

My name is Shannon Smith. I'm a Detroit banker. Specifically, I focus on philanthropic investments to non-profits that focus on social services in Detroit. I think the fact growing up with a deaf mother really showed me how important it was to support others. Those who may not necessarily be able to speak for themselves, those who may not necessarily be able to convey the message in the way that other people will understand. I have a very fine memory of being young and in my home early on, my parents, they chose to send me to private school and all the while we didn't have heat in our home... and so this is a sacrifice I saw my mom make early on. And it really showed me the importance of education in my parent's eyes, the fact that they were doing this. It explains why I am where I am now, as well as why I'm so passionate about giving back.

I'm a true example of upward mobility, but I also saw that as not just something for myself, but to use that almost as an obligation to make sure that I can get more people to that table because I've figured out a way to get to that table. So instead of just being at the table by myself - and representing a past that I've come from. It's almost acknowledging that everyone has a different experience. Making sure that we spread that opportunity to make sure that we include those who don't feel like they are included in society, respecting, you know, those Detroiters that for years put the city on their back in the times of decline, stood tall and smiled through it all, that aren't necessarily being heard now and making sure that we don't ever forget them. I love doing that, but also bringing light to the situations that are dark, you know, that people may or may want to kind of scan over, you know, bringing light to issues that people may not want to speak about, such as race, such as economics, the education or the lack thereof in all those areas, being comfortable with having the conversation, but also being comfortable with identifying those people who need to be at the table or speaking up for the people who are not at the table yet.