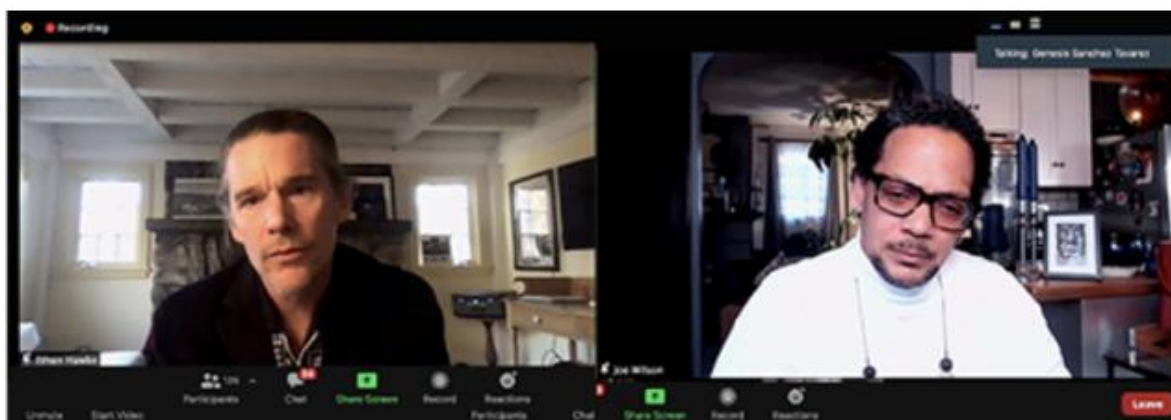




We've been on countless Zooms, but how about a Zoom meeting with famous actors, where you help raise money for after-school programming? [Genesis Sanchez Tavaréz](#), litigation associate in New York, had the privilege of moderating a conversation last month with actors Ethan Hawke and Joe Wilson Jr, as well as Senator Sheldon Whitehouse, because of her relationship with the Providence After School Alliance (PASA) program in Rhode Island and its Executive Director, Hillary Salmons.

Genesis met Hillary when she joined PASA as a 6th grader in 2006. "I remained connected to the organization and to Hillary ever since. Hillary is retiring this year and asked me to be part of PASA's executive search committee to find her successor." And shortly thereafter, Hillary invited Genesis to moderate PASA's fundraiser with a couple of famous actors, pointing out that her skills as a former debater, now lawyer, and her experience as a PASA student made her the perfect choice.



From left: Ethan Hawke and Joe Wilson, Jr.

1. What did you talk about with Ethan Hawke and Joe Wilson Jr?

"The conversation revolved around two major topics. First, we focused on the impact of Covid-19 in the arts industry. Joe Wilson, Jr. spoke personally to that, as he was in the middle of producing a new show when all performances were halted due to the pandemic.

"Then, we discussed what steps could be and should be taken to improve student access to after school programs. Joe and Ethan stated that the first step of this process is to 'give back the money owed to the communities it was taken from' by investing in after school programming."

PASA serves schools that are underfunded — schools that, for example, don't have resources for a tennis program or a volleyball team. It was PASA that enabled Genesis to "participate in cooking, sailing, hip hop, and tennis." Genesis' middle and high school "did not offer those programs, and PASA served to fill that gap."

2. Did anything about the experience surprise you?

"Off screen, it was the newly formed relationship between Ethan and Joe! They had never met, but both worked with Denzel Washington at different times," Genesis said. They were two of the six people in a small breakout room after the panel, and by the end of the event, as Genesis described, Ethan and Joe were in a full-blown bromance, inviting each other to dinner and looking forward to being able to shake hands and watch shows together.

3. What is a takeaway that you want everyone to know?

"Ethan explained that we oftentimes find that the list of funding priorities excludes youth – but there is a huge importance in funding organizations that work to supplement kids' education." Genesis illuminated the issue by adding her own words, "Although racial segregation was found unconstitutional, the same lines are drawn using socio-economic status. Funding after-school education in low income communities is necessary and helps bridge the gap. Without PASA, I wouldn't have had exposure to arts and theater which are fabric of society. Organizations like PASA are critical so that students in underfunded schools can enjoy the same access as their peers."

The event Genesis moderated, "RADICAL RE-IMAGINING: How Arts Education Helps Youth Embrace Change, Re-Frame History, and Discover Themselves," was a huge success and raised over \$30,000 for PASA. The event also honored Genesis' mentor Hillary, the organization's outgoing Executive Director. Segments of the event will be uploaded to PASA's website: www.mypasa.org.

"They say it takes a village to raise a child. Getting me to where I am today took an entire community, and PASA played a central role," said Genesis. "I'm just happy to give back to an organization that gave me so much."

