Albert Einstein said, “If I were not a physicist, I would probably be a musician. I often think in music, and frequently feel I am listening to music while I am writing or talking.” And so it is with me. While I am neither a physicist nor a musician, I often “think” in terms of music, lyrics and song titles and that is why I composed this summary about Aspirations to Actions Cohort 1 as a tribute to our “Greatest Hits” spanning the last two years.

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“Do-Re-Mi”

Let’s start at the very beginning. A very good place to start...

The Patterson Foundation successfully hosted the first Harwood Public Innovators Lab in August of 2014 with 70 participants (now known as Cohort 1), and introduced the innovative concept of providing “Guides on the Side” to support the Teams. Teams began turning outward and started using Community Conversations to learn the aspirations of their communities.

Sadly, because of Kathy Bayliss’s illness, the initiative was slowed, and we needed some extra time to figure out how to move forward. So, we had a Byron beginning.

When we started offering quarterly workshops that we called “Innovation Spaces” – a place borrowed from Harvard — we knew we were onto something. These sessions provided Teams and Individuals an opportunity to come together in order to learn from each other, share their experiences and start asking: What language do we need to talk to our communities? And how do we start learning the language, dissect the model and understand that practice does make perfect, or close to.

Every Team has seen some progress along the way, and over this period time, we all came to the realization that change – real, positive change – is slow and needs a lot of support.

Nevertheless, after our last two Innovation Space workshops, where Teams did presentations, we all felt a shift. There was an “Ah!” moment where we all came to recognize that this is real and we’re doing it. Even better, we are doing it well. We may have been doing it before, but the Harwood practice teaches us to do it better and with intention. This changes how we approach our personal life, as well as our organizations, and ultimately, our community. With learning comes sharing, so we are now able to celebrate and offer our learning in a bigger way.

Aspirations to Actions’ core commitment is “Creating positive change in our community, anything is possible.”

... When you know the notes to sing, you can sing most anything!

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“Hallelujah!”

Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

The talented Aspirations to Actions Guides of Bill Little, Mike Handzel, Pam Thur and the folks at Aspirations to Actions (artist and musician) – along with the Teams they supported and our Harwood Coach Mike Booth – is a lot of high notes. No words can express the depth of my gratitude for the wisdom, compassion and perseverance they all brought to the initiative and all the Teams they supported.

Highlights of Public Innovators Lab 1 Cohort 1

- 70 Individuals
- 11 Teams with 9 Teams entered into Year 2
- 150+ Community Conversations and/or meetings reached close to 1,000 people
- Newsletters – 12
- Blogs – 30
- Video – 1
- Facebook – LIKE
- Twitter – We’re getting better

The Patterson Foundation’s Innovation

- Guides on the Side
- Quarterly Innovation Space Meetings
- Community Conversations in Spanish (and blogs)
- Pre-Lab Workshops for Lab 2

Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

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“IMAGINE”

Imagine all the people living life in peace...

And so our aspirations to involve more people in creating positive change led to the decision of The Patterson Foundation hosting another Harwood Public Innovators Lab with 120 people that we know as Cohort 2. As a result, we made some adjustments by adding a series of Pre-Lab Workshops to prepare Cohort 2 for the Lab, and so they could connect, learn the language, understand the model, and appreciate that the real work begins with them.

As I look back on how I personally developed my own understanding of the Harvard practice, I begin to see “aspirations” everywhere. In fact, I opened one of our Innovation Space sessions by reading a quote from W. H. Auden: “If you have a deep aspiration, a goal for a larger world, then it is a kind of abstraction that is, if you and your partner both want to do things to relieve the suffering in the world, then your love for each other is connected to your love for others, and I expand exponentially to cover the whole world.”

This made me think how philanthropy is defined as “the love of mankind” and that makes sense. The Patterson Foundation’s Aspirations to Actions is truly The Patterson Foundation’s gift to the community. I am deeply touched by how deeply The Patterson Foundation, Aspirations to Actions and the Harwood Institute’s values are aligned. I am also struck by how significant this initiative is, and that this success is being approached with a true partnership where the work is done internally before it ripples out. We don’t always get to see it, but we know it’s there and it’s preparing to sing.

... You may say I’m a dreamer, but I’m not the only one. I hope someday you will join us, and the world will be as one.

P.S. Special thanks to Rodgers & Hammerstein, George Frideric Handel and John Lennon.