

p4 2018 Opening Remarks
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This happened recently. This is Pittsburgh artist Alisha Wormsley's work, "There are black people in the future." As great art often does, it provoked a huge reaction. Because it was in East Liberty, it made a powerful statement about forces of gentrification, displacement, and cultural erasure. It seemed to ask—who is this community for?

The absurd decision to take it down illustrated white America's huge discomfort with race. I can just imagine the "All Lives Matter" crowd grumbling, "What about white people? Is she saying there won't be white people?" And of course that's not what she's saying, but you just know it happened. Actually, you don't need to guess, you can check online.

Which tells you something about how tribal and divided we've become. Incidentally, because now the forces of oppression routinely co-opt progressive language to justify their heinous views, let me say this: it is emphatically NOT tribal for an oppressed minority or gender or group to protest their oppression and claim their absolute right to full and equal participation in American democracy and society. Black Lives Matter, Me Too, Times Up, are a cry for universal freedom, not special privilege, and any attempt to silence these voices in the name of tolerance is a disgusting and self-serving sham.

Somewhat wonderfully, Ms. Wormsley says she had none of this in mind. She describes herself as a sci-fi nerd who just wondered where the black people were in stories about the future. Her work basically asked, Who is the future for?

I celebrate this work because of all of that, but mostly because for me it so perfectly captures the core concept at the heart of p4, which is to be intentional about the city and the future we are creating, especially in terms of who it is for.

I love the fact that tomorrow outside this conference a protest is planned, I think even by some of you, against Amazon HQ2 coming to town. We may agree or disagree on elements of that, but wherever you stand on it, we should all want to live in a community where these questions are being actively debated, discussed, and planned for—and I just want to say to everyone who feels passionately about that, whether we agree or not on the particulars, thank you.

P4 merely gives us a framework for how to think about all of this, to be truly thoughtful – in a way virtually no American community ever has been – about what we are wishing into being. We started this 3 years ago, so what have we learned, thanks primarily to all of you, both inside and outside of this process?

We've learned that our original premise was even more correct than we assumed. The planet is indeed urbanizing, and Pittsburgh is indeed benefiting from those global trends. There'll be 10 billion people on the planet by 2050, about 6.6 billion in cities. We need cities to reinvent themselves in a way that feeds human aspiration and doesn't cause widespread misery along with the poisoning of our climate, seas, air, water, and public health.

We are learning that Pittsburgh's outstanding research universities, deep sense of place, walkable communities, and cultural and natural amenities really are a magnet for entrepreneurs, innovation-based companies, and creative people of all types, from restaurateurs to bloggers. We have the goods and the people to create a future-oriented economy, but only if we value them.

We have also learned the perils of taking that for granted. We've learned that air quality really does matter, that water quality really is important, that public health really counts for something. For our health, obviously, and we should just be able to stop there, end of sentence, full stop. But in America we always have to justify things in terms of money and economy.

So, fine, we have also learned that this shiny economic future collapses if we can't get our environmental act together. How do we imagine that stories likening our water system to Flint or our air quality to the worst in the country, land on people and companies that might want to locate here? How do we imagine they land on us here? This is not a PR problem – it is a failure of public will, of imagination and of effort. It is a fixable problem—so for God's sake, let's fix it.

We have learned that equity really counts. That when we are mindless about displacing people, or oblivious to how growth affects neighbors, or indifferent to how prosperity gets shared, or mindless about who wins and who loses from development, or willfully ignorant about how we are poisoning the homes and neighborhoods of the least advantaged worst of all, we sow the seeds for present suffering and future failure. It should be enough to say this is about fairness, but it rarely is. So let's acknowledge what we are learning from the widening and increasingly obscene wealth disparity around the globe, that unfettered capitalism stripped off social value and free of policy constraint is a formula for social, political and economic decline.

We've learned that quality of life and how we design our cities and technologies, and who we design them for, matters. The companies that are coming here or staying and growing here are doing it because of investments we have made in art, culture, parks and public space, in inspiring design and walkable neighborhoods, in real places that benefit people first. To take one small example, Mayor Peduto took a boatload of heat for his commitment to bike lanes, but bike lanes are one small symbol of a broader commitment to sustainability and to being a city for the young and the not so young.

We are learning how right we were in our concern over the connection between cities and climate change. We are baking our planet faster than we had anticipated and cities need desperately to offer new paths forward, and the ones who do will seize the future. Faced in this country with the complete collapse of a hostile federal government on this and so many other critical policy fronts, we need to become the engines of innovation and change. The fight for our climate future starts right here.

We have learned what we apparently keep needing to learn and relearn in this country, that racism and sexism and all manner of other-ism are alive and well in America and in Pittsburgh, and that they hurt us all. We must stand against these forces with all the vigilance and force in our power. But more than that, we have to stand FOR something, which we describe with banal words like inclusion and diversity when what we really need is love. We need to love each other enough to make room for everyone. Regions seen as hostile to others because of their religion, the color of their skin, their gender or gender orientation, their sexual orientation, where they came from, their immigration status—these regions may become safe havens for hate, but they will fail.

Look, we have learned and are learning so much. But basically what we have learned is that this is our moment to do something right in Pittsburgh that no American city has gotten right before—to use this period of momentum to strive to become a community that embraces all its people, that respects its environment and planet, that protects its sacred places and heritage and identity and connections with history and the land, and that understands its obligation to perform at a high standard of excellence for all. How do we make that our future city?

When we launched this process, we acknowledged that we were already operating in a moment in time, a brief window of opportunity when a new momentum was making change possible but it was not already too late to chart a course to where we really wanted to go. That moment is further along now, and we cannot act as though the window will remain open forever.

Bob Dylan, who even I can quote now because he's a Nobel Prize winner, once sang, "He who's not being born is busy dying." What we've tried to do in this conference is to array some voices who can help us think about what we want to be born to now. And then it will be up to us, collectively and individually, to get busy giving birth to something new. What will it be?

So let's get started. Mayor Bill Peduto...