



Mission:
EYEJ drives social justice reform by empowering young people to advocate for change.

Vision:
An equitable and inclusive world.

Mai Moore's Biography Story

Mai Moore didn't just co-found EYEJ. She's walked in the shoes of those she's trying to help.

As a bi-racial young woman growing up in the diverse community of Cleveland Heights, the native of Japan befriended and developed close relationships with people of all stripes, notably African-Americans. With and through them, she encountered firsthand much of the discrimination, injustice, and ignorance that continue to make Cleveland one of the most segregated big cities in the nation.

Some friends couldn't get simple part-time jobs because of the way they looked. Others suffered violence on the streets or turned to drugs for escape. Brilliant minds and rare talents withered on the vine as her acquaintances fell into cycles of coping. A few even took out their frustrations on her, and treated her poorly.

"In a lot of ways," Moore says, "I was very lucky. I got to experience the Black community on a lot of different levels. I got to see a lot."

Even with that background, EYEJ might never have come into being had not an innocent young man lost his life at the hands of a suspicious neighbor in Florida in early 2012.

When shooter George Zimmerman was acquitted of murdering Trayvon Martin, Moore - a former executive with Travelzoo and Splash Financial then working as an independent marketing agent - and friends at Plymouth Church in Shaker Heights essentially founded EYEJ on the spot. Shocked like many others, they immediately began making plans to engage with young people of color all over Northeast Ohio, in hopes of preventing similar tragedies in the future.

Only theirs were no ordinary plans. They didn't want to be just another passionate but high-minded organization afraid or unwilling to venture into and listen to Cleveland's Black community. As a marketing specialist, Moore had already seen too many cases in Cleveland of campaigns that misjudged, misunderstood, or otherwise failed to register with real life on the ground.

She didn't want to establish another hot-line or resource center no one ever uses. She sought to engage directly with young people, to listen to them and follow their suggestions within the unique political landscape of Cleveland.

EYEJ



Youth
Council



EMPOWERING YOUTH, EXPLORING JUSTICE



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“People in Cleveland do not know how to talk to each other,” Moore says. “There’s such a lack of trust here. You can’t expect people to come to you. You have to meet them where they are. We’re not coming in saying we’re experts. It’s a back-and-forth dialogue.”

The EYEJ Youth Council came into being shortly thereafter. At the urging of several donor organizations, Moore gathered a group of young people from all walks of life eager to follow the advice of Gandhi and be the change they wished to see in the world.

Moore and others designed curriculum to guide them as they learned to identify key issues, brainstorm solutions, and attempt to execute plans. Since its founding in 2013, the council has emerged as a powerful force on the scene in Northeast Ohio and is now actively working on ways to close the Digital Divide in Cleveland.

When the Youth Council convenes, Moore says, “There’s something wonderful just in being human and sharing, and it has nothing to do with color or age or socio-economic background. I know that this is powerful, and I know that this is needed.”

Many times since 2013, Moore has considered calling it quits. Indeed, often, she’s been urged to do just that, by important figures who see EYEJ’s mission as unrealistic, pointless, or misguided. Instead of enjoying a prosperous career in marketing, she’s put her heart, soul, and personal resources into growing EYEJ into the thriving, active organization it is today.

In Moore’s mind, the only thing that’s unrealistic is the thought of giving up. A Libra and a person of faith, it’s in her very essence to seek equality, to end oppression. She loves people – all people, no matter the color of their skin – and can’t help but see the connections that bind everyone. All she can do is keep empowering young people, keep exploring justice.

“It’s not only a calling,” Moore says. “It’s who I am. There is magic in this, and it deserves to be elevated. Every time I think about stopping, I just focus on the mission and trust in God. I just keep going.”

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