



INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND AMERICAN YOUTH POLICY FORUM
 SAMUEL HALPERIN LECTURE AND YOUTH PUBLIC SERVICE AWARD
 Wednesday, April 26, 2017
 9:00 a.m. – 10:26 a.m.

HELEN MALONE: We're about to start. If you would have a seat, we're starting in one minute. Please have a seat.

JOHAN UVIN: Good morning. Good morning. My name is Johan Uvin, and it's my honor to welcome you to the third annual Samuel Halperin Lecture and Youth Public Service Award Ceremony. And I'm delighted that the Institute for Educational Leadership and the American Youth Policy Forum cohosts this great event together.

The lecture and youth award serve as an ongoing tribute to Samuel Halperin, who dedicated his career to advancing education, workforce, and youth policy, to improve the life outcomes for vulnerable youth as well as personally mentoring and supporting many youth and young adults in their careers in public service.

Sam was IEL's second President. And Sam loved the fellowship program, which gave young professionals a chance to get out of their silos and see the complexities as well as the opportunities of a bigger world.

Sam always kept an eye towards young people and what they needed to be successful. He was one of those remarkable leaders who understood both youth development and education and saw both as sides of the same coin.

Our two speakers today exemplify so clearly the commitment Sam gave to the voice of the powers. As IEL's sixth President, I am standing here inspired by Sam's legacy and humbled, very humbled, by his many accomplishments.

So join me now as we begin the program to honor this incredible leader.

Betsy?

[Applause]

BETSY BRAND: Good morning, and thank you, Johan. It's a pleasure to have you on the stage as our partner at IEL. For the last two years it's been Marty Blank and that was a wonderful partnership, but we're really looking forward to working with you and your leadership over the next couple of years.

It's a pleasure to be here for our third annual Samuel Halperin lecture and youth public service award. Just looking at the sea of faces out here and the number of people so

interested and committed to the principles of helping young people grow and develop just really gets me excited.

So I'm Betsy Brand, the executive director of the American Youth Policy Forum, partnering with IEL on this event.

For those of you who aren't familiar with us and the connection to Samuel Halperin, let me just provide a few words of background.

Sam founded it in 1993 to shine a spotlight on the young people that he called the forgotten half, those vulnerable, at risk, and often unseen and unheard in the policy world. Sam was concerned that without some type of sustained attention focused on this population, the policymakers would pass them over and ignore them in policy, because they have very little political voice of their own.

His goal was to show policymakers firsthand the strategies, programs, and policies that are effective in helping at risk and disadvantaged young people prepare for college, careers, and civic engagement, and by doing so, inform good public policy to support those people.

Our mission has stayed true to Sam's vision for all these years. We continue to shine a light on effective programs and approaches that help the most vulnerable young people be successful, and we base our work on four overarching policies that we believe bleed to success for young people. I'll run through those quickly.

The first is to develop policies that support personalized and student-centered learning that help young people develop a wide range of all the skills needed to be successful, such as academic skills, social emotional skills, problem solving skills, and career and occupational skills.

Second, we recognize that the way that young people are learning today has changed dramatically, and so we promote policies that support competency-based learning that allow students to advance upon a demonstration of mastery and that support them in their learning anywhere, anytime, anyplace, and at any pace.

Third, we promote policies to create multiple pathways that allow young people to advance through education, postsecondary education, and workforce development, with a clear plan that's developed at early ages, based on their interests that lead to a family-wage career.

And fourth, we believe communities create structures to support the neediest youth by surrounding them with caring adults, comprehensive education, employment, health, mental health, social services, housing, and other supports.

We believe all young people can grow with these elements in place, to be independent, self-sustaining, well educated, and engaged adults. That was Sam's vision.

Before we turn to the lecture, I do want to recognize a few special people who are here today. First I want to acknowledge AYPF for the directors, the members who are here. We have Tony, our board chair, Jim, our past board chair, Cindy. Thank you so much for all your guidance and leadership.

I also want to recognize Sam's daughter and son-in-law.

And I also want to recognize our first award winner. Hopefully they will show up in a little bit.

I thank our funders who support this event. And last, I thank the staff for helping put on today's event.

Today's lecturer could not be better suited to address the topic of providing greater opportunity for our children and youth. As she has been promoting this work for as long as I've known her, and that's quite a number of years.

Karen Pittman is President and CEO of the Forum for Youth Investment, one of the most widely respected and smartest organizations in the youth field. Through her personal commitment and vision, the Forum for Youth Investment, FYI, has led the movement to ensure that all young people are ready by 21 for college, work, and life, and that states and communities have the policies, the data, and programs in place to do so. FYI provides products and services and thorough leadership, most importantly, thorough leadership, to communities to build collective impact strategies. Under Karen's leadership, FYI advocates for supportive policies and builds public will to ensure that our education, youth, and community programs are meeting the needs of children and youth.

Karen understands what it takes to move an idea forward. She understands how to engage diverse groups of individuals in a common goal to help young people. She's fought many battles. My guess is she's gotten a few scars in the process, but she's a goldmine of knowledge, about how to bring about positive change for youth.

We're so pleased that Karen is our lecturer this year. She knew and worked with Samuel Halperin for many years, and her commitment to helping the forgotten half is undisputed.

Karen will speak for 20-25 minutes, followed by Q and A with the audience, so please welcome a dear friend and colleague, Karen Pittman.

[Applause]

KAREN PITTMAN: Good morning. It really is an honor to be here. And I mean that very seriously. I give lots of talks. I'm not sure I love the word "lecture," but we're going to have a conversation. But Sam was a mentor. Sam helped me do everything from think about when and how to create the Forum for Youth Investment to whether to have to buy a building to put it in. Which we're still in. And I can't think of a place I would rather be than here with you all today.

So I do want to speak for about 25 minutes to guide you through some slides, to tee up a conversation. I'm looking forward to the conversation.

This is a time more than ever when I think we have to take seriously the difference between a commitment to help individual young people beat the odds. We do that and celebrate individuals who overcome enormous obstacles.

But we have to figure out how we're going to be more strategic for changing the odds. Increasingly, I'm starting out with some slides that many of you may not have seen but have really helped me as I work on this project as an adviser. I don't have the technical skills to work on it for real, but worked on this project to really think about what the odds are for young people in this country.

About 5-6 years ago, the Brookings Institution started a social genome project. It ended up with dozens and dozens of publications. This was basically an economic model process in which they cobble together multiple longitudinal data sets that followed young people from birth through adulthood and basically came up with a simulation model that allowed you to say what if. What if this young person had gotten quality childhood education, what if this young person had taken a different path, so you understand the complexity of the models. It took them two years to build this thing. It allows some incredible things that I will share with you.

The first thing that they did was to set a target. And the target you can agree with or not, but the target was middle class by middle-age, defined as being 300% above poverty or more by the time you turned 40. Some of us could say that's too long, but that was the target. And against that target, they started the model running and asked, what does it take at every developmental stage for young people to be on track? If you're really being very parsimonious about understanding what we should be focused on, what are those things? And that's the list. I'm not going to read it to you. You can see there are things up there that are familiar. I want to point out for those in the room who come from a youth development background, the prominence of social behavior, social skills. This is not just about credentials; it's about making sure every step of the way young people are ready. And ready for us is defined, the dictionary defines readiness as being willing and being prepared. It's that combination: Willing to do something and prepared to do something.

So being on track basically is being willing and being prepared to be ready for what you're being handed, whether that's as a third grader or 13-year-old or 30-year-old.

What they did with that list was to basically then ask how many young people at every developmental stage are on track? Depending on whether you're a glass half full or half empty person, you'll be excited that there's no developmental stage where less than half of young people are on track. And for the most part we're closer to two-thirds. But still we have a ways to go. This is a country why most young people should be on track; we have quite a long ways to go.

That picture gets starker when you break it down by race and ethnicity.

This is not a surprise. But we need to just pause and look at the differences and look at the fact that literally we've got documentation that the likelihood that you're going to be on track diminishes if you are black or brown in this country.

What does it take to change those statistics? What do we know about this track? The first thing that we know is that young people, the majority of young people who are on track stay on track. If you're on track in early childhood, you have a 70% chance of moving on track in the next period. But it's not 100%.

At no stage is there a guarantee that being on track in one developmental stage makes you on track in the next. So I'm going to encourage you to download this and look at it, because some of the myths that we carry around, like if we don't help young people by third grade, those myths just are not true. The odds are there. They are slightly lower, but they don't disappear and we can't give up. So we've got remember that we're talking about development, we're talking about development over a period, and at no point are the odds so bad that we should give up. We have to just work smarter and change the odds.

The same is true on the other side. Young people who are off track don't stay off track. Yes, it increases your chances of being off track, but you don't stay there.

So the magic is in those arrows that go back and forth. At every stage you've got young people who are off track, moving on track, and you've got young people who seemingly are doing fine going the other direction.

Now, I put that up because typically our policies focus going from the red to the blue. Our policies are designed to find young people and families who are off track and get them back on track.

Our mission to be complete has to be to be absolutely vigilant that the services, the programs, the opportunities we're providing young people who are on track but remember on track is a fluid thing, who are on track in one developmental stage, we are providing enough quality and relationships for them to stay on track. And that's really where the challenge of changing the odds comes from. We can't just focus on moving from the red to the blue. We also have to simultaneously be focused on keeping young people engaged and moving forward. And that really comes down to quality. Comes down to access but it also comes down to quality.

I teed that up because I did take this opportunity to go back and read Sam's wonderful guide. And if you haven't read it, you have the log-in for it on your tables. It's incredibly insightful and practical. And in Sam's style, incredibly written in simple, clear language that you think, of course I should know this. But you need to print it and carry it around with you.

And I started with this quote because I think what we really have to do now more than ever if we're going to change the odds for young people is get clear about what we really want.

So when Sam says basically most elected officials spend enormous amounts of energy trying to learn what their constituents really want and even more on what's needed to make things right in the world, they may not do what we say, but they listen harder when we talk truth.

So I'm just going to encourage you, that's what we have to do. We have to know what we want and we have to be prepared to talk about it in clear, straightforward language, and we have to go in absolutely believing that children and youth are a bipartisan issue, a bipartisan concern, and that their success is a bipartisan goal.

If you haven't read this, these are from the report and from Sam's words. Politicians don't always love getting visits from educators.

[Laughter]

I won't read all the words to you, but you can see that often we come in and if we don't come in speaking the plain truth, we're seen as arrogant, we're seen as not being effective communicators, we're seen as not really understanding how stuff works. I'm not sure how I got to five minutes so quickly. Did you start with 25?

[Laughter]

All right. I'm going to respect my time.

So we really need to figure this out, how we go in to speak the truth.

So how do we convey what sticks? Again, we need to talk about what really matters for youth, not just about graduation. We need to talk about what people have and what they need in their words, not just talk about the system.

We've got to remind ourselves that when we go in to talk to anybody, but certainly policymakers, we have to put young people at the center.

And we have to remember to talk about the broader ecosystem, the other folks, not just their families, but the other organizations, the other entities in the community that actually work with and support young people, because schools, as important as they are in people's lives, are not the only place where they get attention, where they get support, where they get learning. So we have to remember that.

Very quickly, with that definition of readiness as being prepared and being willing, we've got to remember that readiness is more than a diploma. And as important as it is, we track high school graduation rate and congratulate ourselves it's moving in the right direction, we also have to remember when we talk to employers about whether or not they find high school graduates employable, 4 out of 10 say they're not because they're not coming in with the skills they need to be successful in the workplace, even if they're coming in with a diploma.

So school reform. If you haven't seen this again, these slides will be available later. Go find it. I think I love their visual of what success looks like because the end game is you have young people who are competent, who have a sense of agency, and young people who have a sense of identity. That's what makes you successful. By the time you get into your late teens and 20s, you need that package put together. We're spending a lot of time talking about social emotional skills and SEL and learning and character, and deconstructing what the skills are that young people need to be successful, and that's great, but we're not teaching those skills for the sake of teaching the skills or adding a curriculum into the education alphabet soup. Those skills are critically important for success, and we can talk more about if young people are going to build those skills what kind of environment they need to do it.

This is just a quick reminder that while we're now talking about social emotional skills with new urgency, we've named them for a long time. Those of you who remember the

2002 report from the National Research Council, those words in green are the things that we're now calling social emotional skills. We've got a whole lot more research behind them, but they're there.

So readiness is more than a diploma and we have to ask, "What does it take for young people to be ready?"

Readiness requires rich, redundant developmental experiences that basically boil down to the idea that young people need time to act in ways that are meaningful to them and they need time to reflect. We provide enormous services in that space, but if we can think less about pouring content in and can think more about developing context, where learning and enrichment can happen, we'll be in better shape.

I want to do something very quickly and I want to tie this to this idea of equity, which is also a big word that we're having conversations about across the country. You've got the idea of equality, right? This is a picture to make it fast. We all know that the general simple idea of equality is everybody gets the same thing.

Equity basically says everybody can't get the same thing because of two reasons: One, the playing field literally isn't even. Young people don't all start out with the same resources in their families, right? That ground is sloping down.

Two, the barriers aren't even. There are significant institutional and structural barriers that follow along race and class lines. We know that and we have to acknowledge that.

So when we're talking about what we need to do, we have to acknowledge that we're reducing barriers and moving towards increasing opportunities. And the goal is to reduce the barriers, to get the fences down and ground up so young people are standing there. But I don't think reducing the barriers is enough because if we're talking about youth success, we have to talk about what does it take to get young people not just watching the game but into the game. We have to simultaneously look at both of those things.

If you can see this up on the screen, this comes from an OECD report that came out a couple of years ago, so it's international. Looking across countries, coming to this dual goal of reducing barriers and improving quality as the way you get to success, educational success, for young people.

What I want you to look at quickly, and again, you'll get the slides afterwards, is we do know what the barriers are. Right? And interestingly, when you look internationally, one of the chief barriers in this country is on that list, and that's the egregious extent to which we suspend and expel young people from our schools. So add that mentally to the list and we know what the barriers are.

The recommendations at the bottom about improving have some of the words in there that are so important for coming at this from a youth development perspective: School climate, high quality teachers, effective classroom learning strategies. But there's a lot of room inside those words to define what they mean and that's where we have to be vigilant because we know quality matters a lot. This is a slide from summer learning programs focused on increasing young people's math skills. You can see that the red is

low quality programs. I'll tell you how quality is defined in a minute. Blue is medium quality. Orange bar is high quality. When you got the high quality programs, young people not only retained but improved their basic math skills over the summer. But the definition of quality was a youth development definition of quality: Creating the context for learning. The definition of quality was not certified math teachers drilling young people over the summer. Quality matters and how we define quality matters.

Again, if you haven't seen this, this is a part of the forum but builds off of that National Research Council study telling us young people need safe and supportive environments, opportunities for skill building, broad relationships, etc.

So we know quality matters, but it's our job to speak the truth about what quality is and not let quality become educational jargon.

I want to show this one because it's really, really important. And I think as educators and especially for those of you who are in the classrooms or have been in the classrooms, you know what it takes to engage students. And when you go to speak to your policymakers at any level, you need to speak the truth about what it takes to engage students. So there are lots of versions of this up on the web. I did not draw this because I don't draw anything that well. But this is the idea of a learning pit. So, if you're really learning something, it's hard and you struggle and you fail and you have to come up the other side and then you really have internalized what you're learning. That's this idea.

I want to bring equity into this because we have young people who walk up to the door of learning and they have already had terrible learning experiences. They've already been told they can't learn, they've experienced failure, or they're walking into an environment that's foreign to them. And they will have a fight or flight response.

If we don't acknowledge that and find a way to go back to that slide to welcome young people into the environment, to make it safe and supportive, before we require them to learn something new, we shut them down. They either go to the back of the room and shut down or they act up and we suspend them. That's not speaking truth. That's not supporting our young people. We have to do that.

This idea of young people hitting the wall and getting over the wall is where those social emotional skills come in. Grit, persistence, problem solving, initiative, creativity, teamwork, all of that stuff that we want people to have kicks in when they're trying to learn something that matters to them. So we can try to teach those skills, but obviously the thing is, if we're creating environments for learning, whatever the content is, those skills are need and we need adults that help them use them, name them, and build them.

We can talk more about that in the discussion.

So readiness really requires the systematic effort to ensure that there is room in our official practice to support developmental practice. Every one of you can describe the official environment of school. My image of schools, I grew up in D.C., is a red brick building in the colonial style because that's what D.C. schools looked like when I went through them.

Some people's experience is you walk in and there's a metal detector. But we know what the environment of school looks like. People are hired and trained to be in school. Especially teachers. We know what experiences young people go through, whether Common Core or other things, it's defined through experiences.

And we know typically how they go through space and time, whether 45 minute classes, sitting in rows, or teamwork. Every place can be broken down and described in these four domains. And the question is because we know so much about what it takes to support development, are we building developmental practices into it? You can assess standing in the back of the room, assessing whether you're seeing sufficient practices. If you're not, real learning is not going to happen and too many young people will get to the bottom of that pit and not come back up.

So I showed that before. This is from the Chicago consortium. It really just breaks it down to young people's experience, which is they need time to act and time to reflect. And built into that action is some level of choice. We can come back and talk more about that later on, but the more we're giving young people choice about what and how to learn and who to learn with, the more engaged they'll be in their own learning.

And obviously we need to give them a chance to make that learning real.

So finishing up the list, what else do we need to do to make sure that we're talking to policymakers in ways that stick? When we show up, we need to show up with other stakeholders. We need to show up having demonstrated that we can work with other stakeholders.

How many of you are familiar with the XQ High School Super School Contest? I think almost -- I was one of the reviewers for that, which was a lot of work. Over 700 teams applied to go through this process to pick what ended up being 10 schools. So most people went into it not knowing they were going to win but wanting to go through the experience.

I just talked with one of the folks who created it. Over a third of those teams are still working. And all of these teams are blends of schoolteachers and principals and community leaders and business leaders, still working for free trying to think about how to change their schools even though they didn't get the money. So there was something about broadening that stakeholder mix.

We need to talk about the issues facing young people in their language, before you bring in policymakers. Don't wait to put them on the bus to talk to the policymakers. Begin to have conversations. Youth voice is an incredible piece of what has to be in place if we're going to change the odds. We do that with young people. So youth voice is incredibly important.

And I'm always amazed, we just had our national meeting, that when we have young people up on the stage articulating what it is that they need their schools and communities to do, what they think the solutions are, are literally at our last meeting, someone said, I want those young people to come to my community. I said, those young people are in your community; you just don't talk to them. We don't have to import them in.

[Laughter]

I met them 2 hours before the national meeting and sat down and had a conversation with them. I didn't know them beforehand. And they had the competence and ability to come on stage and talk with 500 people.

So we know they can do this.

However you describe it, the main thing is young people have the ability to do this. We're moving to Q and A. And the important thing is, when young people know that these basic skills matter, it's not so much about teaching them; it's about reinforcing them. And when young people know that their ability to solve problems, work in teams, manage time, manage conflict, their ability to self-reflect, when that matters to other people and to their success, they can tell you incredible stories of when they've done it.

So we are about building competencies, building identity, building agency.

And back up for a second. We're doing that so young people can navigate all the spaces where they spend their time voluntarily or not voluntarily. When we do this and we do it well, young people basically put those skill sets in mind like a backpack that they can walk around into all of those places. That's our job as educators. We have a unique opportunity to be with young people to help them have the skills, the competencies, the identity and sense of agency to navigate difficult situations, whether institutional or personal.

So there are gaps. We talk a lot about opportunity gaps. There are also traps in our systems. And we should talk truth about those traps.

Age as proxy for stage. Completion as proxy for competence, giving people diplomas that don't matter. Using time as a proxy for progress and kick students out before they're ready.

And finally, when we use access as a proxy for quality.

I'm going to stop there, because I want to have time to have a conversation with you. Readiness is important. Equity is a topic for this community, this country. Whether you use the word explicitly or not is important.

And the road to readiness is through quality, and we have to have that conversation.

So I'm delighted to stop now and see what you think. And yes, I'm still working.

[Applause]

Questions? Thoughts?

>> Thank you, Karen. That was really terrific. How are you? My name is Jim, and I'm from Edge Consulting and Carnegie Foundation.

There's been so much focus on readiness in terms of college and career. But the third C, civic readiness, which Sam was all about, really doesn't get kind of equal time.

I'm wondering if you could talk a little bit more about how to elevate the civic engagement aspect of all this. It's interesting that President Obama chose his first public appearance to talk about civic engagement. So it's a central feature.

KAREN PITTMAN: Perfect question because that would have been a slide if I didn't stop.

[Laughter]

An incredibly important point.

I mentioned youth voice. I mentioned youth choice. I didn't mention youth organizing. That's a very specific, you know, form of civic engagement, but for many young people and especially for many disenfranchised young people, organizing is one of the most powerful ways to have an entrance into civic engagement because they basically are thinking, they don't have a voice or a choice in things that really matter in their communities. Providing them with both the capacity, they have the motivation, right? They can walk around. If you ask them what's wrong in their communities, they can tell you. But to actually activate that motivation and get it moving forward, they have to have those skills and capacity to do it and they have to have opportunities. One of the most important things we can do is generate those opportunities, both in our schools and programs and outside of our schools and programs.

So a very quick example of that, decades ago, we still do this, but we were working directly with communities around youth organizing, we worked in Nashville as one of the cities and worked with a model called youth vocalizers, 6-10 young people over the course of a summer in high school, who would come in, have conversations, walking around their neighborhood, in schools have conversations about what they saw, what was wrong, think about who they needed to talk to, think about what skills they needed to have to be able to have these conversations, whether public speaking skills, research skills, they would do the work over the summer and then engage a broader group of young people in the school year who then went out and developed strategies for changing their neighborhoods.

I can tell you quickly, we thought they would change small things and when you start with young people, they change small things.

After three years these young people had realized that there were too many check cashing places in their neighborhoods and no banks. They had addressed that. They had partnered with the United Way to make sure that more families were signing up for the earned income tax credit. They had surveyed young people in schools and found they wanted to go to college but weren't getting advice. They pushed the graduation rate up from under 40% to over 80%. They did that because we were able to tap into their motivation and give them opportunities to move forward.

And then also obviously in doing that, the other forms of youth action came out. Service, governance, broader leadership across a range of things.

So all of those things matter and all are important, and I thank you for bringing that up, because one of the reasons we're getting young people ready, we often think we have to address equity. We actually have to address readiness to get to equity.

Yes?

>> Hi. I'm Emily and I work with the Urban Library Council. I'm also an EPFP alum. And I was really interested in two things that you said. Well, everything you said, but specifically that quality matters and so does the type of quality and that we need to focus on the education ecosystem, not just teachers. Clearly I have an interest in this because I work with public libraries. My work is about identifying and advancing the ways in which public libraries are essential. And specifically I'm very familiar with the summer learning program.

So also really thinking about these opportunities for youth to drop in at the public library and it's not maybe a long term program but still needs to be quality.

So I'm just wondering if you can unpack what that means, about the change or type of quality.

KAREN PITTMAN: Sure. I will try to unpack that in a minute or less. That's a complex question.

And libraries are critically important.

So let's unpack it first by basically saying, if you ask young people to walk through their neighborhoods and even qualify it to say places where learning could happen and have them name the places where learning could happen, there will be a range of places that pop up. Some that you expect like schools, some that you don't expect. And libraries are often in that space. And should be.

One of the things I think we don't do very well is actually before we suggest that young people go into environments is first understand the basics of that environment. Is it bureaucratic or not? Is it mandatory or not? Does it support individual learning or group learning? What does it look like?

Because young people need a range of learning experiences.

Quality in this case really, in the case I was talking about, it's asking are you creating a safe, supportive environment where young people can have choice and have voice. So in that sense, you can bring quality very clearly into libraries and I know that the young adult libraries have spent a lot of time figuring out how you do that without creating programs but by creating environments where learning can happen. And the more you partner with other folks makes that important.

Since we're talking about young people including opportunities for youth, libraries become incredibly important place for learning for young people who are not in school. And I certainly talk to many libraries who have then had to have the difficult conversation about, if you've got a young person who is not in school, spending all their time in your library, what is your official policy? Do you let them stay? Report them to the school? Have a conversation? So you are a learning environment.

Other questions.

Okay. Great. Thank you.

[Applause]

>> Karen, thank you so much for your presentation today. It just hit all the right points, and I think had a message that Sam would have totally agreed with. So we appreciate your leadership on these issues and your dedication. It's always a pleasure to work with you, so thank you so much for being here.

So now, it gives me great pleasure to introduce our 2017 Samuel Halperin Youth Public Service Award Winner. The youth public service award recognizes a young person aged 18-24 who has made a commitment to public service in their life and has demonstrated in various ways over the course of their young years. Applicants submit an essay, and the essays are reviewed and scored by a team of peer reviewers. The winner will receive a cash award of \$1,000 and the chance to come tell their story today.

So this year's awardee is Yasmine Arrington. You are going to meet her in a second, but I just want to say, she is just amazing. We were so wowed when we first met Yasmine. She is a dynamo and has accomplished more in her young life than many of us in our older years.

She is a college graduate. She serves on a mayoral commission on family reunification for Mayor Bowser, but what really impressed us was that she is the founder of a really wonderful program called ScholarCHIPS, which she started when she was a volunteer participant in a program called Learn-Serve International, helping young people become social entrepreneurs.

So I am not going to tell you anymore because she will tell you her story. I just am so thrilled that Yasmine is our award winner for this year. So please welcome Yasmine Arrington to the stage.

[Applause]

YASMINE ARRINGTON: Good morning. This is a great honor. Very exciting.

I would like to, before I share my essay with you, take a moment to invite each and every one of you to engage with me, particularly my tweety birds. All of you out there who are on Twitter or Instagram, Snapchat, particularly Twitter, if there's something that I say that resonates with you or you have, you know, a question or a picture, by all means, please tweet at me. I love that. And I retweet and I engage. And the handle is yazziespeaks.

One of my favorite inspirational quotes comes out of the passage of a book entitled "A Return to Love: Reflections on the Principles on a Course in Miracles" by Marion Williamson.

"Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us. It is not just in some of us; it's in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we

unconsciously give people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others."

I originally heard a portion of this quote as a teenager as I was watching the movie "Akeelah and the Bee," the plot following a young African-American girl coming from a low income single parent home in a poverty stricken community who gathers up the courage to compete in a national spelling bee. She has to overcome a number of obstacles to prepare herself for and ultimately win the national final competition.

I was her as a young girl. And in a lot of ways, I still am. My name is Yasmine Arrington. I was born and raised in Washington, D.C., in the city, and like Akeelah, I found myself and still find myself facing real life obstacles based on my socioeconomic status, my background, discrimination, prevention of access, on the basis of my age, my size, my gender, my racial background, my location, and sometimes even my religious tradition.

However, I am determined to overcome my obstacles to make the seemingly impossible a reality. And I will do this through public service.

My father has been in and out of the revolving prison door all of my life. And I'm 24 now.

My mother unfortunately passed away my freshman year of high school when I was 13. Therefore, my single grandmother was left to take care of me and my two younger brothers. If it were not for the loving kindness my grandmother showed, I would have likely ended up in the foster care system.

Here I was a child in a single parent home, and then as a child with no mother and no father, with little familial, financial, or educational support. My mother did not have any siblings. And when I was in middle school, my maternal grandfather retired and moved to Kentucky without a departing word. I did not grow up knowing my father's side of the family. I'm grateful for having had a strong praying grandmother who always stressed the importance of education and always encouraged me to strive for excellence.

She showed me what the power of having a parent, a person, or support system who believes in you can do.

My junior year of high school I applied for a program that would forever change the trajectory of my life. I applied to a D.C.-based nonprofit called Learn-Serve International, an organization that gives high school students the training and the tools they need to become social change agents in their communities and in the world through public service.

It was through their program that I was challenged to identify an issue in my community and then find a solution. The issue I chose was and still is mass incarceration. But the issue of mass incarceration is such a massive beastly issue to tackle. Yet I knew there was something that I could do.

I was to discover that there are over 2 million, roughly, and many more, over 2.7 million youth in this country with an incarcerated parent. Just like me. I knew I had to do something.

At the time, my maternal grandmother and I were researching scholarships for me to apply so I could afford to go to college, and that's when we discovered that out of the thousands and thousands of scholarships out there online and locally, we couldn't find any scholarships specifically for youth with incarcerated parents.

So this is where I decided to focus my energy. I decided to start a scholarship for youth with incarcerated parents called ScholarCHIPS, today a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization providing college scholarships, mentorship, and a support net, would to youth who have incarcerated parents who are pursuing their college degree or vocational certifications.

To date we have awarded over \$100,000 in college scholarships to 30 scholars and counting.

This sounds amazing, but I certainly had to overcome obstacles along the way and I certainly had help to overcome those obstacles along the way. I was only all of 15 years old when I came up with this idea. I shopped the idea around to the community and many people thought I was crazy. People would say things like, "Oh, wow, I've never thought about this population before, but when you go off to college, you're going to become so busy, you're not going to have time to continue with this."

I was determined to silence those negative voices and prove that I was dedicated to this cause, to my public service, my way of giving back and planting positive seeds into the same community that planted those seeds into me.

I continued to work as the executive director of ScholarCHIPS through high school, all of my college career, and as a master's candidate. Though I managed to fundraise thousands for college for others, there are times I myself still struggle financially as I am finding a path to a career.

I also had to overcome my own personal shame around having an incarcerated parent. In order to do the work I do, I must be transparent about my life as a child of an incarcerated parent, and my scholars have to be transparent and open also. This is not an easy feat. There are still very real social stigmas and taboos around the issue. There have been many times when parents have gotten angry and refused to let their children apply to the scholarship because they feel it's not anyone's business. I'm constantly working towards breaking the shame, stigma, and taboo around incarceration so our youth will not feel any less than or feel they are limited in their abilities to achieve because of their familial past.

As a result of my dedication to the community, to public service and public engagement -- this is very personal, like an "I statement," but really it's a "We statement." Just in the form of, you know, an essay, it's "I" but I realized like, no, it's really "We".

But we have been able to fund several students' college education experiences, provide them with free resources and tools to be successful, such as college and career readiness workshops, professional development, résumé building, and exposure to arts and humanities through theater.

I have been able to serve as a positive role model to youth in our community, as I travel to local high schools and talk to classes, give lectures before I attend my own night

classes. I also do scholarships -- we have also through scholarships given many local, professional, young, old, and in-between, opportunities to give back to their community and engage in public service.

Education, public service, and public engagement or civic engagement go hand in hand. One does not properly function holistically without the other.

When our youth see us serving the community, they will be inspired to serve too. Positive impact is contagious, and that is a kind of message and work we want to spread. As long as I live, I will always be dedicated to ScholarCHIPS and its mission. I will always be dedicated to education and service.

And my idea, in my mind, is to become a nationally recognized radio and televised talk show host. I will --

[Laughter]

[Applause]

Thank you.

>> Claim it.

YASMINE ARRINGTON: Claim it! Yeah!

I am grateful to people like Samuel Halperin, who are not afraid to shine and share his light, so that people like me would be encouraged to shine our light also. It truly does take a village to raise a child, and that child will always remember an act or the memory of having the support of an entire community.

Thank you.

[Applause]

>> So you can see why Yasmine is our award winner this year. She not only has done amazing things with her life up to now, but we can tell she's going to be a force in the future as well.

Yasmine, we have a lovely glass award to present to you that says you're the 2017 Samuel Halperin youth public service award winner, and we have a check for \$1,000 to donate to you and thank you for all of your amazing work for the community and all the young people that you're working with.

So thank you.

[Applause]

>> Before you do that, can I...

Yasmine, I was very inspired by you. That was really cool. Thank you.

I've been in this business a long time. I was one of the first to sit down the other day at that opening ceremony talking about if you were here...

I just want to say, if I remember right, there were 305 of us here. If each of us would commit to \$100 a year for the rest of our careers, that would be \$30,500 a year and that would basically put one scholar through college somewhere. You can still go somewhere for 30,000.

So I throw out that challenge. That's all. Thank you.

[Applause]

JOHAN UVIN: Is Michael around? He is the next person to guide you through the next part of the program.

While we locate him, I want to ask you to join me in giving a shout out to all the staff at both agencies and all the volunteers who have really made not just this morning possible but also have created a remarkable learning experience over the last couple of days. So please, I will ask all the folks who are in the room here who have worked on this morning's event to just maybe stand for a moment and be recognized. So please join me in doing that.

[Applause]

So now we've come to a great moment where we are going to recognize the fifth President of the Institute for Educational Leadership, Marty Blank.

>> Good morning. We are looking for Michael Usdan, who will join us.

In the spirit of what we have been listening to over the last couple of days, I want to share with you that in Washington, when someone is stepping down, they always have a big event and they had Marty's big event at the press club.

I of course wasn't able to come. People who know me know that the month of March I'm watching basketball, don't bother me.

[Laughter]

And I simply couldn't be at Marty's event.

[Laughter]

But they gave me the opportunity to write something, and I did, and I said, Marty Blank started his life the way he intended to go. And that is to say that it was worrying about community. And worrying about literally the development of social capital. And harnessing all of the assets in a community to make certain that everyone benefited.

But I want to share with you, there's a great book out entitled "Appalachian Elegy." In the spirit of my story, I am a child of Appalachia. In this book, the author is at Yale Law School and then of course he's written this great book and he all of a sudden has an epiphany that goes like this: When I look back at my life, what jumps out is how many variables had to fall in place in order to give me a chance. Grandparents, mother, stepfather, revolving door of father figures, sister, aunts, uncles, teachers, distant relatives, and friends.

And here's his final comment: Remove any of these people from the equation, and I am probably screwed.

[Laughter]

So having said that, that is testimony to the work that Marty Blank has done throughout his life. And it started when he was a Vista volunteer in the boot heel of Missouri. Marty may say a word about where that is.

I also want to say that this morning I had someone send me something in the mail and I got it and I make quilts and it was about someone who makes quilts as a strategy for bringing community together. And she has a quote by someone who when asked what is patriotism said, patriotism is steady devotion of a lifetime.

And I would say to you that that's what Marty Blank's life has been: Steady devotion of a lifetime to worrying about community and family and strengthening it.

On behalf of the IEL and Michael Usdan, wherever you are, I have the honor of presenting Marty with the cross boundary leadership award. Marty Blank.

[Applause]

And before I turn this over to -- oh, there's Michael. Before I turn this to Marty, it dawned on me that as all of this was going on, I literally have been hanging around IEL for a very long time, through four presidencies and a fifth one including my own. And when you have been with an organization as long as I have or connected with it, you care not only about the organization but you care about the people there and you care about the people that the organization serves. And that is why it is so important that we recognize what Marty did and we also recognize what Johan is going to do, and I'll recognize my friend Kent McGuire who was on the IEL board when I was around. Kent, I'm leaving.

[Applause]

>> I always learn you listen to board members.

[Laughter]

I'm sorry I was a little late. I had kind of a minor emergency.

We have 20 seconds or 2 minutes to talk about a friend of mine who has been around for 30-35 years. Seems as if all IEL Presidents never fade away. Betty left but she'll be back.

[Laughter]

One of the best decisions I made in my 20-year tenure at IEL, I had the unenviable assignment of trying to fill Samuel Halperin's unfillable shoes in 1981. But in the mid '80s, talking about the 1980s, just to be sure --

[Laughter]

I hired a guy by the name of Marty Blank. And Marty is, as I've often described him, he's an unreformed '60s liberal. To his great, great -- we take great pride in that. From LBJ, Nixon, Carter, Reagan, the Bushes, Obama, I won't mention the current first person, Marty has sustained his passion and values for equity and social justice throughout.

And he leaves a legacy that in many ways is similar to Sam's. The coalition for community schools, which he was a major architect of and sustained through some very difficult times has become a singularly significant national entity that attempts to link schools with social and health agencies, many of the kinds of issues that Karen had just discussed.

Betty and I hope that Marty will maintain the tradition of senior fellow. Joan is in the audience. We have a lot of senior fellows, which indicates we have good longevity, which is nice.

And we welcome Marty to our senior fellow ranks. I've urged him to stay very, very busy and very, very active. He has too much to contribute. His intelligence, his passion, will be needed in the years ahead in many ways more than the very distinguished past.

So all the best, my friend.

[Applause]

>> You've been given what Johan and I were assigned to give you.

And in my capacity as board chair, a job I have had way too long, thanks to Betty, I just want to add my congratulations, Marty, to all your years of service. I think Mike described you absolutely right.

But what I would say to all of you is that nor will you find a person with more steady and consistent devotion to EPFP, and this would be a perfect time to acknowledge that.

[Applause]

MARTIN BLANK: So thank you. People have been all too kind to me as I move through the next stage, to do what all my senior fellows and colleagues tell me, which is to keep working in some way and in some capacity.

But I am particularly proud of what's happened with EPFP over the last 9 years and particularly in the last 3 years. This program has expanded, it's gotten deeper, our relationships with our partners in the field are stronger. I want to thank them, all of the coordinators and all of the organizations and the sponsors, for making this program one of the longest lasting leadership programs of its kind in the whole country, right?

[Applause]

We make this work. You make this work. And I hope that you'll remember, from my perspective, EPFP is not only a learning network; it's a leadership and action network. We got a call to action from our colleague this morning. I hope that some of you will respond to that.

But I think it's important that we not just think about EPFP as the year but the relationships we have with each other in this cohort, with others in our states, and with this national network of people. This group of people can be a real force for the kind of change that you've heard about throughout this conference and that Karen Pittman so eloquently advocated for in her Halperin lecture.

There are three thoughts I want to share with you quickly. One, in the world in which I live, there's a lot of debate about expert knowledge versus community wisdom, right? Many of us in this room, we go to high school, we go to college, we get professional degrees, and we want to become expert so we know what kids need, so we know what families need.

The flip side of that is all of that may not matter unless it's informed by the wisdom and the knowledge of the people with whom we are working. That's what I learned in the boot heel of Missouri, and I know there are people here who know where that is, although sometimes in Kansas City they used to say where is that.

[Laughter]

But that's really important to me. How we find that balance. People at the local level, those young people in Nashville, they wanted adults to help them sort through the complexity of the problem they saw.

Our job is to take what we know and to find the right balance so we don't just say we know. So keep that one in mind.

Second, all these stakeholders, you know, from young people to families to neighborhood residents to local government, community-based organizations, higher education institutions, many of you work in state agencies and you've been told to work on stakeholder engagement, right? That's been a big theme.

But for me it's not just about listening; it's about how you mobilize people to support your goals. That's why we need all those stakeholders. It's not just listen and then we'll decide. It's listen and keep them engaged.

I would encourage you to read a marvelous article written in 1969 by a woman named Sherry Einstein who wore white gloves. "The Ladders of Citizen Participation," a brilliant article about how we think about the way people participate.

And finally, of course our communities matter. I have always said for the last 10-15 years that educators that cut themselves off from communities are walking out on a limb. Where they themselves are responsible for getting the results we want for our young people. Only our schools are responsible.

And you know what? There are people who have been back on the other end of that limb chipping away at it. And frankly I am more worried about the future of public education today than I have been for the 50 years I've been involved in one way or another.

So the connections, the relationships that all you have with your communities, with your city councils, with your United Ways, with your higher educations, they're all working in

public schools right now, hodgepodge helter skelter. We need those connections and relationships so that we can help our young people learn and thrive.

I was struck, maybe some of you heard it too, or didn't, Karen Pittman talking about young people, never said one word that is concluded in almost every conversation we have about public education. What was that word? She never said "academic." Right? Which doesn't mean she doesn't think academics is important. Of course she does. She's obviously quite academically skilled. But it's developmental, and learning is part of that. And that's how we get to the point where all of our kids can learn and thrive.

IEL has been very kind to me. EPFP is one of the finest things that the institute has done. It's where we started. It's where we'll continue to be. It will continue to grow stronger.

Thank you all for all the support you give to EPFP, to IEL, and for the work you do every day.

[Applause]

HELEN MALONE: Thank you all. You got just a sneak peek preview of our closing keynote that will join us in a few moments.

So now I'm asking my EPFP fellows to make sense of everything you learned in the last four days of your experience here.

So on your name tags, if you flip over, you will see a room name. And that's where we're asking you to go next to spend some time in our meaning making session. We have asked all of our facilitators to start right on time.

On page 17, you will see exactly which room you need to go to, who is facilitating, and there will be roles.

If you've lost your name tag or don't know where it is, find a room that you think most closely aligns to the role you currently play. So if you are in higher education, focusing on K-12, still go to higher ed.

If you're working in state agency in health, still go to the state agency. The idea is this will be an opportunity for you to debrief what you have learned across people who hold similar positions to yours in different states. So you can have a conversation.

There you will fill out what's at the bottom of page 17.

Hold on. I'm almost done. Follow instructions. It will help you once you exit.

So the meaning making session will be until 11:15, and I ask you to very quickly then come back here for a closing keynote, Kent McGuire, who you just met briefly.

Please look at your name tag, go up to the assigned room. If you don't have a name tag, as I mentioned, follow the role that you have now. And we'll see you back here at 11:15. Thank you.

(Session ended at 10:26 a.m.)



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