

Civic Leader Michael Marsicano Talks Proximity in Philanthropy, 'Browning of America' in Bridge Builder Conversations

The soon-to-retire president and CEO of Foundation For The Carolinas looks back on what's been done to challenge the status quo—and what's still needed.

CHARLOTTE, NC, USA, March 24, 2022

/EINPresswire.com/ -- Michael Marsicano, president and CEO of Foundation For The Carolinas, joins Charlotte community leader David “Dae-Lee” Arrington for the continuation of [Bridge Builder Conversations](#), [now available on YouTube](#), to discuss the future of philanthropic work in Charlotte, as well as the need to challenge the status quo as the cultural makeup of the city and nation evolve.



Michael Marsicano, president and CEO of Foundation For The Carolinas, appears in episode six of Bridge Builder Conversations. (Photo by Harris Jeter)

Approaching his 2023 retirement, Marsicano’s talk with Dae-Lee is challenging, insightful and reflective, much like other Bridge Builder Conversations, which launched in January. This is part six of the nine-part video series.

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Michael Marsicano

“Vulnerability can sometimes be lost among leaders, as there is pressure to perform and be ‘right,’ Dae-Lee said. “Michael’s willingness to be honest about areas for growth, continued learning and the need for collaboration with

those most proximate to communities in an effort to more holistically serve was very refreshing.”

Marsicano, who is originally from Long Island, New York, moved to Charlotte in 1989, first leading

the Arts & Science Council, then taking the reins at Foundation For The Carolinas (FFTC) in 1999. Today, FFTC is the nation's sixth largest community foundation with about \$4 billion in assets; it was ranked 35th when Marsicano began.

A civic leader widely recognized for his innovation and influence in the nonprofit sector, Marsicano opens up during Bridge Builder Conversations about the difficult but necessary decisions he made to promote social change throughout his career, such as withholding money from arts organizations that associated with segregated country clubs and requiring diverse boards among the nonprofits FFTC funded.

"We put an irritant in the social fabric of all of that," he said, referring to discriminatory practices still evident when he arrived in Charlotte.

Marsicano also discusses what's now been dubbed "the browning of America" and how this could force systemic change in Charlotte and beyond regarding diversity and equity.

"In 2043, the United States will be majority minority," Marsicano explained, later adding that, "The city of Charlotte is 41 percent white, non-Hispanic. ... So, we already have flipped to what the country will be in 2043.

"I'm going to be a minority by 2043," he continued. "Will systems finally change when that happens?"

He goes on to admit he was "never not the boss." and acknowledges how privilege and proximity afforded him opportunities others didn't have—something he hopes other white leaders will intentionally evaluate in their own lives.



Michael Marsicano and David "Dae-Lee" Arrington.
(Photo by Harris Jeter)



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(Photo courtesy: Harris Jeter)

"I might have thought at one time that I was well-equipped, but I think I've had some recent experiences that suggest I'm not as well-equipped as I should be. And that's just an honest answer," he told Dae-Lee. "I know all the nonprofits that are serving the (BIPOC) populations that we're talking about, but I don't know how much I really know those populations."

Since early January, Dae-Lee has used the Bridge Builder Conversations video series to inspire dialogue and action among leaders, no matter their background, to build bridges and form relationships across differences like race and socioeconomic status.

Visit the Bridge Builder Conversations YouTube channel to watch Michael Marsicano's full episode and others.

BRIDGE BUILDER CONVERSATIONS LINEUP

Available to [Watch Now](#):

- Hugh McColl, former chairman and CEO of Bank of America
- Myloan Dinh, multidisciplinary artist and former refugee
- Kyle Mosher, multidisciplinary artist featured by Forbes, The New York Times, HBO and others
- Maria Howell, accomplished actress and singer
- Veronica Calderon, senior vice president of diversity, inclusion & equity at Truliant
- Michael Marsicano, president and CEO of Foundation For The Carolinas

Upcoming:

- April 7 – Dennis Reed, Jr, award-winning songwriter, recording artist and CEO of Inspire the Fire
- April 21 – Molly Shaw, former president and CEO of Communities In Schools of Charlotte-Mecklenburg
- May 5 – Harvey B. Gantt, first African American elected as mayor in Charlotte

ABOUT BRIDGE BUILDER CONVERSATIONS

Bridge Builder Conversations is a nine-part, unscripted video series featuring various leaders and artists sharing their personal journey and discussing the opportunities and challenges of building bridges across difference within their industries.

The series debuted Jan. 13 with a meaningful race talk with former Bank of America CEO Hugh McColl. The series, sponsored by Bank of America, HUE HOUSE, Urban Outfitters and Mansion, can be viewed on the Bridge Builder YouTube channel.

Bridge Builder Conversations is a creative resource from Bridge Builder Consulting™, an innovative, relationship-centered consulting agency, engaging organizations and their leaders as they navigate Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) work. Dae-Lee's Bridge Builder Motivational Journal is now available, as well as the Bridge Builder Patreon and Bridge Builder Motivations podcast on all podcast platforms including Apple Podcasts and Spotify.

Bridge Builder Conversations release bi-weekly through May 5. Details for the series can be found at WeBridgeBuild.com/BBC.

ABOUT DAVID 'DAE-LEE' ARRINGTON

David "Dae-Lee" Arrington is a Norfolk, Va., native who now calls Charlotte, N.C., home. Summarizing his journey "from the corner to the cul-de-sac," Dae-Lee experienced a 180-degree racial, cultural and socioeconomic shift that changed his life and inspired his work today to bridge divides that keep us from experiencing our collective best.

Dae-Lee is a 40 Under 40 Business Journal Winner, GRAMMY-nominated producer, recording artist, co-owner of Black-owned creative agency HUE HOUSE, founding member of Fair Play Music Equity Initiative and serves on many boards and community organization committees.

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