

I grew up in the 1960s on Southern military bases in a Marine Corps family where I observed poverty, class divisions and racism directly. Being fortunate enough to get a scholarship to college one of my first part-time jobs was being a worker at a local grocery Co-op. I moved to Chapel Hill with my son in 1996 and began working for a consulting firm that focused on communication and team building for workers and leaders. In these workshops, I facilitated conversations about challenging issues and about the values such as inclusion, respect for others, approaching conflict, and constructive ways, and achieving equity within the work group and beyond.

Weaver Street faces has a lot of competition in this area from large-scale suppliers. I'd like to help the co-op stand out, not only for its excellent food and products but also for its values of operating sustainably and working with the community, we can always do more. Let's match our customers demographics with our communities' demographics. That means identifying and bringing in even more diverse businesses as partners and creating incentives, and maybe welcoming activities to add new customers from all communities of color.

Weaver Streets patrons are often ecologically minded, and we know buying local reduces pollution and carbon emissions. We could continue its efforts by spearheading programs to reduce its own food waste, packaging and even educate its customers how to do more. Because Weaver Street is already engaged in so many community activities, my son had this crazy idea that what if once a week having a bicycle riding energy generating fitness day to publicize the importance of local and renewable energy production, as well as exercise could happen. Not a bad idea. Weaver Street's commitment to sustainability is a great start. Let's see if we can move the needle even further using Weaver Streets innovative food management practices as a template for other kinds of environmental leadership.

Whether I'm working with employees and employers, big universities, or small businesses, I've tried to create space for the voiceless. I'd like to help Weaver Street accomplish its ambitious goal by drawing on this experience. One of the most special things about Weaver Street is how intimate feels, you feel at home because everything is laid out and it in an accessible way and the types of food are chosen and produced with care. The kind of atmosphere that Weaver Street creates for its customers I've tried to create in the classroom. My years of consulting work have connected me with people from many backgrounds. I facilitated workshops with trauma survivors and with people facing housing insecurity and domestic violence. While canvassing and phone banking for the last two presidential campaigns, I had a lot of difficult conversations. All of these experiences have taught me to listen more deeply.

I've been a part-time filmmaker since college. Making art has often been a way for me to process life's twists and turns. Recently making movies has also brought me in closer contact with actors and crew members from North Carolina, whose lives are very different from what mine is right now. I'm grateful for that as well as for the opportunity sometime work with my son. I don't know if Weaver Street can make use of a filmmaker but it's a big part of who I am, collaborating creatively and sharing good food with other people two of my greatest joys and Weaver Street is home to both.