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#### WL CARE Intro:

**Ila Chaubey**: Hi everyone! My name is Ila Chaubey, I graduated West Side in 2016, and I use she/her pronouns.

**Daniel Afolabi**: And my name is Daniel Afolabi, I also graduated in 2016, and I use he/him pronouns.

**Ila**: Daniel and I are both admins of the West Lafayette Coalition for Anti-Racist Education, or WL CARE, and we want to thank you all so much for coming tonight - conversations like this are the best way to make sure that real & effective change happens in our community. We also want to thank Alan Karpick, Rachel Witt, Karen Springer, Amy Austin, Yue Yin, Tom Schott, and Brad Marley from the school board and Laura Falk, Margaret Psarros, and Carolyn Johnson from the diversity committee for taking time out of their night to join us.

**Daniel**: We recognize that parts of this discussion may be uncomfortable for multiple people here. We understand that it can be difficult to recognize the ways in which we have all been complicit in allowing racism or discrimination to go unchecked. It can be difficult to recognize our own implicit biases and the ways that we have treated people wrongly in the past. And it can be difficult to feel criticized - but that is why those feelings and this conversation are so important. If you do feel criticized or uncomfortable, we ask that you sit in that discomfort - really reflect on why you feel uncomfortable and how you can use that discomfort to improve your actions in the future.

**Ila**: Additionally, we recognize this conversation may be difficult for any BIPOC or marginalized folks attending - if you at any point do feel triggered, please feel free to step away. You can always join again. Additionally, if you’d like your comment to be read by either Daniel or I, either anonymously or with your name attached, please send us a private chat, and we can arrange that.

**Daniel**: A brief summary of how tonight’s town hall will go. We had 12 people sign up in advance to comment. For those people, we’ll call your name when it’s your turn to speak and invite you to unmute yourself. After that, we’ll open up the floor to anyone who would like to speak using the “raise hands” function. We’ll put instructions on how to raise your hand in the chat. We’ll call on people in order of when they raised their hand and invite them to unmute. Each speaker will be limited to 3 minutes - we’ll let you know when you have 30 seconds left via private message. Also, the chat will be open, so that anyone can talk or discuss amongst themselves. Please let us know in the chat if you have any questions!

**Ila**: Before we get started with public comment, we wanted to give a little bit of background on WL CARE and talk specifically about our journey to this town hall. In June, we sent a letter to the school board and administration, signed by over 800 parents, alumni, and current students, with a list of 7 anti-racist demands, including incorporating BIPOC and intersectional curricula, instituting mandatory anti-racist professional development for staff and teachers, and investigating biases in academic track and disciplinary recommendations. In August, we sent a second document to the board and administration. Those were a collection of stories, written by parents, alumni, and students, about acts of racism or discrimination they had faced while in WLCSC schools - at the hands of both fellow students and sometimes even teachers.

Neither of these documents were responded to by either the board or the administration, but we were eventually able to meet with the school board. In that meeting, we discussed the priority of our requests, beginning with hiring a full-time DEI director, forming a diversity oversight task force, and scheduling ongoing monthly meetings between WL CARE and the school board to discuss the board’s progress on these issues.

**Daniel**: In November, some of these issues came to the forefront during the school board race. 15 candidates ran for the school board, many of whom cited a lack of transparency from the board as part of their reason for running. This was in line with some of the conversations we had been having with parents, alumni, and current students - who have felt that the board is difficult to communicate with or that they do not inform the public about when, why, or what decisions are being made.

**Ila**: To be totally frank, we have felt that same disappointment with the diversity committee process thus far. We have tried as hard as we can to work with the school board, but we are continually met with resistance. The committee’s co-chairs were picked with no input from the public, the committee co-chairs refused 5 separate meeting requests from WL CARE, the school board canceled our ongoing monthly meetings, and we still have no insight into the selection criteria for the actual diversity committee. Not a single WL CARE admin was accepted into the diversity committee - despite the fact that we strongly believe the ongoing effort of WL CARE is one of the main reasons this conversation on anti-racism and diversity is even happening. If you were involved in writing the letter back in June, you’ll remember that one of our initial demands was for the creation of a DEI oversight committee. Additionally, Dr. Yin, a current school board member and the only person of color on the board in, to our best knowledge, over 15 years, was denied a seat on the diversity committee. We’d like to take a minute to publicly call for the board to either add Dr. Yin to the existing committee or to replace a white member of the committee with her.

**Daniel**: Despite our frustration in trying to get diversity and anti-racist work done in our town, we still firmly believe in the power of community and conversation. We organized this town hall to create a platform to allow the public to communicate with the board. We recognize that our group – WL CARE - of 1500 community members may not be representative of everyone’s views, and since we strongly believe in transparency, we want to continue to create easy avenues for people to communicate with the board. Additionally, when you’re sending emails back and forth with the board, it’s difficult to know how many other people have shared the same thoughts or concerns as you. Having a group discussion like this allows not just the board to hear appreciation, concerns, and solutions all at once, but also allows all of us to hear from other people who may be experiencing or feeling the same things as us.

With all that being said, we’d like to call our first commenter tonight: Chenell Loudermill.

#### 6:16 Chenell Loudermill:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak at this town hall. First, before I give my comments, I would like to tell you a bit about myself. My name is Chenell Loudermill. I was born and raised in the south. I spent 10 years in the military army reserve, come from a family of military people, and I received my undergraduate and graduate education in Arkansas. I recently took a position here at Purdue. In saying those things, I’m sure that there is someone on this call that knows someone or has had similar experiences, as in served in the military or received undergraduate and graduate education. So things that you have in common with me, and I’d like for you to think about that – our commonalities as opposed to our differences – as I share with you my experience. My children and I moved here in 2018 from Little Rock, Arkansas. Like I said, we are from the south. Little Rock is the capital city. It’s an urban area. And, I’ll use one political reference here and no more after this. Little Rock is a diverse sea of shades of blue, and the rest of Arkansas is fire red if that helps you put things in perspective. That diversity of blue was the only thing my kids knew. They were exposed to different people from various walks of life. They attended both public and private schools while we were in Arkansas, and those schools were top ranked in the state.

When I was offered a job here at Purdue, I was extremely excited about the opportunity. But I also knew that there were challenges that come with relocating for a job. And there were additional things I needed to consider, like the environment for my two Black sons. It was a really scary thought – moving as a single parent with two Black sons to a predominantly white city. But I couldn’t live in fear. I refused to let the fear dictate the decisions for my life. So I visited West Lafayette on several occasions. People told me how nice everyone here was. And really what that translated to be is white people told me how nice white people were to them, which is to be expected. I visited schools around to see where my children would go, what would be the best fit for them. On the way to one school, I saw the confederate flag on my way to Harrison. When we got there, a white student gave us a tour. And during the tour, he told us that all of the bad kids and the kids who do drugs go to Jeff. Now I visited Jeff, and I saw that they had a lot to offer, but it was also larger than West Side. And I felt that my older son would do better in a smaller school. And I also thought it would be helpful for both of them to be in the same building, since this was our first time ever relocating.

I visited West Side, and how much diversity was valued was mentioned to me several times. My attention was directed to the flags to represent the diverse student body. I was skeptical because that was the only mention of diversity that I had, but in the end, I chose West Side because at the time I thought it was in my kids’ best interests.

In searching for a home here, we found something that worked for us, but even that experience was met with challenges. The realtor and the seller were not flexible, as I was trying to sell one house in Little Rock, Arkansas, at the same time move here, at the same time start a new job, and at the same time get my kids enrolled in schools. We ended up living in hotels and in a coworker’s basement for about a month. After we finally got settled into our new home, the boys started school, and within the first month one of my sons came to me in tears and asked me, “Why are people here so mean?”

When I asked him what happened, he described how kids made negative comments about non-white students and as time went on, they both experienced microaggressions on a regular basis. Kids asked my children if they talked a certain way because they were Black. Kids made assumptions about them playing basketball because they were Black. One son was called the n word during basketball practice. When I confronted that parent – this was a parent that actually worked at the school – the dad implied that my kid did something to deserve it. His question was, “Well what did he do to him?” One son had the bus driver close the door in his face on several occasions. One son received a harsher punishment for a minor offense. One son had a nurse dismiss his healthcare needs, which ending up resulting in him in braces and crutches.

My sons have experienced what people of color face every day in the criminal justice system and in healthcare. Granted, it was on a smaller scale, but from these actions you can see how deeply ingrained these racist practices are. Now I don’t think for one minute that their intention was to hurt them, but the impact that that has had on my family is deep. These are things that I know about; these examples that I’ve given you. And I’m sure there are other things that they don’t notice that I don’t know about. And things that they do notice that they just don’t tell me. And I understand why – after a while you just get tired. Tired of trying to teach people what they should already know. This school reeks of privilege and complacency. And my children have struggled to feel welcome here due to the events mentioned previously.

But also because this is just a hard move for them at this age. They left the only thing they knew. They left their dad. They left the only life they were comfortable in. They had personal struggles on top of trying to navigate this school system that made it clear to them that they were outsiders.

I’ve had to have conversations with them that I had not had to have before. Things like don’t run home from school, someone might think you’ve done something wrong, and call the police. They can’t go to the park alone, and my son loves to go to the park and play basketball. But I won’t leave them there alone. And that’s not because I don’t trust them, but that’s because I don’t fully trust the community in which we live. Someone vandalized our Black Lives Matter sign in our yard. We had to have a conversation about that. We are forced to add to our general safety precautions just because we are Black. Even in spite of those things, we pray every night and I continuously remind them that yes, living here is hard, but we can do hard things. It is my hope that this community realizes that supporting initiatives centered around cultural humility, diversity, equity, and inclusion not only gives all students a more accurate picture of this country’s past and its present, but it also impacts the safety and wellbeing of BIPOC students and staff.

This is literally a life and death matter, and people need to pay attention. Being silent and complacent is no longer an option. Thinking about what past practices have been – I would just like to say that it doesn’t matter what you’ve done in the past. What matters the most is what you’re willing to do going forward. And it is time now to start dismantling these systems of oppression and disparity. And my kids deserve better, your kids deserve better, the kids that come after them deserve better, so that they can be better and do better.

#### 15:34 Loren Weyrich:

My name is Loren. Also a little bit about myself – I’m actually a Pittsburgh native. I was a Navy veteran for 6 years. I’ve lived in Chicago; I’ve lived in California – a couple different places. I’ve also lived in Japan. And now I call Indiana my home. I want to tell you this to give you an understanding that I’ve been a part of many different communities, many different cultures. I’ve not always been accepted and have been at the receiving end of both verbal and procedural discrimination. Though these things were unfortunate, what I came to conclude was that those who were cruel to me did so because of their own insecurities and misunderstandings. I’ve also learned through experience that the majority of misunderstandings come from false assumptions, just like Ms. Chenell said. The worst thing is whenever you assume the worst of another person. So given these experiences, I actually came up with the complete opposite conclusion that Ms. Chenell did. And you may not like my perception of WL CARE.

To me, they come across as a far-left political group pushing an agenda into our schools based off of falsehoods. Specifically, whenever they say that they are fighting against anti-Black violence and that the violence that they see is directly related to systemic racism and white supremacy, I don’t agree with it. I completely and utterly condemn any and all forms of racism and any claims of superiority of one group over another. I believe that this systemic racism claim is a fictitious enemy that we’re attacking, rather than something tangible. And it completely disregards to recognize individual choices and responsibility for one’s own actions, that possibly could increase the likelihood of a deadly encounter with police.

Though tragic, and in my eyes it can absolutely be preventable. The police brutality that is pushed on our media cases – they were not all entirely unjustified. And that is because they do not tell us the full truth. I strongly disagree with the narrative that these tragedies occurred only because of race. And I’m really disappointed in our supposed free press and our government officials’ complete laziness in finding out full information before pandering to the race narrative. I really implore all of you to research objectively on the percentage of media coverage that does white on Black crime vs Black on Black, Black on white, and white on white crime. Because you never see the latter three. It doesn’t mean they don’t exist; it’s just they’re not reported on. So it may possibly put it in a slightly different perspective for you.

I end by asking all of you to please do not assume that all white people are racist. Please do not assume that because if you are a person of color that you cannot succeed or are disadvantaged just because of the color of your skin. Because I believe that is simply not true in any way, shape, or form. I believe we are all created, and we are all equal. Of course, I’m going to say this last part wrong. Thomas Jefferson said it so much better than what I ever could – that we’re all created equal by our creator with unalienable rights. And that’s how I view everyone, and I love all of you. So thank you Chenell for sharing your story, and it is just so heartbreaking. I also came from a school district where my son was jumped in second grade on a bus by five boys who called him racial slurs. And that’s why we moved away. And I would be so disappointed if you had to move away from here for the same reason I had to move away from my last school. Thank you.

#### 20:39 Amogh Chaubey:

Hi everyone, my name is Amogh Chaubey. I’m actually a senior. I lived for 12 years in Indiana, and I went to the West Lafayette school district. Now I live in Connecticut. I truly miss West Lafayette every day. My closest friends are here and my favorite teachers - my 4th grade teacher, my debate coach, my high school chemistry teacher. I truly love this community, and I’m really grateful to be speaking here. Moving to Connecticut and especially in the middle of high school actually gave me a lot of perspective, specifically comparing these two districts and seeing how my new experiences stack up.

Interestingly enough, over the summer we also delivered a letter and petition to our school administration and board of education. And two days after this letter was delivered, they immediately met with us and committed to having regular meetings occurring biweekly. Moving after that, they actually invited us to board of education meetings regularly and would post them and invited us directly and went out of their way to organize new meetings and special discussions. These were board-led initiatives to make sure to have community conversations. Moving past that, they even created a student advisory board committee, where students could be on the board of education directly and speak on these issues of inclusiveness, diversity, and fostering an anti-racist culture.

So that’s why, watching this from afar, I was really shocked to hear that this wasn’t the case here. To be frank, from what I’ve heard, not just from the administrators of WL CARE but from the students as well, is that this process has been really slow-moving, behind closed doors, and really difficult to communicate with the school board. And this was actually really surprising to me. My freshman year I organized a walkout at West Lafayette with two of my closest friends. And I remember the administration being nothing but helpful and advocating for being closely involved and working closely with us. Years following that the same thing happened with WL climate strike, where the administration was super eager to help out with that group because they knew they were trying to make the community better. That’s the school board I remember. But what I’ve seen here is that Ila and Daniel and the rest of WL CARE have been working for 6 months with not nearly the same amount of commitment. They’ve delivered hundreds of testimonies and several well-substantiated demands with backed up evidence. They’ve done their research, talked to community members, which are all things that the school board told us to do when we organized our movements years ago. This should not be any different than any other student movement or organizations, and why there’s been a lack of communication and lack of transparency is beyond me.

Especially because with the recent school board election a major issue was about transparency. WL CARE and the students behind it are merely just trying to push the community to a greater level of inclusivity. This is not a direct attack on the school, but rather an effort to make it better. These are the values that West Lafayette instilled me in the 12 years that I spent there. It is a mystery to me why this has become so complicated, when at the base level the first priority is transparency and having open conversations, but that doesn’t seem to be happening – even that is incredibly difficult. There are clearly things that need to be addressed, and I don’t think any of us should pretend that there aren’t.

The civil rights study that was cited in the letter delivered highlighted a clear academic achievement gap in Happy Hollow that is now WLES and goes all the way to West Side between white and Black students. There were also hundreds of testimonies of students experiencing racist experiences at West Lafayette. These aren’t coincidences.

The previous speaker, Ms. Weyrich – you might say that this isn’t a systemic issue that needs to be addressed. But once again, these hundreds of community testimonies cannot be coincidental. And you say that these things can be prevented, but that’s actually what WL CARE is trying to do. And these unalienable rights that you advocate for that everybody sort of has – Chenell’s kids, she just said that her kids were denied the right to healthcare at school. These aren’t coincidences; they are clearly systemic issues. There are clearly things that need to be addressed. Just like the administration’s done in the past, they should be openly working with WL CARE to make the community better. My current school has taken large steps to increase transparency and have a direct line of communication with the students and have regular conversations, and the fact that this isn’t happening here is unbelievable. Specifically, when in the past, this has been made a priority with the administration. Once again, all WL CARE is at its core is trying to make the community a better place and have a push for inclusivity, and this has become far more complicated than it needs to be. The demands, or the asks in the letter, are well-substantiated and have backed up evidence. And the first priority is just transparency. So I see no reason why the board shouldn’t move to work closely together with WL CARE. Thank you.

#### 25:24 Nikita Prabhakar:

I’m Nikita or Nikki. I’m a West Side alum, class of 2015, and I actually just graduated Purdue back in 2019. So, with the creation of the diversity committee and then certainly the opening up of positions to the community members, I think a lot of us are looking forward to seeing a lot of minority representation from people not officially connected with the school system in order to feel like there’s a sense of accountability there. Questions that I would have for the board are: firstly, how are these selections being made? But more importantly if the board shares that goal with regards to the selection process, and if not, what were criteria for deciding who could accurately represent these students that are facing discrimination?

And regarding the plethora of stories from students and parents and alumni regarding discrimination they faced at West Side, whether it be from students, teachers, or faculty – I think something that could be very helpful is for there to be a dedicated person, ideally an outsider to the school system, a counselor or teacher that students can go to even anonymously report incidents. I think many times things happen, and students are too scared that they’ll be judged by their peers or even by their teachers, or they may not even fully understand that what’s happening is wrong and it doesn’t need to continue or happen again to other students. Or they simply might just believe that nothing is going to happen if they speak about it, because that’s certainly been the case that a lot of people have found. But I think having a clear path of who to go to when these things happen could really help to hold everyone accountable – students, teachers, faculty, everyone included and could provide a better learning environment for all students. Thanks.

#### 27:25 Daniel Milner:

Good evening. My name is Daniel Milner, and I was the valedictorian in the class of 2010 at West Side. I now live in Chicago, where I am in my final year of my PhD in management and organizations at Northwestern University, where I have studied and researched extensively in organizational and cultural sociology.

To counter the spread of misinformation (both in general and especially by tonight’s second speaker), I want to use my time to clarify what is meant by the terms racism and anti-racism. According to historian Ibram X Kendi, racism is the combination of racist policies and racist ideas that produces and normalizes racial inequities. Racist policies, also known as structural racism or institutional racism, are any measures that produce or sustain racial inequity between racial groups. Racist ideas are those that hold that one racial group is superior or inferior to another racial group in any way. When racist policies and racist ideas unite to create racial inequities, we have racism.

From these definitions – racism as inequity coming from policies plus ideas that are racist – it is easy to see why it is not enough to just be not racist; we must have active anti-racism. An anti-racist is someone who supports anti-racist policy through their actions or expressing anti-racist ideas. Anti-racism holds that racial groups are equals, in all their apparent differences. We must have anti-racist policies whose outcomes create and produce racial equity, and we must have anti-racist ideas hold that no racial group is superior or inferior to any other. One without the other – anti-racist ideas with racist policies or anti-racist policies with racist ideas – is just window dressing and will never achieve equity.

Finally, I want to condemn the dog whistling smearing critical race theory as leftist or Marxist indoctrination. To begin with, the use of the word Marxism as a pejorative needs to stop. Marx wrote extensively on a wide range of social issues, and although in popular American culture and education he is associated with Stalinist communism, there is in fact little resemblance to the policies of the former Soviet Union in Marx’s writings. So just on the basis of fact, people need to learn what Marxism is about if they’re going to criticize it. Secondly, these same ignorant people may be surprised to find a great deal of Marx’s writings that they agree with, such as the pursuit of meaning in life according to self-defined principles, and not being beholden to any master of fate. In fact, if I hadn’t told you these were Marx’s ideas, you would have likely thought they came from a hard-right capitalist. But independent of the relationship of critical race theory and Marxism, critical race theory fits the goals of an anti-racism by espousing both anti-racist ideas and anti-racist policies. There is no indoctrination – Marxian or otherwise. To be opposed to critical race theory is to express racist ideas. Opponents to WL CARE’s demands are encouraged to educate themselves on the lines of criticism they adopt so that they can be taken seriously and not simply as mindless parrots of racist ideas. Thank you.

#### 31:09 Enosh Kazem:

Hi everyone, happy to be here. My name is Enosh Kazem. I’m the youngest of four Kazem siblings who graduated. My oldest sister graduated in 1992, my brother in ’93, my other sister was the class of ’97, and I was the class of 2007. All graduated from West Lafayette High School, and I did my K-12 through the West Lafayette school system. And we’re all immensely grateful for being a part and being raised in the West Lafayette community.

My parents moved to West Lafayette from Kabul, Afghanistan in 1981 after my dad finished his master’s here in May of ‘69 at Purdue University. So we’ve lived in Purdue or West Lafayette for well over 40 years. On the day of September 11th, 2001, I was a seventh grader in West Lafayette High School. And the support I received from faculty, fellow students, coaches -- I see Coach Roseman here on the call -- was overwhelming, positive, and transformative for myself, being a short little Asian kid from Afghanistan. I never felt excluded from anything as a result of my race or, more so what happened after 9/11, because of my religion. I just wanted to share that personal story about how great West Lafayette really is and how great the West Lafayette community and West Lafayette school corporation really is.

And I understand that that’s an anecdote of 1, that’s an n of 1, but that’s a really powerful one if you ask me. Not to say that times don’t change, they obviously do, school systems and communities and cities evolve, and there definitely were some negative experiences I experienced in high school, some by faculty, some by fellow students. But what I want to stress and emphasize is that, in the context of my whole experience, those are drowned out by overwhelming positivity and support that truly transformed the person that I am and become and is a real emblem of our community. And there’s a lot of positive examples and stories of students over the decades that are an important part of the West Lafayette school corporation narrative that we need to continue to capture and recapture for future generations of West Lafayette students that perhaps may not have experienced that same community that I‘ve experienced and my siblings experienced, but that need to be shared and procured and preserved and maintained for future generations of students. Whether they come from Afghanistan or whether they come from Mexico or whether they come from Chicago or Indiana, wherever they’re from, that they see their stories represented in the broader West Lafayette High School and West Lafayette community story is important for them to register with.

And I think that’s an important strategic goal that I think the alumni base – between the administrators, the school board, other people – need to continue to push that forward. Stories of our success. Because these stories only happen as a result of a supportive community that champions diversity. And it’s not just a slogan, not just the chief word, it really means something. That’s something that, sure, changes over time, but we shouldn’t gloss over our positive points. I just wanted to put that forward – not to paint over negative stories that are real, and that people experience unfortunately in our community, but perhaps one solution that we’re not putting forward enough in our conversations with administration and to our younger students and alumni on the call is that these administrators really do have your back. And it may not always seem that way or look like it or feel like it, but we have a very distinct and unique culture here in West Lafayette that we need to continue to champion and pull out of our past. And sometimes some of our younger students may not be aware of some of that great history that often gets overlooked. And I wanted to put that forward as something for us to entertain as something that we can continue to celebrate and put forward in our community. Thanks, happy to be here.

#### 36:33 Lora Williams:

My name is Lora Marie Williams. Get ready people. I am a 1986 graduate of West Side. And my brother and sister were graduates – one was from the 70s and one was from the 80s. So, we’ve been here a little while, and I think everything that everybody has shared has some truth to it. You know, I think within the West Lafayette school corporation, there is the good, there is the bad, there is the ugly, and there is the beautiful. But we can always do better.

I think it was Nikita who brought up having some kind of independent advocate type of position available to students. I think that’s a great idea, even to parents to be able to come to about concerns where we could do better. Because I think it’s important to do better. Because if you accept mediocre, you keep getting mediocre. My son – I’m comfortable sharing this – has disabilities. Because of disabilities, there is discrimination. We can do better in this community in all kinds of ways. We need to do better.

I have seen that confederate flag waving on Salisbury, and it drives me mad. It’s worrying and concerning and disconcerting and, in my opinion, wrong. Aside from that, we do have to acknowledge that we’re a place like any other with positives but with negatives and with issues that must be resolved. There have been incidents of racism in our city. Obviously, I’ve been out of school a minute, and I left this place for many years and lived in New York City. But I’ve been back several years, and kind of the reasons I initially wanted to fly away have sort of come back.

There are issues. In the next-door county, there were four little African American girls that died in a fire, and the case has still not been solved and it was ruled an arson. There are problems, and we can do better within the West Lafayette school corporation to address inequities, to make people feel at home, to make them feel comfortable.

I thought Nikita had a great idea about a diversity advocate. I think that that’s a fantastic idea. And I was curious too how they chose the diversity committee members. I want to thank everybody for being here. And we all got to fight the good fight and try to do better. I just came off a Zoom call about the death of Susan Moore at IU Health in Indianapolis. We have to call out wrongs. It’s our duty to do better. Not to say that there aren’t wonderful things about West Side. It’s a safe place where you can mostly – if you’re an academic achiever – you can make great strides. I want it to be a place where people with disabilities can make great strides. Where people of all types can make great strides. Kids of all types, of all kinds, of all flavors, of all everything. Thank you for letting me share; thank you everybody for being here.

#### 42:47 Alice Pawley:

Hi, thank you for some chance for a comment. I apologize for being a white person speaking first in a conversation about race. I’m Alice Pawley, I’m a white parent, I’m an engineering faculty member at Purdue, and I use anti-racist theories in my research. I’ve lived here since 2007. I have a white child at West Lafayette Elementary and another who will start there next year. I found the work that WL CARE did around the school board election hugely helpful and used it to inform my vote, including to vote for Dr. Yin. I’m in strong support of increasing explicit BIPOC and anti-racist content into the curriculum that my children are going to learn. I have read scholarship that demonstrates how institutional racism gives people with skin color like mine and hair like mine and phenotypes like mine and speaking style like mine unfair advantages over neighbors and colleagues and friends who are not white. I am grateful for the incredible labor of all of these students and alumni and parents associated with WL CARE, to the people of color on the call who continue to do a huge amount of the emotional labor educating white people like me about their experiences. I urge the other white people on the call to just listen to them. And I urge the board to incorporate a member of WL CARE on the diversity committee. Thank you for your time.

#### 44:22 Ben Tally:

Thank you. I graduated from West Side in 2014, and I remember problems in the school that I wasn’t very aware of at the time, but after seeing the notes people have shared, ranging from decades ago to recently, I’ve realized the scope and depth of it - including bigotry among the staff and administrators is worse than I thought. In terms of problems I did pick up on myself, I’m happy I got a decent education to kickstart my interest in history, and it’s because of that continued learning that I realized how white-washed and incomplete and in some ways flat out inaccurate my education at West Side was. And there was a problem of both the curriculum and the teachers - I’ve had to unlearn a lot. And I think having non-white and otherwise diverse administrators and teachers is an important step and specifically ones with an intention to fix some of those problems. I don’t think representation is sufficient though. And I know WL CARE’s recommendations provide a lot of specific ideas to go beyond that, which I think are great.

One thing that really ticks me off is that West Side has cops in schools. I found out there was one who failed to break up a fight the other day or week ago. And I think any civilized country looks at the fact that we do that in this country and says what are you doing. Originally cops in schools, that’s what racists would post up in poorer Black schools so that they could funnel Black and Brown problem kids into steel cages and interrupt their education, and the fact that that’s happening here – the scholarship is clear that it doesn’t keep anybody safer; it just ruins kids’ educations. Cops are often violent themselves. Cops often hurt the kids. And cops act in a racist way against kids. You’ve got to get those cops out of there.

The one other thing I wanted to say is that I know the people in charge of WL CARE have been so diplomatic, and they’re working so hard, and they’re getting so much crap from the community. And I think that’s the fault of the administrators who, from my outside perspective, have done a really bad job of taking into consideration what they’re saying. They’re just trying to help people, help the new students, and they’re getting a lot of flak that they don’t deserve, a lot of online harassment. And I think they should be commended. And I guess that’s it.

#### 47:12 George Marx:

I graduated from West Lafayette High School in 1969 way before most of you were born. And I was fortunate that my parents were anti-racist which was very unusual in West Lafayette. We were in a Civil Rights March around the square in Lafayette either in the summer of 1961 or 1962 when I was either 10 or 11 years old.

Now, we had one Black student my freshman year. Her parents moved from Gary. She lasted one year at the high school; she couldn’t stand being the only Black student. And I heard from a third party about this classmate who was ashamed that his father had worked with I assume were other fathers to convince the family to leave West Lafayette. I just want to say to the school board and others is this can be a win win. This doesn’t have to be you losing and WL CARE winning. It’s really important that we learn about racism. And to those who say there isn’t systemic racism – I admit I’m prejudiced. My wife is Black, two of my three children are Black, but I see it. It’s not all coincidence when my wife experiences microaggressions all the time. She never knows some of the time - is it racism or is it not. But it happens too often to not be racism most of the time.

And I just think you can do a lot on the school board and the city if you really accept the good will of the people that are trying to make change. And obviously you’re going to face anger and frustration and people saying negative things to you – that’s true. But people are upset, they’re frustrated, they’re scared. And I used to walk to Purdue basketball games in West Lafayette either starting in second or third grade by myself. It was a safe and is in a lot of ways still a safe community. But it’s safe for most of us who are white. It’s often not safe for people of color.

I also want to say I’m autistic. Other people have attention deficit disorder and other needs, and we need to deal with all the ways that people are different and help make them more accepted. And we can have lots of students going to Harvard and Yale and all these places and also deal with the needs of so many other students, who may not have the ability to do things like that, but they’re still loving, caring people. And if West Lafayette and West Lafayette High School are really going to be a great place, it needs to help the people that have it the roughest and have the biggest issues. Being great is not just helping people be super, super successful; it’s a lot more. Thank you very much.

#### 50:38 Anonymous parent:

I want to thank Ila Chaubey for raising concerns about Mrs. Psarros’ involvement on the diversity committee. WL Care is saying things our community has been afraid to say out of fear of retaliation from staff and other parents who have close relationships with the school. This fear of retaliation was affirmed when Mr. Karpick referred to Ila’s concerns as “attacking” at a recent board meeting.

It’s not attacking to say we parents would feel very uncomfortable sharing in front of Mrs. Psarros. It is not attacking to say we feel Mrs. Psarros doesn’t value our input as parents, that we feel she is uninformed on how her actions affect us, or that we feel like she digs her heels in even when she is making bad decisions and has sown distrust toward the middle school. Her actions have brought so many families pain, sadness, and anger. And Mr. Karpick, your statement reassures us we cannot share our concerns with you.

Mr. Karpick’s statement gave the impression that administration is more concerned with protecting their staff members’ reputations than they are protecting our children’s wellbeing and hearing criticism that could improve our relationships with the school. This sensitivity to criticism just makes administration look out-of-touch with our needs.

Anytime committees are formed, it seems like they are formed in secret, meetings are held in secret, and committees are formed using criteria administration is not transparent about. Administration says they do this to protect confidentiality, but then when people submit anonymous letters and comments to the board to protect confidentiality, administration says they won’t put much stock into those letters and comments.

Mr. Karpick, you talked to a reporter about the diversity committee. You said, “We’re really excited about the opportunity and the ultimate positive effect we believe it will have on the student experience in our schools.” If Ila Chaubey and Daniel Afolabi had the good sense to bring these issues and this venture to your attention, why then do you not trust them and eagerly seek their membership on this committee?

The people being mistreated in this district are in the margins, a place you’re not even looking. We hope the district will form a new committee, made up of people who aren’t lawyers, who don’t have PhD’s, who aren’t favorited by administration or are in administration, and people who aren’t associated with powerful banking institutions in our community.

#### 53:51 Loren Weyrich:

Hi, the only thing I’m noticing is that a lot of the demands that are being pressured onto the school right now are very emotionally based. And from a person that suffers from severe PTSD and depression, I would strongly recommend that you do not make such strong decision making when you are in an emotional state. So, let’s say something horrible happens to you. You really shouldn’t decide right then and there what the best course of action is. Because typically you’re being very irrational, myself included whenever I get angry or upset about something.

So, I’m really concerned about these demands, especially against the police. The more that we separate our children from our community police, the more that that fear and division is going to widen and become worse. I’ve seen it. So that’s why I’m strongly against that demand. I do want to make sure that the police here specifically have the most rigorous training and qualifications before they can become police officers in West Lafayette. So, I just want to let you guys know that you really should be proud of your police department here, because I’ve come from areas where the police are not very moral and do not act in the best interest of the community. The police here really have the community’s best interest at heart. They’re not perfect, none of us are, so whenever there are mistakes, I’m glad that at least the police officers that I’ve communicated with have been very open with whenever they do make mistakes and try to do the best that they can to rectify them.

I completely understand why many of the people in this town hall feel the way that they do. And I empathize greatly. The biggest thing that I’m worried about is that we’re going to cause self-destruction and make things worse. So those are my concerns. Thank you for letting me speak.

#### 56:49 Jatin Singhal:

Hi there everyone, my name is Jatin Singhal, and I graduated from West Side in 2017. Thank you so much for giving me an opportunity to speak. Sorry if I’m not articulate enough with my thoughts - I’m a little nervous because there are a lot of my fellow classmates on this call, and I don’t want to make a fool of myself. That being said, I feel like a lot of the conversation, at least in the chat, has become a debate about socialism vs communism vs capitalism, all of which is pretty detrimental to what we’re trying to do, which is see how we can improve our schools. I think Nikita had a really great idea – some words from the school board members, which I believe are part of this call (at least I think they are), would be really great as to what the implementation costs vs what the possibility of implementation could be, and making this idea a reality.

Also, I do want to address a comment made by Enosh earlier. I’m incredibly happy that you did not experience any major flak for your race or your country of origin after 9/11. And that’s really cool and encouraging to hear. But I do feel like it’s important to realize that that’s a testament to the fact that there are so many Middle Eastern and South Asian students at West Side, allowing for diversity and perspective of people like you and me – to make it a safe space for people like you and me. The number of Black and Hispanic students at West Side is quite low – disproportionately low even compared to national averages. And I think that has made it a little bit of a worse space, for specifically those communities. People that were formerly part of my friend groups in high school – I do remember them making, not just microaggressions, but at some points some pretty damn racist comments about those communities, which I wish I had taken more time to call out and fix. Having that kind of diversity on places like the school board, places like the committee that we are in discussion for, and getting a better perspective of that within West Side altogether would go a very long way in solving these kind of problems.

Also, in response to Ms. Weyrich, regarding the actions of the police. I guess we don’t have proper statistics of West Side itself on what has happened and what kind of disciplinary actions have been taken. But I do believe WL CARE did publish a few statistics regarding disciplinary rates themselves. And I might be wrong about this, but I think they said something like Black and Hispanic students make up 13-15% of the student population but were responsible for about 43 or 45% of the disciplinary rates. Like Amogh was saying earlier, these kinds of statistics they can’t just be coincidence. A lot of this does come down to the way things can be treated in our school systems themselves, and if we say that these things are not coincidence and are just things that are just systemic of communities that are Black and Brown, we’re basically saying that they are inherently different from white people or from other communities. Those are my two cents. Thank you. I would love to hear some words from the school board as well on the ideas proposed by Nikita.

#### 1:00:58 Sharada Shastri:

I might be all over the place because I haven’t written any notes or anything. I just wanted to say that I feel like it’s a huge problem that there are so many people behind the scenes who are just okay with racism. My freshman year of high school there was an English teacher who, during one of his classes, a Black student’s cell phone went off. Instead of taking away his cell phone like teachers usually do, this teacher took away his cell phone and sent his backpack to the office to have it checked, to have it searched through.

Another time in high school a world history teacher asked me a kind of inappropriate, racially charged, culturally insensitive question during class. And at the time I kind of laughed it off, didn’t think of it as a big deal, but looking back you’re a grown adult, you’re working in this place where there are so many people of color, yet you see no problem asking questions like this without any sort of hesitation.

And even before high school in 5th grade, I would get bullied on the bus, and some of the kids doing it had parents on the school board, some of whom are still on the school board, not going to name names. And they would say things to me, a lot of which were racist and other things. And I felt like I had no one to talk to. Finally, I retaliated against them, because I was a stupid kid, and I got in trouble. When I explained to the principal what happened, she didn’t believe me, because she was friends with some of the students’ parents because they were on the school board.

It’s really frustrating that there are so many people in positions of power who are either dismissive or blatantly racist. Also, the fact that these people on the school board raised kids who were at the time – this was more than 10 years ago obviously – comfortable saying awful, racist things to another kid is a little bit concerning to me. That’s all.

#### 1:04:38 Joy Krueger:

Good evening. My name is Joy Krueger. I’m a member of the community, and I’m also a former parent. My daughter graduated in 2019 from West Side. We fostered our daughter for 3 years, and she entered West Lafayette community schools as a kindergartener. She is multiracial with special needs and a horrendous early childhood. The first time that the n word was used in West Lafayette directed at her was kindergarten. By another child of course. The teacher immediately intervened. She was surrounded by understanding. Her peers comprehended that this was wrong. And yet, she found herself challenged just by being herself.

And I have learned a great deal intentionally to recognize my own biases as a white woman who is educated. I have worked very hard to comprehend, so that I could be the ideal parent for this specific child. And I will tell you that I was and our family was assisted by many, many educators and other families, as our daughter navigated through the challenges of school and learning. And I am very thankful for those interventions. I am also well aware from my own education school cultures. We’re working with children, we’re working with adolescents, we’re working with young adults. And like every organization we continue to evolve and learn and change. Thank god we do. But I will tell you that I became keenly aware as a white parent to a Black child the microaggressions that had been commented on this evening. They exist. There were times where I at a distance was observing my daughter interacting. As circumstance would occur and the other party didn’t realize that I was the parent. And there was clear evidence of racism towards a child. An innocent child.

And those are the systemic issues that we need to come together and work towards. Because they affect – when young children encounter those experiences, no matter what strength or privilege or standing the family has or doesn’t have in the family – when those things occur it impacts the development of those children. And for no other reason than to have members of our community joining in this discussion and young adults in particular being on these committees because they recognize it. They have their lives fully ahead of them, and they have a voice, and their voice should be heard and appreciated. And there is systemic racism in West Lafayette, in this community, in this school corporation. it exists, it is real. And I am witness to the ability for individuals to make a difference on behalf of our children. But it is actual. And I think we need to be listening to our kids. And we need to be listening to these young alumni who recognize the experiences they had.

I will also add there is a difference being a domestic Black child and an international child in the West Lafayette community schools. And I think there needs to be some consideration given of the disparities there and the assumptions that are made. Similarly, when we talk about the children who live in the apartments vs some other part of our community. I will tell you that we are going to miss and lose a great advocate for our kids in Coach Wood. And he reached out to my daughter multiple times from 7th grade to 12th grade. And he knew everyone’s name and made them feel welcome and accepted. And I think we need other advocates for our children, much like Coach Wood and other teachers who get it. Thank you.

#### 1:10:51 Lora Williams:

I just wanted to clarify that I don’t think just having one ombudsman or something to reach out to is an answer to all the issues we’re talking about. I just thought it was an excellent tool that could be added. I just wanted to clarify that. I want to thank everyone for being on here. I think our first speaker brought up like there’s some privilege and complacency here. And I think she’s kind of right. I think we can do better. I already said that. I thank everybody for being here. I look forward to hearing – I think another speaker was talking about having the members actually chime in, so looking forward to listening to them. Thank you.

#### 1:12:09 Chenell Loudermill:

So I wanted to come back around and make the comment and let everyone know that, yes we have faced challenges here, but there have been some good things that have come out of some of those challenges that we’ve faced. My kids have asked several times to just move back home – like let’s just go, let’s leave, let’s go back home. I try to tell them that this is not something we can run from. It is everywhere we go. So we have to learn how to navigate in this world at this given time until thing change, and we can keep fighting for that.

And I will say that when some of those things happened, when things were vandalized here, the neighbors, the people in my neighborhood, the small neighborhood I’m in, they did rally around me, and they reached out. But until that happened nobody in this neighborhood had really reached out to me. There have been positive things that have happened here, and I don’t think that everyone in the West Lafayette community has the same issues or the same thoughts around BIPOC individuals, but what I tell my boys is that it only takes one person to decide that they don’t like you because of the color of your skin. So I need you to pay attention when you walk home. No, you can’t go to the park by yourself. Because I don’t know everyone in this community, and people don’t know you. And because of the color of your skin, they assume one thing about you. There are people that will assume things about you that are not true. That is part of the talk that we have to have.

While I do realize this community is not all bad, we can do better. This community can do better. It will take more than marginalized groups. It will take the people of privilege to stand up for those who do not have the same privilege. I am in a field that is 93% white, so I am used to being around people who do not look like me. That is not the issue. And my son came and said to me, “Mom I don’t have a problem with white people or people that are different from me. The problem is the lack of people, the lack of diversity here. There are no people that look like me around me.” And yes, no people was an exaggeration, but you get the idea. He didn’t have a problem being around white people. He had a problem with the lack of different types of people that were around, so that other people could understand our culture, understand different cultures in general. So I think that is the issue that we need to push for is learning and being empathetic and being culturally sensitive to all different types of people, because we are just not.

#### 1:15:43 Ben Tally:

I wanted to respond to Loren Weyrich’s comment, because it sounded like it might be an example of the kind of problems of dismissiveness I was worried about. And then they’re DMing me, and I don’t have any charity to give anymore. Because they stated this matter of fact that the demands were based in emotion and irrationality. And I think that racist white people view some people of color as irrational and say that if there’s a person of color talking as opposed to a white person they’re presumed to be irrational.

And second the demand itself they say that keeping cops out of schools is based in emotion and not based in evidence and that’s not true.

I don’t know what media bias you’re talking about. I guess I would ask you to consider your own bias if you think that it’s mainstream media that’s too hard on cops. Racist white people are also assuming the accumulation of carceral responses to problems, the acceleration of white supremacists, and violent responses to social problems are normal. And they think that anything that to incrementally walk it back – like it’s not even radical to say we shouldn’t have cops in schools. But you should just presume that it’s irrational, that it’s crazy to even bring it up.

Third of all, when you say as a matter of fact, I’m the rational one, you’re the emotional one, but you don’t even bring up a rational argument. You say that cops hurt more people in other places. What does that have to do with the stats that Jatin brought up about the harms that we know about in West Lafayette? Beyond that, there’s boatloads of empirical evidence against cops in schools, and I think it’s because of a dismissive and disrespectful white mindset that you don’t even consider that any kind of evidence or serious problems that the drafters of those demands were thinking of - that that isn’t how they came to their conclusions. I don’t think you should go around presuming that these are emotional ideas.

#### 1:18:28 Amogh Chaubey:

I think Loren you also mentioned that we should avoid making decisions and judgments based off emotion. I think we should dispel that notion immediately. The specific section you talked about – the section about police in schools and cops in general – that section in the letter had four different sources on it. One from the Alliance of Educational Justice, multiple metastudies based on impact of DARE, one study from the ACLU. As a whole, the letter cited eight different studies and listed multiple resources. So this idea that the letter is emotion-based simply isn’t true.

Even going beyond the letter, WL ARE has met with several community members, hence the testimonies, but has also met with every single school board candidate who agreed to meet with them to discuss the community and the demands. So the idea that this is emotion-based simply isn’t true. I encourage everyone who hasn’t read the letter to go read it. It has studies from the 1960s about the impact of the current culture in schools and how we can go out and address it. A lot of the discussion is based around cops and the presence of police in schools. But the evidence and the studies does not just address that. Remember this letter and the demands of WL CARE also talk about curricula in schools, special education, and disability justice. So this idea that this is emotion-based simply isn’t true, and we shouldn’t give it any merit, because this letter is well-researched and has documented studies from the 1960s. Thank you.

#### 1:20:04 Enosh Kazem:

Yeah thanks. Maybe I glossed over in my opening comments – there were overt discriminatory things that I experienced and that my siblings experienced growing up through school. Not just microaggressions, things that happen in high school that are normal, but are colored in clearly a racist kind of way. I’m talking about fights and other things, and I can laugh about it now in retrospect only because of the amount of support that counteracted that was so overwhelming. And I think that is the aspect that – I am only saying that to balance out that negativity that certainly does exist. Whether you’re a student from whatever background you are.

And what I’m trying to say in that spirit is that a lot of minority students are going to find a lot more friends faster that already exist that are just quiet. And I think that having more town halls like this, having more formats like this, having broader around the initiative, pulling more alumni that come from diverse backgrounds, whether they’re African American students, Hispanic students that are in minority in West Side’s history that are a part of the West Lafayette family that are alumni – can we create zoom calls around Asian students from different backgrounds over the decades. Kind of like this call in a small way has captured and continue that conversation with marginalized communities, even informally through Zoom calls like this, through a platform like WL CARE, is a really important step in this journey. And I think that’s something for all of us and the WL CARE leaders to consider is looking for small wins, low hanging fruit, and view this as a long-term community conversation that isn’t going to go away.

I don’t want you to feel discouraged or feel like you’re winning or losing in a tug of war with the school board. I’ve had my experience with school administrators over the decade and my siblings, and I have nothing but amazing things to say about them. The only thing I would say is that they’re not always going to seem like they’re on your side. But what I would add to that is that there are a lot of alumni all over world that are on your side, and you’re going to find a lot of surprising support and a lot of surprising spaces. And in the interim we’re going to be able to help a lot of students until we get to the optimum solution for everyone. So I think that’s a really important strategy and initiative that I want to put forward for all of us to consider.

#### 1:23:25 Emelina Abneau:

My name is Emelina Abneau, I’m a twelfth grader at West Lafayette High School, I just wanted to say a few things. I’m not really prepared, so I’m kind of nervous. There are going to be three little parts to this.

So, if you don’t know me, I am Mexican and French and American. And I moved to West Lafayette schools in 2016, which coincidentally is the year that Donald Trump got elected as president. I moved here from Chicago, and I learned pretty quickly what the culture was in the school. I learned pretty quickly to introduce myself more as the white girl or the French girl and kind of put back this identity of Hispanic. And that was because of a lot of the things that I heard and saw from other students, which were many jokes, many comments, slight microaggressions that looking back now were microaggressions, but I chose to ignore and move past because I was the new kid anyway – kind of had to make friends. And I also quickly saw the way that none of that was taken seriously. Other students would laugh when kids would make jokes about Asian students and their race or Black students or things like that. So, I kind of learned to put my head down, instead of trying to stand up, even though looking back I wish I did more. It’s one thing to talk about on an administrative side what we can do, but it’s another to talk about directly the students and how they’re impacted between one another as a community. Because there’s only so much you can do as a little eighth grader when someone comes up to you and makes a border wall joke. You’re like okay, cool, thanks, and you just kind of move on. I’m going to talk about something that I believe would help those kinds of situations later on.

But the second thing is more of an administrative issue that my family and I faced. So, coming into this school as a Mexican and French person, we had to do a bunch of paperwork, and part of that is filling out what languages we spoke at home. Fortunately, I’m lucky enough to speak French, Spanish, and English. And so we all checked that off. And within a few weeks of being at the school, we were pulled out of class for a short period of time, kind of asked questions to assess how we were doing, was there a language barrier, things like that. For me and my youngest sister Andrea, that was the end of that. We went back into class and moved on. But my middle sister – her name is Eloise – she will be taking her fifth ESL (English as a Second Language) test next week as a freshman. Just to clarify, Eloise has an A+ in English class, she’s super smart, super eloquent, very studious, very eager to learn. But she is brown. She’s way darker than my sister and I, and for some reason – I don’t believe it’s a coincidence – she’s the only one who has been stuck in this cycle for the past four and a half years. This has been brought to the attention of the administration on multiple, multiple occasions. My parents have been brought in, etc. and nothing has been done. So she’s going to take that test once again next week.

There’s issues at West Side, I believe, on an administrative level, on a cultural level, and that’s not to say that I’m ungrateful for the education that I receive and the opportunities that West Side provides, but there is a lot of work yet to do, and I believe part of the work that can be done to start at least is to form a cocoon of education surrounding anti-racism work and racism itself, or nurturing different cultures. For example, the initiative that has been taken by students in this past year has been led by myself and some other of my peers. We do a little club/organization/group called Anti-racist Community Education or ACE for short, where we engage in conversations about once a month with professors or researchers across the country. And we do a zoom call, we talk, we ask questions, ad we listen. And we try and learn as much as we can. This Sunday we just talked to a formerly incarcerated person who is now a research assistant at Columbia, who told us not only about his experience, but also his research. And it was really informative, and I believe that especially for young kids and kids in high school still and middle school, etc., the key to addressing this prejudice inside and these jokes and this culture is this sort of education on a larger scale. And I wish that within my years at West Side there had been assemblies, instead of concerning some random book that none of us read afterwards, were about anti-racist work or a novel about some important story in history that impacts people of color or students of color, etc. and not just gloss over racism in our history classes. I believe that would be the first step to engage students in a more diverse and educated way. That’s all I have to say. I’d love to hear what the school board has to say about that. That’s it. Thanks.

#### 1:29:48 Shireen Hafeez:

Hi everyone. Actually, it was more of a comment. I exist in an intersection of a lot of things. I’m the mother of a child that is deaf or hard of hearing, has been born and raised in this community. I’m also the founder of a national nonprofit outreach organization, which works with students with disabilities where more than 50% of our student population across the country are Black and Brown children. So they’re at the intersection of disability, as well as being a racial minority. So, on that I was really thinking about Chenell, because we have also faced a tremendous amount of pushback having a child with a disability and having a mother that has a very high bar in terms of my expectations of my child’s outcome in this life. We too felt the walls closing in at times and felt like maybe we should high tail it out of this community, because they just can’t handle if you’re not this type A child that’s just robotic and acing everything and not a Rhodes scholar by the time you’re 20, then you’re pretty much screwed in this community. And then you compound that microaggression with a child that requires more effort on the part of the school. We’ve been there, and we’ve done that.

My son is now a junior, but I can tell you that, because of my relentlessness and because of my role in being a prominent advocate in the state, that gave me a lot of leverage, where the school is very concerned about their reputation. That is something that they hold very dear. So, the idea of any negative press – so when they do bend, they may not be bending out of necessarily the good will of wanting to be inclusive and diverse. It’s more about that the last thing we want is bad press. We don’t want that, because ranking and all.

I would say that the good news is that the things that have been the accommodations that we have fought for and things along those lines, where my son received in terms of accessibility and other things, has paved the way for other future students that may have a disability. Of course, every disability is complex and has its own nuances, so I can only speak for myself and maybe other students who are deaf and hard of hearing, where the community or the administration is a little more seasoned and understanding. I think it takes conversations like this and forums and platforms like this that really elevate and is a catalyst for future things. Now we’ve engaged the West Lafayette school board and all of these things. So, you have a multitude of stakeholders as well as common citizens, and everybody is chiming in. And this is absolutely the right beginning. So just wanted to make that comment.

#### 1:34:22 Lily Shen:

Hi everyone, I’m Lily, and I’m a junior here at West Side. And Emelina just talked, and I also started Anti-racist Community Education of Greater Lafayette (ACE) alongside her. And I wanted to talk a little about my own personal experience, and some stuff that I think we should do going forward. Obviously, anyone that’s been through the West Side school system or been through West Lafayette itself knows that there’s an extremely large East Asian population here, so I personally have had a great experience and a great community at school because of this large community that I have. But I know for a fact that this is not the same for other BIPOC and that my experiences obviously can’t compare to theirs. But although my overall experience has been great here, it still definitely could’ve ben better. And I think an important part to talk about here is this systemic idea and the way this underlying racist mentality and worldview that we are exposed to at such a young age - the way that this affects the way that you view the world and the way you view yourself.

I remember in junior high I used to count the number of white people on my Snapchat best friends list. And I wanted to keep it above half, because I somehow thought being friends with more white people made me better in some way. And in the same vein, I stood by to so many racist comments made by my friends at the time, made by classmates, and I made many racist comments myself. Many insensitive comments that I thought weren’t a big deal. I didn’t want them to think I wasn’t chill; I didn’t want them to think that I couldn’t take a joke. Obviously I myself have dealt with my fair share of pulled back eyes, Chinese accents, dog eating jokes, but I made these sort of comments myself before I knew better, also against other races, which obviously I know now is wrong.

And that’s why I think we need to do a better job of educating our kids. Because I wasn’t taught to be racist. And we all tell our kids that racism is wrong. But the reality is that society tells them differently. And that in my experience created this internal conflict. Because in my head, even though I was taught that white people aren’t better and Black people aren’t worse than Asians, and deep down I don’t believe that because I don’t believe that any race is better, I still acted like they were. And I’m so confused why I acted that way and subconsciously still thought that way. And it wasn’t until I learned about how society tells us that white people are better and Black people are worse and learned that these racist lines of thinking are still so prevalent and still taught in our society that I was able to reverse this sort of thinking in my own mind and better myself. And I think this is the kind of education that we still need. And obviously again this is just my experience as an Asian American, which is an extremely large minority at our school, so this really can’t compare to the other experiences that I’ve talked about.

So, I would call for the diversity committee that is being put together – I would call for it to contain a current student representative that goes to our school. Or at least a sit-in to act as a sort of liaison between the student body and the administration, or at least to create some sort of transparency, which we’re obviously not seeing in this entire process. And obviously this would make sense, because the entire point of this committee is to help the students, so the students should at least have some say or know what’s going on. And I know that I personally and possibly other students in ACE, which is the club and organization that I started would be happy to do this if other BIPOC students are unavailable. And finally obviously I just want to thank WL CARE for all their hard work and for organizing this. Thanks guys.

#### 1:38:31 Annabel Prokopy:

Hey everyone. My name is Annabel, and I’m a current junior at West Lafayette High School. I’m also a member of West Lafayette Climate Strike. I just wanted to talk a little about intersectionality and how this just draws even more lines between – it really brings more attention to why we need to be taking action right now to increase diversity, to increase equity in our own community.

First of all, a big line that we can draw between the climate crisis and what we are talking about tonight is the importance of listening to the people who are directly impacted. For example, we’ve heard some really incredible stories tonight from people who have been directly affected by racial inequities in our own community. It’s really important that we uplift these voices, that we listen to them, especially if you’re like me, and you’re not directly affected by racial inequities and racial inequalities. And this is directly tied to the climate crisis, which we’re seeing across the world, across the globe, where we need to be listening to the people who are directly affected which again is tied to racial inequalities. Tied more into that, because this is what I focus on a lot with what I’ve been doing all through high school working for climate justice in Indiana. We see huge ties with environmental racism. And this is in Indiana; this is not something that’s far away. We see it in Gary, Indiana. I’ve talked to students who have spent years fighting against plants, against coal plants that are being built in their communities of primarily minorities, of primarily BIPOC students and BIPOC community members. This just brings up the point that we need to be tackling racial inequality.

We need to be uplifting voices who are directly impacted in every community. We need to be taking this community approach in every city and every community and every school board across Indiana, across the country, across the world. And this just makes what we’re doing here so much more important. We’re tackling this issue together as a community, and this will not only help to solve racial inequalities, but it will help to solve so much more. And it’s all interconnected, and I applaud you all for being here tonight. Thank you.

#### 1:41:45 Loren Weyrich:

Thank you. I know that I apparently push a lot of people’s buttons, even though I’m trying to be as respectful as possible. I’m really not okay with the way you responded to me Ben. I think you could have been a lot more respectful. The reason that I brought up the idea that it is emotionally driven is if you read the letter on wlcare.org, in the very first paragraph it said that it’s specifically in response to the anti-Black violence against George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Tony McDade, Iyanna Dior, and Breonna Taylor. So, because it is a response to what the media has been pushing as a narrative, that’s why I feel like it’s emotionally driven. So, I wanted to clarify that for you that I wasn’t saying that everybody in the group doesn’t think rationally. And I even said that myself included, when I am emotional, I am irrational.

So, the only way that you might understand my perspective is if you look at the ratio of media that is presented whenever there is a white on Black crime vs Black on white, Black on Black, or white on white. The only thing that is pushed right now in the mainstream narrative and in most mainstream media is white on Black. And then on the conservative sites, guess what they’re showing them? Videos of Black people going around hitting white people and hurting them and shooting them in the head to get them riled up and get them emotional. So, they’re pitting us against each other.

I don’t know if you’ve ever seen that experiment, if you have black ants and red ants in a jar, and you don’t do anything to it they live peacefully together. But whenever you have an outside force, and you shake it, they will kill each other. And that’s what our government and our media is doing to us right now. And that’s what I would like for people to at least investigate and look into, rather than completely dismissing it. That’s all. So I really appreciate everybody.

Ok. I see I just ruffled a lot of feathers. I apologize if you are offended, but that is my perspective. And I’ve had a much different perspective than most of you I’ve noticed. And using an analogy apparently is a really big no-no. So I guess black ants are synonymous with let’s say Democrats. And the red ants are synonymous with Republicans. And then you have strictly Democratic news sources and you have strictly Republican news sources, and they both feed off of their ideologies, emotions for ratings. Some good documentaries is *Social Dilemma*, especially Facebook is really good at putting us into little echo chambers. And also, there’s another really good documentary about the media bias and how it’s no longer facts, it’s all based on clicks and wanting more and more people to click on their site and to read their articles. So, if they can get an emotional rise out of you and get you to click on their link, they’re going to do it. So that’s where I see it as being emotionally driven.

#### 1:46:33 Arjun Ramani:

Thanks so much WL CARE for giving this community a chance to have this conversation. To my knowledge nothing like this has happened before. And I went to the West Lafayette school district for 12 years. And it’s very difficult to create a space to have these difficult conversations. Usually you want to focus on the good experiences you have, and quite frankly for a lot of students at West Side, they have a lot of great experiences, me included. But I just want to talk about three things: a little about my own educational experience, secondly about some things I’ve learned from my friends recently during this time, and finally about how the school can best move forward from here.

Firstly, I just wanted to echo something that came up earlier from Ben in just how pervasive this kind of issue we’re bringing up is in our school curriculum. And how much you almost have to learn on top of what you learn at school. When a lot of students are taught about the Civil War in middle school classrooms, it’s a common talking point that the Civil War wasn’t entirely about slavery; it was more about states’ rights. And when you learn about where does inequality between Black people and white people in the United States come from, you never hear about redlining and the inability for people of color to gain home loans throughout the 20th century. And these are topics that are central features of American history that I didn’t learn until I studied them in college. So, I just wanted to point out that it’s very pervasive, I think, some of these issues in our education system. And they point to very clear solutions as well, right, that means there are things we can get done. And I think this group has brought about the forum where we can talk about them.

The second thing is I wanted to just mention, as I said I had a really great experience at West Side. A lot of friends did as well. But unless you create a space to have difficult conversations, you oftentimes don’t know about them. So I think what this national conversation that is currently being made local here at West Side has shown a lot of us is that there can be things you never knew about your friends and people you went to school with and their experiences. And you won’t learn about them until you create the space for those conversations. So I think it’s important to keep on doing this. This shouldn’t be the last forum or discussion. The school board, the school corporation, WL CARE, and so forth should continue to collaborate and create these types of forums in the future. I hope the school board will do this in the future, because I think this time has been great, what WL CARE has done to create this space.

And finally, I think that my third point was about communication going forward. I think one of the main frustrations that I’ve seen from talking to people in the community about this whole process is that there oftentimes isn’t a place to talk. And that’s why Facebook has been used so much. But in order to create a space to talk, there has to be an effort made to create those communication channels where everyone has the ability to come to the table. And I think that’s what I would encourage to take away from this town hall is that these types of meetings can be really be productive, but this space needs to be continue to be made in the future.

#### 1:50:22 Carmen:

Hey guys how’s it going? I really want to thank everyone at WL CARE for setting this up. I did join a little bit late, so I didn’t hear everything, but I will say that to respond to Loren – I do think that we need to kind of focus on the core issue, right, which is, regardless of what triggered this conversation, it’s still a conversation that we need to have. As evident by the testimonies of people like myself, my sister, other folks that have been in the past in West Lafayette, as well as the current students that are at West Lafayette that can give testament to the experiences that they have. I want to make sure we don’t derail the conversation. Regardless of how you feel about the media, political parties, we can go on and on about that, but I think the crux of the issue here is there is a problem, there’s empirical evidence, there are testimonies from folks here, from current students, and that’s really where we need to focus our effort. Everything else is kind of just noise.

So that said I do want to lend my voice to the conversation. For those that haven’t read or seen my personal experience, I just kind of want to give a little excerpt here. So, to give you all context, my sister and I were students at West Lafayette from 2003-2007, so we’re millennials. But it’s interesting that even our experiences it seems that they’re still going on. We also came from a different state, shoutout to Emelina earlier, and it was very early on that we realized that being Latino it’s something that you shouldn’t be proud of, you should hide. And it’s something that day 1 it’s a lesson that I learned.

Case in point I had taken advanced mathematical courses in Wisconsin, and when I was looking to similarly take advanced courses in West Lafayette, I was automatically enrolled in a course lower than what I had done in Wisconsin. And my mother had caught it and once she caught it, we brought it up to the administration as to why this was done. And their response was “Well Latinos in general do worse in mathematics than whites,” and then that’s why they put me in a lower rank. But I think what’s interesting is it wasn’t until we had brought this up did we even get an offer to take an advanced placement test. That’s one instance.

And this sort of mentality that Latinos are less than in any number of subjects was repeated. My sister - she had ranked highly in a national mathematics competition, and we had requested that one of her math teachers give a recommendation for her. And as part of the recommendation, there was a piece where the teacher had to identify where, based on the teacher’s experience or the teacher’s knowledge, that student would rank. And this teacher, rather than giving her something on the scale that was given, decided to give my sister something less than even the scale that was provided for them, stating that she would not recommend my sister. And the irony again here is that my teacher would not recommend my sister, even though it was very clear that she was incredibly competent and ranked nationally or I think in the state.

So, it’s coming from the teachers, it’s coming from the administration, and obviously comments that you hear all the time as a student from other fellow students. I totally relate to what was said prior that we learn this. We learn it from other students, we learn it from our teachers, and we repeat these things. And it isn’t until much later that we realize how destructive it is to ourselves and others. That said, I do think that again, let’s focus on the core issues, don’t listen to the noise. We have plenty of experiences here, empirical evidence, and research that backs a lot of this stuff up. And I really hope that folks here listen to what people of color are talking about, their experiences, we can’t negate them. This is the truth of our lives. We experience it every day. And I hope that the conversation keeps going, the administrators listen, the parents listen, the students listen. And that’s all I really had to say. Thanks so much for setting this up. And for the students that are currently in school at West Lafayette - incredible work that you guys are doing. Super excited to see how this generation is really taking their education by the reins. Thanks guys.

#### 1:57:18 Rachel Witt:

Hi, I am Rachel Witt for those of you who don’t know me. I have been on the school board for 7 years. I have 6 children. The oldest two graduated actually from Lafayette Jefferson High School, and I have one alum who graduated four, four and a half years ago. And I have three current students – a 7th grader, a 9th grader, and an 11th grader at the junior/senior. I want to speak. And typically, President Alan Karpick would do this, but in this scenario he gave me the go ahead. So, I’m not as well-versed as he is, so try and be patient with me a little bit.

I am the board representative assigned to the DEI committee. And I want to thank you. All of the board members are here tonight. Many of our administrators are here tonight, are here listening. I want you to know that you’ve been heard. You’ve been heard; this conversation has been going on for a very long time. And it’s going to continue to go on for a very long time, because it’s not a simple issue, and it’s also a really important one. There are a great many things, no doubt, that we do in West Lafayette school corporation that are remarkable, that are very, very unique to our community and our schools and that should be applauded.

There’s also always room for improvement. There’s always things that we need to do better. And it’s become clear that issues of race are a priority. And that is why our superintendent Dr. Killion started this DEI committee. It’s not been simple, thanks to a pandemic. But we are working through that process. While I understand there’s some frustration at times about how quickly we’re doing that or the pacing we’re doing that, I think it’s important to say that we’re doing it at a pace where we can do it right. This is not going to be a 6-week, let’s get it done kind of thing. It’s going to be a long and focused initiative. And it’s important that it be handled in that way. It’s important that it be handled with real data and real information and real feedback from students and alumni and teachers and administrators and professionals, who can guide us through this process. I’m really thrilled and incredibly supportive and enthusiastic about our co-chairs Margaret Psarros and Laura Falk, as well as our facilitator. Dr. Carolyn Johnson is phenomenal leadership and source of knowledge in this process. But you may not see it play out in the media; you may not see it play out in superficial ways. You’re hopefully going to see it come out in some real results, and that’s what we’re working towards.

So, I just want to be clear in expressing appreciation for this talk, this candor, this willingness to put out so much effort. Ila and Daniel and Claire earlier and I had spent a lot of time on Zoom together. They may be sick of me at this point. And also Kathy Parker has been involved in those conversations – thank you to Kathy, I see you on here tonight as well. And a lot of feedback that we get. We’ve received a lot of feedback from our community in general, and I love that we’re having this important conversation. I hope that you will be supportive of that long conversation continuing to really make some important changes in our schools. Thank you again for your time and your evening and your feedback. We are always willing to hear from you. And if you have any questions, you are best suited to go to the corporation website and the school board link. There is a tab and the information available where you can come and give feedback. I think that’s in development – it may not be live yet – but it will be live, and there will be updates there as well. That allows everyone to reach the content, not just those who happen to be on Facebook or whatever social medias there. It needs to be universally available to everyone, and that is why it is focused on our web page. Again, thank you, have a wonderful night. I appreciate the time and the availability to talk tonight Ila.

#### 2:01:58 Ila Chaubey:

Thanks Rachel. We again want to thank the rest of the board, as well as the representatives from the diversity committee for coming. We want to thank all of you, especially since I know we ran over a little bit tonight. A particular thanks to everybody who was brave enough to speak, particularly the Black folks and other people of color. I know that can be really difficult, particularly in a room full of people you haven’t met before, you don’t know. So, we really, really appreciate the candor and bravery. Just a quick summary on WL CARE – if you haven’t read our letter or our story compilation, you can do so on our website: wlcare.org. It’s really important to Daniel and I and the rest of the admins in WL CARE that it’s constantly an ongoing conversation, and that we’re always representing everyone’s views when we do email the school board and before when we met with them. So I’m going to go ahead and put my personal email and phone number. Feel free to text me, email me, whenever. Similarly, we have a public email for WL CARE on our website. Feel free to contact us whenever. We will schedule meetings every day of the week. But once again, thank you so much everyone for taking the time. We really, really appreciate it - everyone for speaking, for listening, for keeping it respectful. Have a great rest of your night everybody.