

My name's Lisa Johanon. I'm the director of Central Detroit Christian (CDC) and have been for almost 25 years. So some of my childhood memories are living in a household of a lot of chaos and confusion, four brothers and sisters in a very small home. A lot of dysfunction, I would say. I was the person who was the responsible one. I would sometimes help my older sister do her homework. I would say where I developed a family sense was really in going to church and really and having a youth group when I was in my teenage years – and that had a big impact on me and still, still does today in terms of the work I'm doing.

I think when I went off to college, I still didn't understand fully what I was going to be doing with my life – as it related to young people in particular. I was in Chicago and out my dorm window I could see the Cabrini-Green Housing Projects, which don't exist anymore, but at that time were the second poorest area in the nation... and very volatile, very violent and very attractive for me. You know, and I said this... this is it. This is what I want to do. You know, I really want to help disenfranchised people. I want to really take this area and turn it upside down. And that was a very bold and audacious goal for an 18 year old to take on, but did that for seven years, working in the projects, working with gang members, seeing you know, some of what we see right now in Chicago going on with all the youth violence or just the violence and shooting in general.

So my dream is captured through the verse in the Bible – Zechariah 8:4-5. It says; Once again, old men and women will be standing in the streets with canes in their hands, telling stories to one another and children will be playing in the streets – And it's an exciting picture to me, because it's a picture of freedom. It's a picture of people feeling safe and all the other great things that come with having a whole community. And yes, it's the work that has to go along with that. But it's what we strive for – that all of this can happen.