

Bridge Builder Conversations: Harvey Gantt Shares His Personal Journey Breaking Racial Barriers

"You can make change. You don't have to sit back and wait for things to happen; you can do things," Gantt says on the finale of the nine-part video series.

CHARLOTTE, NC, UNITED STATES, May 5, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Civil rights icon Harvey Gantt joins Charlotte community leader David "Dae-Lee" Arrington for the final episode of Bridge Builder Conversations, [now available on YouTube](#), to discuss his journey breaking racial barriers, key influences throughout his life and the progress of race relations in the United States.

As the first African American to enroll at Clemson University and later, be elected as mayor of Charlotte, Gantt has found himself at the center of pivotal moments in civil rights history. Though he never sought the spotlight, he says he's always loved a good challenge and believed in the power to enact change and find common ground.

"I always believed that people are people at heart, and if they can get past the cultural silos [and] attitudes, you can change people's hearts, and they can change me too," Gantt told Dae-Lee, recalling his time at Clemson.



Cultural leader Harvey B. Gantt reflects during his time on Bridge Builder Conversations. (Photo courtesy: Harris Jeter)



Bridge Builder Conversations host David "Dae-Lee" Arrington talks with Harvey Gantt.

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

“Mr. Gantt is such a humble giant! For him to be the first at a number of monumental things as a Black man, navigate through racial opposition, but to still have hope inspires me as I continue to push forward in my vision of encouraging authentic relationships across difference through Bridge Builder Conversations,” Dae-Lee said.

During the last of nine episodes, Gantt, who grew up in Charleston, South Carolina, shares stories from his childhood, living in public housing (which he emphasizes was a positive experience) and helping his father build the family’s first home.

“The values that were planted in me were that, ‘You’re here, but you’re not going to stay here,’” he explained. “I had parents who didn’t teach me ... segregation is going to be a hindrance to where you can go.

“Mom and dad believed the promise of America, while it wasn’t real for them, it could be made more real for us.”

Gantt also talks about the day the Brown v. Board of Education decision was made to desegregate schools and how his parents began to open up about racism.

“I tried to read every newspaper and everything that mentioned segregation and interracial. I felt, ‘This may be our ticket to making the promise of this great country real for us. You’ve just got to knock the door down,’” Gantt said.

“The disappointment was, this was 1954. We were of the naive belief ... that these things were going to happen right away.

“They fought it tooth and nail.”

Visit the [Bridge Builder Conversations YouTube channel](#) to watch Harvey Gantt’s full episode and others:

Ep. 1: Hugh McColl, former chairman and CEO of Bank of America

Ep. 2: Myloan Dinh, multidisciplinary artist and former refugee

Ep. 3: Kyle Mosher, multidisciplinary artist featured by Forbes, The New York Times, HBO and others

Ep. 4: Maria Howell, accomplished actress and singer

Ep. 5: Veronica Calderon, senior vice president of diversity, inclusion & equity at Truliant

Ep. 6: March 24 – Michael Marsicano, president and CEO of Foundation For The Carolinas

Ep. 7: Dennis Reed, Jr, award-winning songwriter, recording artist and CEO of Inspire the Fire

Ep. 8: Molly Shaw, former president and CEO of Communities In Schools of Charlotte-Mecklenburg

Ep. 9: 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.

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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