**Transcript**:
Conversations on Economic Inclusion
The Effects of Toxic Stress on Youth and the Economy
Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland

**Participants:**
Dr. Faye Gary
Case Western Reserve University

**Host:**
Dionissi Aliprantis
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Dionissi Aliprantis:
Hi, I'm Dionissi Aliprantis, I'm the director of the Program on Economic Inclusion at the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland. And today is part one on conversation about approaches to youth development to overcome toxic stress. Our guest is Dr. Faye Gary from Case Western Reserve University. Now Dr. Gary, I guess I'll call you Faye, but you know I think of you as Dr. Gary.

Dr. Faye Gary:
Please call me Faye.

Dionissi Aliprantis:
Okay. Now Faye, so you are the Medical Mutual of Ohio Kent W. Clapp Chair and Professor of Nursing at the Frances Payne Bolton School of Nursing at Case Western Reserve University. There you are also professor in the department of psychiatry in the medical school, and recently you were awarded Case Western's highest honor, the title of distinguished university professor.

Dionissi Aliprantis:
So you've worked with ministries of health and nursing and agricultural groups on six continents. You've published more than a hundred refereed articles. You've edited textbooks. You've chaired and served on over a hundred theses and dissertation committees. You've achieved the highest academic ranking at two universities, University of Florida, and Case Western Reserve university. You served on advisory committees at the National Institutes of Health, the National Institute of Rural Health, the National Institute of Mental Health, the National Institute of Minority Health and Disparities, where you are elected as chair. And you've also served on the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's National Advisory Committee.

Dionissi Aliprantis:
Now, Dr. Gary, Faye, I just gave you a little bit of an introduction. It's quite an introduction. You've done a lot. I'm wondering if you might introduce yourself to our audience as well just to start. And then I think, also, I'm interested in hearing about your life story. So your work is very incredible. I'm excited to hear about your work, but I think you also have a really compelling kind of life story, and I'm wondering if you could tell us about that. All these accomplishments, all these contributions to medicine and to our society, I don't think it was easy for you to get there so I'm hoping you can tell us a little bit about that.

Dr. Faye Gary:
Sure. It's my pleasure. First of all, I want to thank you for inviting me. I consider this an honor, and the first time I've ever had any association with the Federal Reserve. So this is a special kind of event for me, and thank you so very much.

Dr. Faye Gary:
I grew up in the rural south. I grew up in Florida primarily, and spent some time in Georgia. And I had a rural perspective, which I think was very helpful for me. We did not have any close neighbors. My mother and father, my father was a farmer. My mother got her a college degree when I was in about eighth grade. But long time ago in the South, if you passed some kind of examination after eighth or 10th grade, you could become a teacher. My mother was the seventh of 13 children, and I'm convinced to now that all of them were gifted in some way.

Dr. Faye Gary:
My father was a hardworking farmer. And we lived with my grandfather, who was a phenomenal man. He died when I was about 10 years of age, but he taught me and my oldest sister how to read. He was our babysitter. We didn't have babysitters. We stayed home with Papa. We would get on Papa's horse, and the horse's name was Ida. I would be in the back and my sister Junie would be in the front and we would go across the farm, check the fence, check the cows, check the pigs, and go and see his neighbors and be back.

Dr. Faye Gary:
But at all times we tended to be in the midst of the family activities. Now I must say that during my era, there was no television, no telephone, and certainly no internet. So the interactions and communications were with families and neighbors, and I must say with the animals. Animals played a dominant part in our lives because that's the way we made our living. That's how we generated our food.

Dr. Faye Gary:
I understood the seasons by what was being planted and what was being harvested. So I lived very close to nature and I understood climate and climate change long before it became in the vocabularies of other people. I think my father checked the weather by looking up at the sky and saying a prayer just about every morning. So we were very cognizant about the sun, the rain, the dew, the fog, the hurricanes, et cetera, et cetera. Always a great appreciation for nature because we knew that the seeds would sprout if the stars aligned. They did align quite often, and we were always appreciative of nature and of the gifts that we were given. My grandfather would say that we all were given gifts that we did not deserve, but it was through mercy and grace that we received these gifts.

Dr. Faye Gary:
I feel the same way now. It's mercy and grace that I've been able to accomplish anything. I'm awfully grateful to many, many people for those opportunities. I'm the second of five siblings. I have three other sisters, all of whom have doctorate degrees. My oldest sister was the Dean of the School of Social Work at Boston College for 24 years. And then it's me. And then my sister, Dr. Gladys Gary Vaughn is at the Department of Agriculture as a senior administrator. And my sister Dr. Ali Christian is a professor at Southern University in Baton Rouge.

Dr. Faye Gary:

We have one brother. He's number five, and he's a full-time farmer on our farm in Ocala. We are fortunate to still have our farm, even though that has not been an easy feat. As you know, most Black people lost their lands. Right after the Native Americans lost their land then the next group was African Americans or people of African descent for a variety of reasons, some the same and some different reasons. So that's who I am.

Dionissi Aliprantis:
Okay. Wonderful. Can you tell us, I guess, when you left Florida? So I think you first left when you went to Chicago, is that correct? And can you tell us about what you were doing in Chicago and your experience there?

Dr. Faye Gary:
Yes. Well, I'm a graduate of Florida A&M University, which is in Tallahassee. And interestingly, Florida A&M is about five or six blocks from Florida State University. You might know Florida State University as the Seminoles. But we were not allowed on their campus. Florida A&M University was Florida's university for its Black citizens, and that's how our administration was sometimes introduced to the general public.

Dr. Faye Gary:
So all of my college classmates, all of the faculty, staff, et cetera, were Black. And we were not allowed to go uptown in Tallahassee in a group. We had to go two people, not more than three people. A critical mass was very threatening to the powers-that-be in Florida at that time, and perhaps to a lesser degree, or more subtle, even now.

Dr. Faye Gary:
So we managed to transverse all of that. We had a Black hospital, Florida A&M University Hospital, and all of the patients there were Black. All of the nurses were Black. We had one or two physicians who would come there to care for Black patients on a certain day. All total, there must have been five or six physicians who were associated with the hospital. Now I make that point because I graduated from nursing school, not ever having touched a white patient, never.

Dr. Faye Gary:
So before I went to Chicago, I went to Syracuse, New York because I couldn't get a job in Florida, except that Florida A&M had a job opening perhaps, and I worked at a TB hospital for a brief period of time. They were beginning to close TB hospitals because it was becoming an outpatient phenomenon. So when I got to Syracuse, I was asked if I would work in the intensive care unit. All of the patients were white. All of the nurses were white. All of the doctors were white. And then I walked into this room and I said to myself, "My God, I don't know what to do. I've never cared for a white patient. What am I to do?" And my mother in her wisdom would say, "If you don't know, Faye baby, just keep your mouth shut. Nobody needs to know that you don't know."

Dr. Faye Gary:
So my mother's words echoed. I kept my mouth shut, and I observed, and I said, "Oh my goodness, they take the blood pressures the same way. My goodness of life, the science and symptoms for X disease are the same. You cough and deep breathe and you record your clinical data the same way. I can't believe this. What were they depriving us from? What was the intent of having all of this segregation back

home?" So after about a week or two, I could take care of white patients, and no one ever knew my struggle. No one ever knew my fear and my struggle. I kept my mouth shut.

Dr. Faye Gary:
And so after I left Syracuse, I came back home, couldn't find a job. And I could not get accepted into white schools in the south. So I got on the Greyhound bus and I went to Chicago and I went to a wonderful place called St. Xavier College. It's now a university. And at the time I was there it was all women's Irish Catholic college. I was frightened to death. I had worked at the VA in Chicago, and that's how I learned about it, but I was frightened to death. And I got there and I was welcomed. I was told that I couldn't have a roommate because I need to study. The Dean assigned me a carrel, and she gave me my marching orders. She told me "Here you can be as successful as anyone else. All you need to do is let us know how we can help you." And for some strange reason, I believed her.

Dr. Faye Gary:
St. Xavier University was a metamorphosis in my life in terms how I relate to people, the extent to which I could trust and care for people, which had never been an experience that I'd had with white people, regardless of whom they were. I also learned that my thinking and my potential was as good as anybody else's. I'd never gotten that affirmation. We were always told that we were second class and we could never do, we could never be, et cetera, et cetera.

Dr. Faye Gary:
We read about it. The kinds of snares that came at us. You have to remember that in Ocala we could not go to the library. I drank colored water. We could not go to the toilet. So we always had a little pot in the car. That was the kind of experience that I had. So to be in a place where you were reaffirming, despite the color of your skin and your historical perspective, was very, very reaffirming to me.

Dr. Faye Gary:
Now, I must say to you that it was not always easy because one of my instructors told me that she read my clinical paper and she got a headache. She got dizzy my sentences were so long. And I saw that as a threat. I thought she didn't want me there. And her response to me was just overwhelming. She said, "If you'd just let me help you. All I want to do is help you. Please let me help you. It's not an affront. It's that I see potential, and I want to help you maximize it." And this same lady, I stayed in her apartment while she was away for surgery in Washington. I stayed in her condo on Lake Michigan in this lovely place and finished my thesis. I was the first student to graduate, the first one to publish a paper, and the first one to get a doctorate out of my class.

Dionissi Aliprantis:
It's a pretty incredible story. It's funny sometimes how first appearances or first impressions can be a little deceiving. I was going to ask you about that experience. You know, I'm just curious when you talk about your childhood and all the messages you were receiving about the fact that you couldn't perform at the same level. How much time and how much affirmation did it take for you to really kind of deep down... I think at some point it's inevitable that you kind of question yourself, right?... How much affirmation did it take and how much almost just kind experience of being in those contexts did it take for you to really deep down understand that you could perform at that same level in a very deep way?

Dr. Faye Gary:

Well, I could answer that on two levels. At my high school, we were affirmed and our teachers would tell us that we were as good as anybody else, what was missing was our opportunity. And when I got to FAMU, when everybody was Black, I met some students that I would consider to be geniuses. They were genius musicians, genius thinkers, genius scientists, genius dancers, genius everything. And so all of us collectively knew that at some level, this was a sham. Because genius is genius and it's distributed, I think, equally across the world. And that's what we were told, but we had no way to test it out because we were in this Black bubble.

Dr. Faye Gary:
So when I got to St. Xavier, well, when I got to Syracuse, I learned that what I'd learned in nursing school with four or five doctors, and two or three or four nurses, and total census in the hospital of 50. But I had learned the basics of what it takes to be a nurse and I passed the state board exam. That we had gone farther with much less than our white counterparts. And so I think we took some pride in that, that we'd gone farther with far less resources than our white counterparts.

Dr. Faye Gary:
Now we didn't know how to articulate that at the time, but I think that was a driver for us. So when I got to St. Xavier, I had to test out, unconsciously test out, all of these belief systems that had been stored in me. But in one of my classes where I was supposed to talk a seminar, I didn't open my mouth for the entire semester. I took copious notes and my head was always down. And believe it or not, no one ever called on me. No one ever said, " Faye, what do you think?" My teacher never called on me, and I have concluded that they must have known that I was petrified.

Dr. Faye Gary:
I made all A's, got on the Greyhound bus and came home to Florida. Went back on the Greyhound bus, and I was late there because of a snowstorm in Bowling Green, I think. Bowling Green, Indiana, Bowling Green, Kentucky. I think there are two Bowling Greens. I don't know which one I was in. And I slept on the floor at the place, but managed to get up. But at the meantime, my professor had called my home in Florida to find out where I was, and that's when I knew they really cared about me. I got back to school with all of my A's, with my sense that they cared about me, and I maxed everything and never stop talking yet.

Dionissi Aliprantis:
Well, something that I think sounds really important from your story is this sense of creating places where, even though maybe the outside world isn't so supportive in some of these places, we can create supportive environments for kids to grow up.

Dr. Faye Gary:
Absolutely. And they work every time. And they are transferable from one system to the other.

Dionissi Aliprantis:
So okay, kind of continuing on with your story. After that you spent some time on the west coast in California.

Dr. Faye Gary:
I did.

Dionissi Aliprantis:
Could you tell us about the work you were doing there?

Dr. Faye Gary:
Yes. I got a job. I was working at the VA in Palo Alto and I liked that. But I was recruited away quickly to go and work in Chinatown North Beach, as the coordinator for a health program that was connected to the war on poverty and the public health department. I took that job in Chinatown North Beach so I could be further exposed to life conditions that other people have who were not Black, who had had a different historical experience, but the outcomes were similar. And that was a lot of poor Chinese immigrants. I worked with poor, poor Filipinos and very poor Italians who lived in the North Beach area. A lot of whites who'd come from the south who lived in the Tenderloin area and the Tenderloin is still there.

Dr. Faye Gary:
So what I learned from that experience is that there are many commonalities and many points of sectionality with people despite the color of their skin, despite their religion, despite their historical migration to the United States. I learned from that experience that we are all uniquely human, and that our struggles are quite similar. We struggle for health. We struggle for a better education for ourselves and our children. We struggle for good housing, for clean water, decent food, for viable sustainable communities and relationships.

Dr. Faye Gary:
Now I was able to make those connections without any fear or any hesitation because of my experience at St. Xavier, where I had learned to trust other perspectives and other life perspectives, and the genius that I had been exposed to at Florida A&M university, because we reinforced each other and we told each other girl, "Are you smart!," or "You've got it going on," or whatever. Those two environments seem to just interact, and so working in San Francisco was very pleasurable for me. I considered myself a student of human relationships, because I had to work with so many different cultures that I'd not been exposed to.

Dr. Faye Gary:
Now, the flip side is that they'd not been exposed to people like me either. So we had a lot of mutual work that needed to be done.

Dionissi Aliprantis:
So you learned a lot.

Dr. Faye Gary:
And we worked it out in a harmonious way by being honest with each other.

Dionissi Aliprantis:
It goes a long way.

Dr. Faye Gary:
It's a long way. Yes.

Dionissi Aliprantis:

So, okay. So it sounds like at this point you're in this really wonderful place in that you've spent some time in some really positive environments that were, I think, really affirming and really supportive. But when you were in San Francisco or on the West Coast, you were thinking about coming back to Florida. Could you tell us a little bit about that experience?

Dr. Faye Gary:
Yeah. Yes. I wanted to come back to Florida because my parents had sacrificed so much for all of us to go to school, and I wanted to get settled someplace. So I thought I would come back home so I could be there when they got old, and when my aunts and uncles, all of whom helped us. The other 12 aunts and uncles helped us. My father's three sisters had no children and they helped us in ways that were just unimaginable.

Dr. Faye Gary:
And I knew they were going to get old. They were all working. And then I liked the country. I like my home. I like walking in the fields. I like riding the horse and feeding the chickens, and putting the pigs back in the pen when they got out. That was a part of what my life was about. So it was a wonderful kind of experience that I tended to gravitate toward.

Dr. Faye Gary:
But the main reason was to come back to help my family and to say thank you in a very concrete kind of way. So I came back and I could not get a job. I was unemployed for more than a year, and a wonderful thing happened that I've written about. That is my friend from the University of California, San Francisco. Her name was Gertrude Hess. I had two good friends, Gertrude Hess and Agnes Middleton. Gertrude was a Jewish woman who'd come to the United States during the Holocaust. And Agnes was a Black woman who'd come from Mississippi looking for the same thing that Gertrude was looking for. And that's some peace and a way to express their brilliance. And we liked each other. And they made me a lecturer at the University of California, San Francisco.

Dr. Faye Gary:
So I would go to their classes. I met them at some conference that I went to, very casual, and heaven is just looking out for me. That's the grace and the mercy that my grandad would tell me about. But so I would write these letters. I wrote a letter and Gertrude got the letter. She was in Dallas, Texas at a national conference, and she called me up at my home in Florida. And she said, "I don't like the way you sound. This letter does not sound like you." I said, "Well, I can't get a job. I don't have any money," blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. And she said, "Well, I'm going to come and spend some time with you. I'll call you back."

Dr. Faye Gary:
She called me back. She told me she'd gotten a plane ticket to Jacksonville, Florida, a hundred miles away. That's the closest you could get to Ocala at that time. It's all different now. We picked her up and she stayed with me for a week. She helped me feed the chickens. She helped me feed the pigs, water-

PART 1 OF 4 ENDS [00:26:04]

Dr. Faye Gary:
the cows and the horses, fix the fence, cook the food. We had a wood stove, pick up the chips. We did everything together and she would share with me stories about the Holocaust. And she would tell me that the last thing I was to do was to give up, that I had to persevere. I would get a job. I would do well,

but always remember that I had to be hopeful and in my hope, and when I had opportunities, I must share it with others.

Dr. Faye Gary:
So when she left, I just cried and cried and cried and she said, "You'll be okay. You'll be just fine." And then, lo and behold, one night about 10 o'clock, I got a call from one of the nurse administrators in the School of Nursing at the University of Florida, about 10 o'clock one night asking me if I'd come to work the next day. I knew that I was the last name on the list when that happened, that somebody had planned to come and couldn't show up and now is my time, so I'd better move.

Dr. Faye Gary:
So I did. So I got in the raggedy car and I went to the University of Florida and I started working. I called Gertrude and she said, "I told you so." I said, "You were right, Gertrude." She said, "Now it's your responsibility to do the best that you can every day." And she said, "It's okay that they called you at 10 o'clock at night. It's okay. You're there." And she said, "It won't be easy for you. So I want you to get a journal and every evening you go home, I want you to write in your journal about your experience. It won't be easy for you."

Dr. Faye Gary:
It was not easy, but I stayed there. I went and got a doctorate. I resigned after a year, went and got a doctorate, worked at the community college. I got awarded at the community college, outstanding faculty. Came back to the university where I stayed for 30 years and became a distinguished service professor, tenured at the University of Florida in the Department of Psychiatry, in the School of Nursing. So Gertrude and Agnes had long since died, but that's an example of grace and mercy that my grandfather used to tell me about.

Dionissi Aliprantis:
So I'm sure at the University of Florida, they're happy that they called you at 10:00 PM that night.

Dr. Faye Gary:
Well, it was hard for them to get rid of me, that's for sure.

Dionissi Aliprantis:
They realized-

Dr. Faye Gary:
I was not going any place. I was not going any place.

Dionissi Aliprantis:
They managed to get lucky in spite of themselves, huh?

Dr. Faye Gary:
Well at the University of Florida, I met two men, both were white, both were in the School of Medicine, both I met through some serendipitous event and they became my mentors long before that term was used. And one of them, when I was in deep trouble or felt that I was really threatened, he would say, "Come to me and we almost ... we will have to ... and there will be times when you'll have to write a memo to protect yourself."

Dr. Faye Gary:
And he would dictate these memos and I would say, blah, blah, blah and he would help me with them. And I have written some of the most intriguing, courageously presented memos to administration that you'd ever want to read. And I thought about that and I said, "Why did I do that?" But I did it because I trusted them to always do what was in my best interests. And these two men were administrators in the School of Medicine.

Dr. Faye Gary:
They had a lot of power. They had a lot of insight. They were not in competition with me for anything, nothing. And I trusted them. And when they said I was being treated unfairly, I believed them, even though there were times when I just wanted to bow my head and say, " I can deal with this." And they would say, "No, you have to do this for somebody else. You're not doing this only for yourself. You're doing it for somebody else. We have to correct this system." And believe it or not, I would do it and I think it did get better for others.

Dionissi Aliprantis:
I mean, just the importance of allies is what I'm hearing here, just all of the importance of having those friends that can support you. So-

Dr. Faye Gary:
Powerful. They were powerful allies. Powerful allies.

Dionissi Aliprantis:
That can help too. Yeah.

Dr. Faye Gary:
Yes.

Dionissi Aliprantis:
So, okay. So you have degrees in sociology, anthropology, psychiatric nursing for children and adolescents and special education. So you studied a lot and we could talk about a lot, each of those, we could probably talk all day. They're very fascinating subjects. And they also, all of them connect in important ways to thinking about the labor market, how we can ensure full participation in the economy. So I'm thinking though, if you could speak a little bit about your training in psychiatric nursing and how maybe your studies in sociology and anthropology inform both your work and your training.

Dr. Faye Gary:
Oh, I think that's a very intriguing question. And I would like to say that when these subjects overlap, they might not be as clear to the individual when it's happening. Sometimes it takes years after to really understand the impact that the overlap has. In education, I think sometimes we evaluate things too quickly and I would be such an example.

Dr. Faye Gary:
Now at St. Xavier, it was psychiatric nursing, we talked a lot about the individual and families. And in sociology and anthropology we talked about families and communities. We talked about theories, ways of thinking. In psychiatric nursing we talked about psychiatric, psychological theories and let's say

biological theories. But when you add community to that, when you add family to that, when you add policy to that, when you add politics to policy, when you add finance to politics and policy, then you get a very different kind of picture.

Dr. Faye Gary:
And when you add economics and then you put an overlay of opportunity then things come together very clearly. And over time that came together for me. Now, I had a fellowship in anthropology and we looked at the first regrouping of public schools. And my mentor was Dr. Solon Kimball, who was just an outstanding and very well written. He penned a lot of research and written books, et cetera, cetera. So under his tutelage, I really got to see human interaction, management, human organization from a very different perspective than I had learned when I was doing family therapy and group therapy and psychopathology, et cetera, cetera.

Dr. Faye Gary:
That there are some other social determinants that were causative agents that produce the pathology that I was having to deal with and sometimes effectively and sometimes very inadequately. And so what I learned that when you talk about illnesses, you have to also be concerned about the causes of the causes. And that's what anthropology and sociology taught me. And I could link that to psychiatric nursing, psychopathology and the expressed disease entities that we see, be it heart disease or cancer, and why some communities have more diseases than others. It's the causes of the causes that help you answer those questions.

Dionissi Aliprantis:
Well then-

Dr. Faye Gary:
Now, that came later. That did not come when I was taking-

Dionissi Aliprantis:
That took some time.

Dr. Faye Gary:
... classes. I was checking off the blocks when I was taking the classes, but that's what mean when I say that we have to be careful with regard to the time points when we want to really understand the impact of what we do. Sometimes we do it too quickly and we miss the point.

Dionissi Aliprantis:
Are you thinking about how long it can take for those seeds to grow in terms of the things that we're doing or are you thinking about processes that take time?

Dr. Faye Gary:
I'm thinking about both. Processes take time and also to see the actual outcome sometimes it takes time. And what bothers me is that we will have an intervention or a program for one or two years, then it's gone and then we evaluate it and we say it was impactful or it's not. And I think many times we really don't know what we are talking about. They are driven by policies that are not well developed and not well thought through.

Dionissi Aliprantis:
Do you-

Dr. Faye Gary:
It's too quick.

Dionissi Aliprantis:
Do you have any thoughts on how, I don't know if it's on the part of any organization, whether it's the nonprofit world, whether it's universities where you are, whether it's hospitals, whether it's governments, state, local, national, do you have any thoughts on how we can encourage thinking over a longer time scale?

Dr. Faye Gary:
Well, I think it might be one of the lessons that COVID teaches us. Now, I have to think long and hard about any silver lining from COVID, but at least it's gotten us from a point of our denial, because I think we've been in denial about a lot of things in our nation, but COVID has just laid it bare and say when you confront death and when you confront hospitals being full, and when you confront people who don't trust the science, that brings us full circle.

Dr. Faye Gary:
We need to do something about the basic structures in our society, including education. we need to do something about education. I'm writing a book now almost ... I'm editing a book, almost done, and we're looking at population health. But one of the lessons learned from editing this book and writing five of the chapters is that unless we do what I've determined to be two basic things in our society or any society, we have to strengthen our educational system and we have to strengthen our healthcare system.

Dr. Faye Gary:
And once we do that, then what we talk about the social determinants of health will address themselves automatically over time because people will have a higher level of health literacy, of health numeracy, which means they will figure out how to calibrate their diabetes medicine, their insulin better, et cetera, et cetera. We'll automatically have better jobs, better housing, safer neighborhoods, less violence. But what happens is that in our society we have set up a system that I explain by two additional concepts and one is a concept of white privilege. And the other is a concept of advantage.

Dr. Faye Gary:
Now, let me see if I can explain it. White privilege is something that some people have at birth. You can't take it away from them. It's something that they did not necessarily earn. They were born white just as I'm born black. That's white privilege. Now that's a given in our society and in many other societies, fair skin is very important. But now the other is advantage. Now in this society, despite my darker skin, I have had some advantage.

Dr. Faye Gary:
Advantage is basically theoretical, but also can be concrete. I got advantages when I went to St. Xavier College. I got advantage when I went to San Francisco and met good friends. I got some advantage when I was at the University of Florida and met two men that I trusted explicitly, and they had white skin and they were very powerful and very knowledgeable, all Harvard and Yale. They came with the right

pedigree and et cetera. All of that was impressive to me. But despite that, I would eat dinner with them at their table and they would tell me and reaffirm the advantage that I have.

Dr. Faye Gary:
I would never have the privilege, but I could have the advantage. So I think we have to make some distinction about that and privilege helps to beget advantage. And that's what happened to me. It was their privilege that made advantage for me. And if we look at the fact that we could stop talking so much about white privilege and say, "How can we take white privilege to extend advantages to other people?" And it's initially theoretical, but it can be concretized and it also can be operationalized to help other people. I hope that makes sense.

Dionissi Aliprantis:
That makes a lot of sense. So I actually want to hear more about that. In a lot of different ways, I guess when you ... I guess maybe I want to ask you about clinically first and then maybe we can get to Provost Scholars.

Dr. Faye Gary:
Sure.

Dionissi Aliprantis:
In clinical settings are you working primarily with children or primarily with adolescents or a combination?

Dr. Faye Gary:
Well, throughout my career, I've worked with children and adolescents and always families because children and adolescents live in families and families live in communities. So it all makes sense to me, and again, that's where the sociology and anthropology comes full circle. And Miss Kate and I, with the ... we call her Miss Kate. That's what all of the Provost Scholars call her, fondly. And what we want to do is connect with the parents. We have the parents' college at Case, and I always feel that I make much better inroads if the parents are on my side. And being a clinician, I also know that parents can sabotage you because you have to depend on the parents to bring the child to the clinic. That's just basic. Okay. And if the parents don't like the clinician, sometimes-

Dionissi Aliprantis:
Step one.

Dr. Faye Gary:
... they sabotage the whole thing and don't bring the child.

Dionissi Aliprantis:
So, okay. So what I'd like to talk about going forward, I want to hear about the Provost Scholars program, but I guess for now, before we even do that, so I'm interested in this general question of what you just brought up, how do you, whether it's through white privilege or whatever levers that we can pull, how do you extend advantage to more kids and to more people as they develop and as they grow?

Dionissi Aliprantis:

And I guess the question that I would have for you is, to start, I'd be curious that you were talking about the different social determinants of health. Could you speak a little bit about some of the ways that manifests in terms of obstacles? The kids that you work with, what are some of the obstacles that they're facing and what kinds of approaches do you take in, I guess, in a clinical setting to start to try to address those obstacles?

Dr. Faye Gary:
Well, first, I think as a clinician, I have to understand the obstacles and I have to have some appreciation for the obstacles and the impact that they have on the child from various levels, as an individual, as an interpersonal level, societal level, policy level. I have to understand that. That's an obligation that I have as a clinician. Now, it's not always been this clear to me. It evolves over time. And it evolves with conversations with colleagues who are interested and who are just as invested or even more so than I am.

Dr. Faye Gary:
I have learned that policy drives our daily behaviors. And in many ways, our attitudes and I have ... I teach a course in health policy. I never taught that course until I came here to Case, but it's been intriguing to me. And I have learned, I have come to terms with the notion that policy dictates all that we do. There are policies in your family, whether you articulate them as policies or not.

Dr. Faye Gary:
There's some things that you have to do in your family. Now, you might not want to tell me what they are, but they exist. They do in my family too. And there are policies in the church and the synagogue and the mosque. There are a whole bunch of policies at universities. We get a policy manual when we come here as a faculty or a student, okay. And so I've learned that policy drives our attitudes and our behaviors and determines the decisions that we make. Period.

Dionissi Aliprantis:
Can you-

Dr. Faye Gary:
It's policy.

Dionissi Aliprantis:
Can you give an example of that? I'm thinking in some educational context but maybe in some health context, could you give an example or two, beyond I'm thinking of how the dishes get done in my household, those kinds of things. When you're thinking about how, I guess, how kids respond, for example, to education policies or policies in their schools and how that shapes their approach to learning.

Dr. Faye Gary:
Well, I think that policies in schools, in some areas are too restrictive and in other areas not nearly restrictive enough. There are a lot of ... Now, the school systems vary and they're in certain communities and Miss Kate and I work in a school system where there are a lot of needs among the children in that school system. And there are school systems like this all over the nation. But I think we work in an under-resourced community. So let's just think about the policy of you go to a school and there, so you have to walk through a surveillance system because the policy is, the message is that it's unsafe here. So

you walk through. When Miss Kate and I go to school X, we go through some surveillance thing and people look in our pocketbooks and see what we have. That's a system that it's unsafe here. Okay. That's a very rigid policy that grows out of some need, but certainly has an impact.

Dr. Faye Gary:
Now let's take another policy and the policy about what is excellence on an essay, or what is excellence for a biology project? What is the policy about excellence at the school? What is the policy about children must know how to read by when they're in second or third grade? And how is that policy manifested and who monitors that policy? And who's responsible for that policy? And what happens if a child can't read at third grade?

Dr. Faye Gary:
Now I have a student who just finished her doctoral dissertation. I was the chair for her committee, and she looked at maternal deaths in certain region of the nation. And in our literature review, we found that maternal deaths is related to third grade reading scores. Now that was a new find for me. I know about reading scores and prison beds. I know about reading scores and economic growth over time, but I had not related it to maternal deaths.

Dionissi Aliprantis:
So, can I-

Dr. Faye Gary:
And so those policies that speak to excellence for academic learning, I think are too relaxed and serve at a great disadvantage for children in under-resourced communities. So those are differences in policies in one system.

Dionissi Aliprantis:
So I'm going to ask you to speak a little bit, I guess, in two different directions here. So we recently spoke with Richard Rothstein, the author of *The Color of Law*. And I think he would argue, I don't want to put words in his mouth, but I think there is an argument to be made that, given historical disinvestments, just given our history, that it's very difficult for a school system to maybe attain that excellence.

Dionissi Aliprantis:
And it's not having anything to do with the potential of the individuals there, but it has to do with the state of poverty, the state of environmental pollution, all of those factors that make it difficult in a school. And I guess my question to you would be, when you think about that and maybe this will lead into the Provost Scholars, how can we support those schools? How can we support those students to reach that level of excellence?

Dr. Faye Gary:
Well, I think we did it in our little country school. After we built the fire in the stove to stay warm and baked our potato for lunch, but we never strayed from the fact that we were all capable of learning how to read. And our teacher told us we were beautiful and we were bright and one day America would recognize us. I think that we have to get the ... we know that poverty exists, but we know that poverty exists because of the policies that have been developed that created it.

Dr. Faye Gary:

We create poverty and we create systems that keep poverty in place, that maintain poverty. So it's no mystery about that. Now, George W. Bush was not my favorite president. I have no qualms about that. He did some good things, but one of the things he said that I resonate with when he did his No Child Left Behind, which is for another discussion, but in that narrative, he said that Black children, and probably brown children too, suffer from the bigotry of low expectations. So I would begin with the bigotry of low expectations. I don't want anybody teaching my children who don't think they can excel.

PART 2 OF 4 ENDS [00:52:04]

Dr. Faye Gary:
I think that happens in some school systems. I think it's in Boston or some place. I just heard on NPR that people are beginning to say now that tax monies are used in public schools, and it's one of the poor investments that taxpayers make, is the public school system. Now that is a real indictment on the public school system. Now the schools can't do it alone. I'm going to switch over to healthcare. In healthcare, I teach that when you talk about improving healthcare, you have talk about the healthcare system. You have to be honest about the people you serve that we call patients. And you have to be honest about the providers who give the service to the people in the context of the system. You have to talk about all three.

Dr. Faye Gary:
When I take that and relate it to the public school system, we have to talk about parents. We have to talk about teachers. And we have to talk about the system, which is created through the federal state, and local governments, all who have their own policies about what should happen to children.

Dr. Faye Gary:
Now, I do not subscribe to the notion, that poverty in and of itself prevents a child from learning. I think what we need to have is a system that recognizes what a child needs and provide it, that's a safe place. I think going to school from eight 30 to three o'clock and going home to a system that does not continue to support the child is not helpful. If I had my magic wand I would have children in school from about 7:00 in the morning to about 8:00 or 9:00 at night.

Dr. Faye Gary:
I would also involve parents. Parents need to be educated. Parents need to have their GEDs. There's some initiative now to get that. Some parents feel that, when you talk about education, they don't know a thing, so they shut down. They don't want to expose their lack of knowledge. They don't come to the school. It's a foreign place.

Dr. Faye Gary:
School has to become a part of the community. Now, when I was growing up in [Podunk], everything happened at the school. The church burned down, so we went to the school. The operators were at the school. The fairs were at the school. That was the only place we could go. And we were Black children. We couldn't go to the library. We couldn't go to restaurants. Everything happened at the school, everything. And the teachers and the principals, they lived next door to the students, so we were one collective community.

Dr. Faye Gary:
That's not the case anymore. Now, what I learned is that the teachers live one place and they come to work at a school and they go back. And that's especially in poverty areas. Teachers don't live in the poverty. They come to it, they teach the students and they go back. That works okay for some and not

so well for others. But I think that the color of law has been disadvantageous and has presented policies that create and maintain poverty. That's what I think. And the policy does not come with a sufficient armamentarium of resources to correct the policies that have been in place over time.

Dr. Faye Gary:
And I also work with Native American nurses in particular. And their plight is even more blatant than Black Americans are. They have fewer voices and they are more isolated. And one advantage that Black people have is that long time ago, we understood the lives of white people because we cooked for them, nursed their babies, walked their dogs, took care, hold the fields. That's what we did. Pick the crop, share crop and everything. So we were very much an intimate part of white people's lives. And we had to stay in our lane to live, but we knew what they did. And Native Americans have always been isolated. I don't say Alaska Natives because that's a whole different issue. We did not learn anything after we integrated Alaska and made it a state. We treated the Native Alaskans the same way we treated the American Indians hundreds of years ago. No lessons learned. Few lessons learned.

Dionissi Aliprantis:
So I'm curious if, when we think about the set of policies that created the poverty we're thinking about, and thinking about schools and supporting those schools. And I'm thinking I'm coming back to this question of academic excellence and helping kids to achieve that, despite maybe they're growing up in a family of poverty or in a community with high rates of poverty, and helping put them on a trajectory for full participation in the economy, in the labor market. I'm curious in that context to hear about your work with the Provost Scholars. And I'm wondering if you can talk about that program, how it started, and then go from there.

Dr. Faye Gary:
Well, thank you. I think the Provost Scholars program could be an excellent example. And I will start off by saying that when I came to Cleveland and I had gone to school in Chicago. And I had done a lot of work in under resourced communities in Chicago as a graduate student. But when I came to Cleveland and I saw such disparate communities all over Cleveland, this was a city I was not familiar with. I just couldn't understand it. And there's a large Black population here. And some people do well, but many do not.

Dr. Faye Gary:
And I also read that Ohio has more academic institutions than any other state in the nation. So learning that data and looking at all of the institutions here and, let's say, the variability across socioeconomic status in the segregated neighborhoods was something that I was not anticipating. And then I saw that East Cleveland and Case Western Reserve were so very close together. Then I was confused about the west side and the east side. And I had to get all of that straight. That took me a little while.

Dr. Faye Gary:
And then, so when I got that straight and I learned that East Cleveland is a very different entity. Then my colleague and I, who's a native of Cleveland. I said, "You have to just level with me. What in the world is going on here?" And then I also was a member of the university Senate, and I recognized that there was a lot of concern among the administration and the faculty and the staff about the variability in people's lives in the greater Cleveland area.

Dr. Faye Gary:

So I listened to those themes and I think people were expressing that in different ways without even knowing it. And I picked up on that because I am a registered certified group psychotherapist. And so I listened to all of these themes and bring that together. And I said, "Well, wait a minute now. Maybe it's time to test out this theory, just like I did when I went to St. Xavier and learned that I could be whatever I wanted to be." So I tested out the theory and I went to see my dean. And she said, "That's a very peculiar, strange idea."

Dr. Faye Gary:
But the other advantage was that I was not from Cleveland and I could see things that others had missed. And I was from the south. And I also know that most of the Black folks here come from the south. I haven't met a Black person yet who doesn't have a connection in Alabama or Mississippi or Arkansas or Texas, a few from Florida. But most of them come from Alabama. And then I would go to Black churches and I would hear the deacons pray. And they would be saying, "Lord, when I was way back then the clay hills of Alabama." I said, "All these folks in this church from Alabama and the south. What is this?"

Dr. Faye Gary:
And so, I took that information. And my dean said, "It looks pretty strange for me." She was born in Ohio and she had some other kinds of experiences. She said, "Oh, okay. If that's what you want to do, let me know how I can help you." So I went to see the Provost, who's Dr. Baselad. And he said, "Well Faye, I don't know, but I'll support you." And so that's all I needed. So he said, "Write up some kind of concept paper."

Dr. Faye Gary:
And when I was at St. Xavier, my teacher told me that my sentences made her dizzy, but then she got some help for me. That's the resource. She got some help for me. She just didn't complain. She said, "This is how we can help you." So I knew I could write it up. And so I did. And the Provost said, "Okay, I'll help you. And I'll incentivize the program."

Dr. Faye Gary:
And so I learned too, that there's a proverb that I learned when I was in Africa. And it said, "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go with others." So I knew I had to find some others to go with me. And all I need was a critical mass. That's what my student who was at the University of Florida. She was a nurse who served in Vietnam. She was a Caucasian lady who taught me a lot. And she would say, "Dr. Gary, all you need is a critical mass. You just get your critical mass and March on." So that's what I learned from my doctoral student.

Dr. Faye Gary:
So I got a critical mass and started marching on. And went to East Cleveland, and Provost Baeslack went with me. And we sold our idea to the superintendent who was Dr. Myrna Loy Patton Corley. And she didn't know how it would work, and she thought we would come and get burned out and leave and write a report just like everybody. That's what she said. And she tells me that now. And she thought that I was a decoy for the university to soften them up so that they can bring research projects there. So I had to agree with her that there would be no research. That's passed because now we have trust. We have an extended relationship of eight or nine years. So those conversations are moot conversations and have been archived. So we're at another place now, another place.

Dr. Faye Gary:
So I got a critical mass. I found some wonderful mentors, Dr. Lee Thompson who works with us now, who's Associate Dean in the School of Arts and Science and the Social Director of this program. And then Miss Kate came on board and the rest is history. I can't keep up with Miss Kate, she exhausts me. And the children would much prefer to see Miss Kate than me.

Dr. Faye Gary:
And so, we transcend all of this American dilemma of race. Many of our mentors are Caucasian. I want people who are experts in whatever they say they're experts in, because our children deserve the best. And I want them to care enough to know enough to do something. That's all, and to be consistent and persistent. And our children say to us that having a relationship with their mentor is the first meaningful relationship they've ever had with a white person. It reminds me of what I said about St. Xavier University and about Gertrude Hess, who came to stay with me. There are some human connections that are beyond race and skin color. That has been a most difficult lesson for Americans to understand, whether black or white. And at times when I encounter a situation which I think is so unnecessary, I have to tell myself that I can get beyond this and I can go on. But it's because of the previous experiences I've had with good, decent people who come from all parts of this world that we can go on. That's the critical mass.

Dionissi Aliprantis:
So I'm wondering if you can talk about the way that those relationships form. So the Provost Scholars

program... And I have to say, that comment you just made in some senses, it's not surprising to me based on my life experiences. But it also just makes me really sad to think about that, that for a lot of kids that's their first meaningful relationship with a white person, is your program.

Dr. Faye Gary:
Well, yes. It is sad, but we are happy to offer it. And as I said, now that gets manifested when the children would sometimes, when they want something and they think that I'm going to say, "No." They don't ask me. They ask Miss Kate. Now, Miss Kate and I have an understanding, but they'll go to Miss Kate first.

Dionissi Aliprantis:
So-

Dr. Faye Gary:
Yeah. And Miss Kate is always their advocate. Always there, and so am I. But I think I kind to hold the line a bit more than Miss Kate.

Dionissi Aliprantis:
You, you have different roles.

Dr. Faye Gary:
And she and I both know that. She and I both know that. And that's okay.

Dionissi Aliprantis:
You have policies with the provost too, huh?

Dr. Faye Gary:
Absolutely. But I describe it, I say that I'm old. So one of the children called me grandma. I said, "Well, grandma can say what she wants." If you're grandma, you've earned to say what you want. And so when I say, We're not doing it that way", I've earned that position.

Dionissi Aliprantis:
That's right. Well I guess, could you describe to me a little bit about the principles behind the Provost Scholars? Could you say exactly? So that you're establishing these relationships, these mentoring relationships. What are the principles behind what you're looking for in the mentors, as you said earlier? How do you foster those relationships? And what is it that you're looking to do?

Dr. Faye Gary:
Well, the program has two basic umbrellas, and that is academic excellence and social emotional learning. And just about everything we do falls under one or both of them. There's a lot of overlap, and so those are the two pillars of our program. So everything we do, we ought to be able to link it to one or both of these.

Dr. Faye Gary:
And the mentors who are excellent in whatever they do, most of them are professors at the university. So they're excellent in their fields, in music and dance and biology and biochemistry and medicine, et cetera, et cetera. So we want the children to see others who have excelled. And we want them to develop a relationship with other people who have excelled and who have done well.

Dr. Faye Gary:
And that relationship gets developed over a period of time. It gets developed through the mentoring. They could go to their mentors' offices. They go to the student center where they talk in general. And they talk specifically in general about things. They go to a basketball game together with special permission. They go play catch football together. They go to a lecture with their mentor. They go to a lecture that their mentor is giving. They go to the offices. They meet their deans, et cetera, cetera. So you expose them to a bold new world with a person who cares for them.

Dr. Faye Gary:
And we have mentors who've worked with students for four and five years. Dr. Thompson, for an example, her mentee right now is our student assistant. She's been working with Dr. Thompson since she was in eighth grade. And she's a junior at Case Western Reserve University. So not only is she getting... And my mentee, who's now at Ohio State in graduate school, another mentee is getting ready to go to law school on and on and on and on.

Dr. Faye Gary:
So they learn that the mysticism about skin color is removed and they see a human being. And they see a human being who cares for them. They see a human being who shows up every Tuesday and addresses whatever the agenda is that Miss Kate tells us we have to do and where we can go and what time we have to be back. They go to the museum together. They go to the library. They work on essays. They go to the Think Box. But it's the relationship with no strings attached.

Dr. Faye Gary:

I'm here because I care about you. We make it very clear that nobody gets paid anything. The mentors don't get paid a dime. They are volunteers. And initially, we don't hear it very much now, but would you believe initially the faculty and the students and the parents would question that? That's all been archived now, but initially, they were saying, Why are they doing this for our children? They never did anything before. So what do they want from us?" And I've had some of the children would ask me, "Well, Dr. Gary, what do you want from me? You're not coming here for nothing." That's the mentality of the children and their parents. That's gone. We have relationships. And it's very clear. It's very transparent. And we've been true to our word so we don't have to struggle with basic trust. And we don't have to struggle with whether there's any manipulation anymore.

Dr. Faye Gary:
And these children remain with their mentors and their mentors with their children years later. I mean, almost all of them at some way, at some level, are in touch with them mentors. Let me give you an example. My mentee called her good friend's mentor who's in the Weatherhead School and say, "I need some money. I need to talk with your mentor about how I can make some money. I need to set up a GoFundMe. I need to do whatever." And they did. They didn't ask me, but they have learned how to use more resources. And that's what we want to happen. And the mentor set up some kind of fund where we can pay into a fund to help pay for graduate tuition for our Provost Scholars.

Dr. Faye Gary:
Now, I had nothing to do with that. I just set it up where a system of trust, a system of communication, a system of, I call, interpersonal literacy. That's different from health literacy, interpersonal literacy. Where do you go to get your needs met and how do you make your case? That's what they did. They don't need me to do that. Miss Kate and I have somehow taught them and they've learned that lesson.

Dr. Faye Gary:
So now with the social emotional learning, we do that in many different ways. One of basic ways is we do have a code of ethics that everybody has to follow, including me, Miss Kate, Dr. Thompson, the Provost, everybody, everybody. These are the rules of the game because we love and respect everybody. This is how we act. This is how we behave at all times. Okay? Everybody knows that, including the parents and teachers.

Dionissi Aliprantis:
Standards of behavior.

Dr. Faye Gary:
Standards of behavior, and we have the same standards for everyone. We discuss it with the parents. The teachers have it. The mentors have it. The tutors have it, et cetera, et cetera. Now we don't have to pull a hard one. When we have to, we do, but seldom do we have to do that. But the trick is to be consistent. And we try to have our guidelines, to the extent that we can, consistent with the schools'. Now there's a difference because we have 30 something children. We can reinforce them quicker than the schools can. We can be more resolute about it than the schools can. And it's very important to us because we know. I was talking with the principal yesterday and I told him that an old man who probably finished fourth grade would say to me, he used to call all of the girls "daughter" and the boys "son". He would say, "Daughter, good manners will get you where a dollar never will." And he was right. He was right.

Dionissi Aliprantis:
So I'm curious if you can tell us about some success stories. But I do also want to respond, react a little bit to what you're saying based on some of my own work with kids. And that's that I feel like communicating to kids that you care about them is a superpower.

Dr. Faye Gary:
It is.

Dionissi Aliprantis:
It is a superpower.

Dr. Faye Gary:
It is.

Dionissi Aliprantis:
And then once kids know that, kind of the sky is the limit. And I'm thinking actually, there's this economist at the University of Toronto, Phil Oreopoulos. He told me in one of the programs he was evaluating, he said somebody told him something to the effect of, "Everyone deserves to have someone in their life that they're afraid to disappoint."

Dr. Faye Gary:
Yes.

Dionissi Aliprantis:
That's one way of looking at it.

Dr. Faye Gary:
Yes. Yes.

Dionissi Aliprantis:
But you think about it in a lot of different ways where once kids know that you really care about them, I feel like the sky is the limit.

Dr. Faye Gary:
Absolutely.

Dionissi Aliprantis:
But to express that fact-

PART 3 OF 4 ENDS [01:18:04]

Dr. Faye Gary:
Absolutely.

might be things that we're not used to doing. They might be a little bit different. So it might be like you said, we have to go and I don't know, play some flag football, you have to just come and hang out in my office and we sit and hang out and listen to some music together. It could be a million different things.

Dr. Faye Gary:
Absolutely.

Dionissi Aliprantis:
And so I'm curious, could you talk about some of the success stories that you all have had and maybe some of these, I'm wondering, how do we think about this superpower? You know, how do you generalize it or how do you harness it? How do you leverage it? You know, obviously there are people doing it every single day, there're parents, there're teachers, there're family members, friends. How do you think about whether it's a program or a school or, in your case, the Provost Scholars, how do you operationalize this and how do you try to foster those kinds of interactions?

Dr. Faye Gary:
Well, I think that's a very interesting question and it is an essential one. I think you have to have people who care and people have to understand the struggles or something about the nature of the children that they're working with. I'm a psychiatric nurse, if I'm working with a depressed person, I need to know something about depression.

Dionissi Aliprantis:
So...

Dr. Faye Gary:
And I need... Yes?

Dionissi Aliprantis:
I'm sorry to interrupt, but can I ask, because I was thinking about that, and I think in my own, I guess, experience and thinking about the literature. So, there's a literature showing that, for example, Black students often will do better with a Black teacher. On the other hand, I also feel like what you had said before. So, I think there's something about this understanding is important, but I also think there's something, and shared experiences. But there's also something much deeper that's just this basic caring that, like you said, just transcends everything. And I feel that that is so powerful, but I guess the question is, does that caring then turn into, I'm going to listen and try to understand? How should I be thinking about, maybe there's a mentor that isn't as, I don't know, culturally sensitive or as experienced. And as we think about going forward, trying to encourage more of these kinds of relationships or more people getting involved in them, how do we think about that?

Dr. Faye Gary:
Well, I get back to your point, and in healthcare we talk about people do better with when there's a concurrent concordant provider. I would say that's true to a great degree. Now, many people never experience a Black provider. That's just the way it is, that's unfortunate. Now in some systems where there's no opportunity for interaction with people who look like you, I think that can be very devastating, but not necessarily so. When I was at Saint Xavier, I was the only Black person on the whole campus. Now that intrigued me because Chicago, the south side of Chicago was called "the Black Belt" and I didn't come from Chicago.

Dr. Faye Gary:
So I asked about it and they openly talked about it. So I think honesty and truthfulness brings light to darkness. I think you have to be honest, you have to be truthful. Now, when I went to graduate school at

Chicago, there was not a Black school any place with a master's program in psychiatric nursing. So if I were want to advance myself, I just had to grin and bear it. And I didn't even think about it because that was not a part of the conversation during my era. We didn't talk. That was not the language. The language about having concordant providers is something that's come up since we've been talking about diverse workforce. And I think that is the case because it's been missing for so very, very long. In some instances, almost all of the patients that I've taken care of have been white. And I did my level best to provide care for them.

Dr. Faye Gary:
And some of them would prefer me to a white person. And I was proud out of that. But now let me tell you that when the opposite happened, it made me very sad. Some Blacks would prefer Ms. white nurse over me. That made me sad. But then the other issue is, what is the difference? What need is that person responding to that I wasn't? And it may not have anything to do with color of my skin. So, and that was okay, we talk about it. And I said, okay, you go for it. But initially I felt, as I said, I felt so very proud when a white person wanted me to be their therapist or whatever. But I had to dig in and think about it when a Black person would say, I'd rather have Dr. so and so, and for good reason, it was fine. And as long as it doesn't cause conflict within the system, then you know that you got a well greased operation because there's a space for everybody. So when you can get to that point, then you're ready to move forward.

Dionissi Aliprantis:
And what do you all tell mentors along these lines? Because I think, again, going back to my own experience, working with somewhat similar programs, the things that we would always tell people is just be yourself.

Dr. Faye Gary:
Yeah. Yeah.

Dionissi Aliprantis:
Just be yourself and be genuine. And I feel like that goodwill and that caring for people will get you far. And that's the path forward.

Dr. Faye Gary:
And people know if you care for them, especially, I must make a confession, Black people know how to sight phonies in a minute. That's a skill that we've had to learn to survive. So I've told you a big secret now, but we know that. And we talk among ourselves to get it validated. What do you think? And once it gets validated, that's it, kind of thing.

Dionissi Aliprantis:
You going to come to some meetings with me then, please. Are you going to come help me out?

Dr. Faye Gary:
But I mean, that's one of the things you have to do to survive. You have to figure out who you can trust. Who's on your side, who's not and so that happens very, very, very early. But that being said, I think consistency is very important. And with our mentors now, we do all of the things that other folks do. We have a mentor's manual, but what we say to the mentors, we give them an overview about the struggles of the children. They are volunteers. We get people who gravitate toward our program because they

have some propensity for wanting to help. They have some, and what we say is that all you need is a little bit of empathy, and we could help you with the logistics. I say to them, just come, if you care enough to do enough, Ms. Kate can give you the manual. Ms. Kate can teach you about the logistics when you come to show up, but when you come, bring your true self. And then we have programs to help with the mentors. And in the past, we've shared our experiences. So we've become a collective body with the mission of helping the children and they enjoy sharing their experiences. We haven't done this for a while, we would have lunch and the with the Provost's would provide lunch and we would share experiences. So we would have this collective union, if you will, among the mentors, through sharing and through, let's say, consensual validation about what we are doing that's helpful and about the program. And that's been very reaffirming for the mentors and also for Ms. Kate and Dr. Thompson and me and the Provost. It works. We have mentors who've been with us since 2013.

Dr. Faye Gary:
And it's no doubt that they care. And we learn different ways and means of working with the students. And we believe that one size does not fit all. And so we do it on an individual basis and we try to match the mentee with the mentor around some common attributes or characteristics, hobbies, or academic work or recreation, some way. And Ms. Kate does an excellent job of matching. And typically the matching works because when the mentee finds out that the mentor shows up every Tuesday cares about them, I say it's a slam dunk. They work out the rest of it.

Dionissi Aliprantis:
It's all details from there, right?

Dr. Faye Gary:
That's right.

Dionissi Aliprantis:
So I guess the other thing, so I think there's a lot of ways to see the work that you're doing with the Provost Scholars. There's the very basic caring about kids, there's thinking about our country, thinking about a university and how it relates to its community. There's a lot of ways of thinking about this program, being at the Federal Reserve, we care about it a lot for how it affects labor market outcomes. And so I'm just curious if you could speak a little bit about some of the success stories in terms of how kids have done in terms of their education, in terms of their later labor market outcomes and ways that you think that this program is able to open doors for students that might otherwise not have been open.

Dr. Faye Gary:
Well, I would start with one of the things that is missing in under-resourced communities is networks to important people and important organizations, just networks, having relationships with people who can make a difference, or who can provide the advantage if you will. So once our children get into the program, they have an armamentarium of a network that they never even knew existed. They get, through their mentors, they go to this Dean, that program, they can go to the admissions' office. They can go to the think box. They can have a conversation with the career center, just a variety of resources that exist at Case, on many other college campuses, but they have access to human and material resources, human resources, because their mentor can say, well, I'll call Bob or I'll call John. And we'll make an appointment.

Dr. Faye Gary:

I'll take you to see John and he can tell you about the Holo Lens. That's what happens. That's so powerful for these children. So they become empowered and the sense of helplessness, hopelessness wanes, and their dreams get fertilized, if you will. And then they can make plans for themselves because they know that they have a safety net, they can call a mentor. If they say whatever, they could tell Ms. Kate that they need some help with biochemistry or whatever. And we try and provide that. That doesn't happen, they don't have anybody in their neighborhood to tutor them in biochemistry, let's just be honest about it. And there's nobody in their church who can help them, but there's somebody here who can. And so that's, I would say networking. And to say that what I have, I will also share with you. And that again, is the advantage that comes with sharing resources and opportunities that they would not otherwise have.

Dr. Faye Gary:
That's so reaffirming, it provides consensual validation that I can do this. And the mentor tells them every time, you can do this, I will help you do this. Get your grades good and you can come to Case and you get a scholarship, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. If you don't come to Case, we'll help you go wherever else you wish to go. And we do that too. They don't have to come to Case. Now Ms. Kate and I have discovered, and she might have known that before I did, but some of the children would prefer not to come to Case. Now that was a hard lesson for me to learn.

Dr. Faye Gary:
And the reason is they don't think that they can be successful here because they're too close to home. And by home, I mean their peers and their families. So you think about the insights that these children have that says, I need to leave because my peers and my family might not let me be successful. They want me to come every weekend to do X, Y, Z, to hang out with them and I have my studying to do. But when the child is in a state of transformation, their families may not be, and their peers may not be. And what they are insightful enough to know is say, I need to leave and I'll come back to visit, but I need to leave to be successful. So these are the kinds of messages that the children learn that they, and I said that they've taught me. So when they say, I would love to come to Case, but I can't stay here. I said, okay, then let's go to a plan B and Ms. Kate and I are masterful at plan B, Cs, Ds, and Zs. We are masters at it.

Dionissi Aliprantis:
Okay. Well, I think we're running up on our time to stop in a few minutes here. So I guess I have maybe two questions more for you. The first one would be, if you want to just tell me anything more about the Provost Scholars, and then the other question would just be, what did I not ask you that I should have?

Dr. Faye Gary:
I'll tell you a little bit more about the Provost Scholars. And that is we continue to expand and find ways and means to impact the children's lives in different ways. We started out at East Cleveland and now we are at Ginn Academy. The other thing I'd like to tell you that because we can go from a plan A to Z in a half second, COVID taught us many lessons, but it did not stop us. And let me give you one example, for two Decembers now we've not had our winter celebration and our spring celebration, but in December 2021 and 2020, Ms. Kate got these lovely bags. We call them holiday bags, stuffed them with books, planners, yearly planners, granola bars, our favorite thing to eat and apples and whatever. And we went to every child's home and we delivered those bags.

Dr. Faye Gary:

We've done that for two consecutive years. And we, again, that's an opportunity for us to be in the community, but also to see the parents, to say hello, to say thank you to the parents. And they of course give us a lot of accolades. But we also want to say thanks to them for investing in their children, going the nth degree to keep their children in school, despite the COVID et cetera, et cetera. And a mentor went with us, a new mentor went with us, new to us and new to the university and one of the school principals. And of course the principal had never been in the community in the way that we have been. And when time permits, we will be going back into the homes where we describe the program, introduce the program to the families in the home or in the school if they prefer, but it gives us a chance to meet other people in the home to see the community, et cetera, et cetera.

Dr. Faye Gary:
And we sign a child up in the home because we think family is important. COVID has stopped that, but we did a Z and we did it through Zoom and telephone and everything else, but it did not stop us. The other thing that we do is we are involved in other organizations in the community who have become advocates for the Provost Scholars Program. And sometimes they're advocates and you don't even know it. And you learn about it in circuitous ways like Ms. Kate and I do, but we are very grateful for it. Now, going forward, we are concerned about sustainability. So that is our next big category. How do we sustain the program? Now we have a tool kit. It's five sections, 300 some pages. So we have done all of that policy work and we've written all of that stuff, but now we got to make it happen and we will begin to figure out a way to sustain it.

Dr. Faye Gary:
And what we want to do is we want to endow the Provost Scholars Program. And we have people who, I think at Case you have to have 25 or $50, 000 to start the endowment and so we have people who are willing to commit to that. We just, COVID slowed us down. So sustainability for the program, we've worked out what we think is durable. And we have, we didn't start out with the summer program we have a very dynamic summer program and we focus on again, academics, and we focus heavily on math and writing and critical thinking. Because whatever a child wishes to do, these are some of the skills that they're going to have to have. And these are the areas that they're least efficient in, least efficient in these areas. Remember the third grade reading score is now in maternal deaths, that should tell you the whole secret.

Dr. Faye Gary:
So sustainability of our program is where we are. And we are fortunate to have a new president who references our program in his public statements and the Provosts who support it. And our previous Provost, Dr. Baeslack is retired, but very much still involved in the program. So we have a critical mass of people that we will go forward to continue to advance the program. And we had this grand scheme of where we were going to advance it to other colleges, and we perhaps can start doing that. And that is for an example, John Carroll or Baldwin Wallace would take our blueprint and partner with the school and use our blueprint to help children in those neighborhoods.

Dr. Faye Gary:
Again, one of the undergirding themes is that if we improve education and healthcare, we help to sustain communities and families for years to come. And I can remember my grandfather who taught me how to read and how him teaching me how to read and my sister has helped to sustain us and has inculcated in us the need to read, the need to be informed, the need to share with others to make this

world a better place. So I'm back to where I began and that's grace and mercy will always be with you. That's the message from my grandfather.

Dionissi Aliprantis:
Well, Faye, I think maybe that's a good way to end.

Dr. Faye Gary:
Thank you. It's my pleasure.

Dionissi Aliprantis:
Thank you so much for spending this time with us. I'm very, truly grateful that we were able to have this time together.

Dr. Faye Gary:
And thank you. Thank you for thinking enough of us to even ask.

Dionissi Aliprantis:

I hope you enjoyed this episode of Conversations on Economic Inclusion. If you would like to learn more about this series for the Cleveland Fed's Program on Economic Inclusion, please visit our website at clefed.org/PEI.