again, it's broadening community to find that your community is a lot bigger than you might have realized before. I think the Atlantic has been particularly helpful in that as well because of the insightful writings that you all have.

Matt P.: All right. Well, Lin, thank you very much for sharing that. So we've got time for, I think, one more. I'm gonna ask Barbara Didrichson to jump in here. Barbara attended the Women's March and wanted to talk to us about that. Barbara, do we have your online here?

Barbara D.: Yes. Hi, everyone. Can you hear me?

Matt P.: Yes. Hello, Barbara.

Barbara D.: Okay. Hello.

Matt P.: Go for it.

Barbara D.: Yeah, I went to the Women's March. I felt called to attend the Women's March. It was a year after my mother had died. She was a very active person in politics and in the community, and remembering my grandmother, who was a very involved woman politically. Actually pregnant with my uncle when she got the right to vote. I just felt called to go there.

It was the first time since the election that I felt power coming back. I spent pretty much the month after the election ... I was not one of the people that was happy, obviously. I spent most of that time binge-watching Netflix, and I knit four hats for Christmas presents that year. I guess I made it productive, but I was not a happy person.

Getting to the march was ... it was fun, just taking the car ride with a friend of mine and taking the trip and visiting with friends in the DC area that we stayed with.

I have never ... I'm just a little bit too young to have participated in any civil disobedience in the '60s. So I've never really done anything like this before, and

to be part of something that big. It was just enormous and so positive. Despite the crowds, despite some of the bottlenecks that inevitably come up when you have that many people in one place, everybody was positive - the police officers, the Army people, the military people that were there to protect everyone.

It was just a happy day. Everybody was happy. I don't know what happened the day before. I heard there were protests, and I heard sometimes it got a little ugly. But it was not like that, and it really inspired me to come back and do more.

One way I did that is not so much at the national ... That was kind of my national expression, but I've gotten a lot more involved in my own small corner of Cincinnati, Ohio. I live within the city but in a neighborhood, and I've gotten a lot more involved with my community council, and I'm making my little corner of Cincinnati a better place to live.

So I suppose, out of all of the heartbreak and all of the disappointment, I have managed to find ways to turn that into something positive for myself and for where I live.

Matt P.: Barbara, jumping back to the first caller, to Kern's story, do you feel like you've been able to talk to people whose politics you don't share this year?

Barbara D.: I have. I've had a couple of very good conversations with conservative friends of mine where there's been a ...

I think there was something in almost everything that somebody said before me that I could relate to profoundly. The idea that you have to want to talk to people and maintain relationship with them is so important. I've had some wonderful exchanges with conservative friends of mine who believe very differently, but we listen to each other respectfully.

I think it starts with me and making sure that I don't project an unwelcoming or shaming or angry demeanor when I comment on something that's going on or a policy that I don't agree with. There are ways to say things without putting people on the defensive, and I'm just always aware of being careful to do that.

My background is in being diplomatic anyway. It's the kind of work that I did for a living, so I work hard at it. It takes effort, but it's worth it.

Matt P.: Barbara, thank you very much for sharing that.

Barbara D.: Thank you.

Matt P.: So I will wrap up here. I guess I'm the last person to speak, so I should probably tell you my little story, which is that the experience for me of watching the

Vietnam documentary that Ken Burns and Lin Novick did was really profound for me in a lot of ways.

I thought a lot about why that is, and I think for me it's something really specific. It's that, particularly as a journalist, it's given me an excuse to talk to people who are in another generation who served in that war. Obviously, I'm too young to have been to Vietnam, and what I realized is that I really just never had a chance to talk to anybody who was over there about an experience that was really profound for such a big part of our culture, for so many people who live in this country and who still live and are still active in our politics and our civic life but for whatever reason just never have a chance to talk to someone like me or never have an excuse or reason to talk to someone like me and vice versa.

So that has been one of the most important aspects, particularly talking to some of our members, Benedict and [inaudible 00:43:25]. I'm sorry, I'm mispronouncing your name. But I've gotten to talk to some of those folks, and it's been really valuable for me. So that has been my story.

Matt T.: Excellent story.

Matt P.: Yeah. Glad to hear that. All right, you guys. I think we will leave it there.

Thank you, everybody, for taking time to jump into this experiment. We really appreciate everyone's willingness to work with us and listen to us on these Masthead trials. All right.

Matt P.: Yeah. We're off for the next couple of weeks, so we'll be joining you again in early January. We'll let you know who's coming up then.

Thanks, everybody. Good bye.