



# **YOUTH CIVIC ENGAGEMENT FOR HEALTH EQUITY & COMMUNITY SAFETY**

**HOW FUNDERS CAN EMBRACE THE POWER OF YOUNG PEOPLE  
TO ADVANCE HEALTHIER, SAFER COMMUNITIES FOR ALL**

**PACE webinar | Jme McLean, MCP, MPH, Principal | March 20, 2019**

**Mesu Strategies, LLC** is a research and strategy firm committed to realizing a more just and inclusive society. We partner with leaders in philanthropy, agencies and neighborhoods to create healthier, more sustainable communities for all.





"Visions of a Healthy Community" youth mural, Groundswell NYC © 2012



What is the value of youth civic engagement for health equity and community safety?

What are the fundamentals of success – what must funders know about successful youth civic engagement?

How can funders unlock their full potential to embrace the power of young people to lead the way toward health equity and community safety?



# Definitions

HEALTH EQUITY – The condition that will be achieved across populations when race, place, nationality, age, gender identity, and income no longer predict health outcomes.

COMMUNITY SAFETY – The concept of safety, or protection from harm, is complex, nuanced and closely related to health. Safety has implications at the individual and community levels.



# Definitions

YOUTH CIVIC ENGAGEMENT – A range of activities focused on removing barriers and building the skills of multiple groups to enable youth to participate in efforts. The term has many meanings and the differences among them are important.



Youth mural in Greenville, Mississippi © 2007 Dave Lowenstein

# Why youth civic engagement for health & safety?

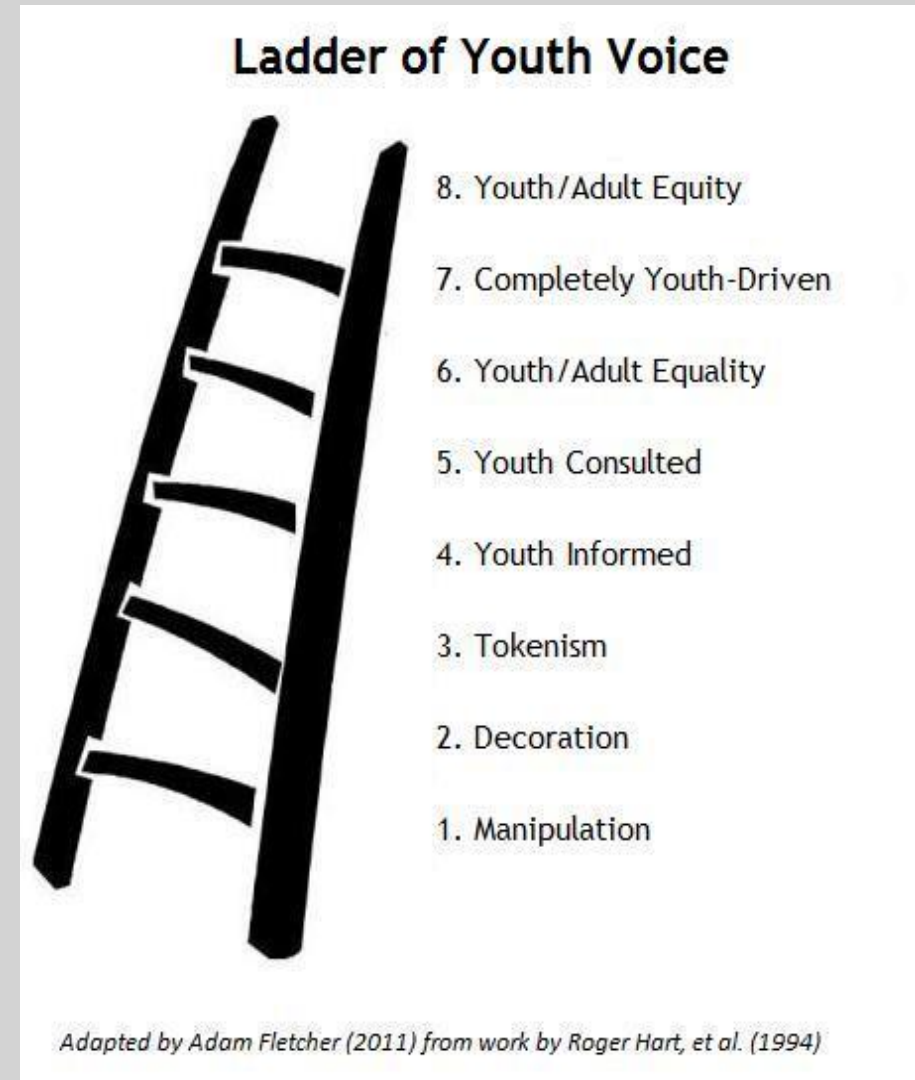
- Problem and Goal Definition
- Persuasive Power
- Solution Identification
- Direct Benefits to Health Equity and Community Safety
- Systems Changes Influencing Health Equity and Community Safety



Young leaders and former foster care youth testifying before legislators. Kansas Appleseed © 2018

# Youth civic engagement: *what does it take?*

- TRUST: Authentic appreciation for what youth have to offer, and recognition that young people must trust the process and the people with whom they engage.
- EMPOWERMENT: Genuine and meaningful opportunities for influence and impact at all stages of a process



# Youth civic engagement: *what does it take?*

- CARE: Providing young people with safe, supportive environments to learn, grow and act.



## THEORY OF LIBERATION

RYSE Theory of Liberation © 2018



# Youth civic engagement: *what does it take?*

- LEARNING FOR ALL: While many youth-oriented programs include efforts to build leadership and capacity of youth, efforts must also help to build the skills and capacities of adults.
- SUPPORTING A BROAD INFRASTRUCTURE FOR CHANGE: Success involves more than leadership development and organizing activities among youth; a healthy and robust system for advocacy is essential for meaningful youth participation.

# What can funders do?



GRANTMAKERS



COMMUNITY  
ANCHORS



PARTNERS  
TO YOUTH



CONNECTORS &  
CONVENERS

# What can funders do?



GRANTMAKERS

## BE INTENTIONAL ABOUT...

- GRANTEE SELECTION & SUPPORT
- MULTI-YEAR INVESTMENTS
- CORE SUPPORT
- PARTNERSHIPS FOR POOLED FUNDING



COMMUNITY  
ANCHORS



PARTNERS  
TO YOUTH



CONNECTORS &  
CONVENERS

# What can funders do?



GRANTMAKERS

- ACT AS ADVOCATES & AMPLIFIERS OF YOUTH PRIORITIES
- GAIN THE ATTENTION OF DECISION-MAKERS



COMMUNITY  
ANCHORS



PARTNERS  
TO YOUTH



CONNECTORS &  
CONVENERS

# What can funders do?



GRANTMAKERS

- BRING TOGETHER EXPERTS ACROSS COMMUNITIES, FIELDS AND SECTORS
- FOSTER NEW PARTNERSHIPS AND INNOVATIONS TO ACCELERATE YOUTH INFLUENCE



COMMUNITY  
ANCHORS



PARTNERS  
TO YOUTH



CONNECTORS &  
CONVENERS

# What can funders do?



GRANTMAKERS

- LEVERAGE RESOURCES AND RELATIONSHIPS TO HELP SHIFT NORMS IN COMMUNITIES



COMMUNITY  
ANCHORS



PARTNERS  
TO YOUTH



CONNECTORS &  
CONVENERS



Youth engaged with Meraki Community Uplift pose for a photo on the court. Kirsten Allen © 2018

**Thank you!**  
Jme McLean | [jme@mesustrategies.com](mailto:jme@mesustrategies.com)

