



**Highlights for WIL
September 25, 2020**

**“Leaders Living Their Purpose: Voices
Against Hate”**

featuring **Dr. Allison Padilla-Goodman**, SE Regional Director at the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) and **Jill Savitt**, President & CEO for the National Center for Civil and Human Rights

Summary: For our 208th monthly WIL seminar, #8 virtual, we welcomed two of Atlanta’s – and the country’s – foremost experts on this topic. Allison and Jill are not only friends and colleagues, they’re self-described “co-conspirators” for advocacy, education, and coalition building across the broadest possible spectrum. Their work is about raising awareness, studying the past and the present and bringing people together with different views and backgrounds for better understanding, for change, and to have an active impact.

It was mesmerizing to hear Allison and Jill tell their own stories - from childhood to adulthood, through multiple leadership, advocacy and learning experiences both domestically and internationally. Clearly they were born to do the work they do and become experts as well as leaders living their purpose. Two recent accomplishments include ADL’s leading the coalition for Hate Free Georgia, a legislative campaign to get a hate crimes law successfully passed (GA was one of only five states that didn’t have this law). Another accomplishment was Jill’s leadership in ramping up the planned transition from attraction to learning lab/education center during the pandemic in order to provide online training for diversity and inclusion. This is/ will be available to law enforcement, businesses, schools, and the community at large.

Lastly, reviewing Allison and Jill’s extensive and impressive bios and learning from their shared career and life experiences, there’s no doubt that they have already achieved what many would consider a lifetime of accomplishments. However, it appears these two passionate and purposeful leaders have only just begun. There’s so much more to be done to stop hatred, racism, anti-Semitism or any “ism” that impacts our fellow human beings. As individuals and as participants of this WIL program, all of us were both invited and challenged to get involved, share our voices and be role models for good. We certainly has two role models in Allison and Jill.

Background – Personal & Professional:

- Allison grew up in New Orleans, 3 siblings; both parents politically active; Hurricane Katrina had huge impact on her / her family; that experience strongly influenced her further education, especially her PhD dissertation and her life
- Jill came from NY / Hell's Kitchen and spent early years in Ramsey, NJ before moving to Miami later; at age 9 her letter to a newspaper editor re girls playing baseball resulted in article entitled "Tell the Boys We're Equal"
- Allison has lived on 3 continents and several U.S. cities. Earned a B.A. from Middlebury College, an M.A. in Latin American Studies from Tulane and a PhD and M.A. in Sociology from the City University of New York Graduate Center where her work focused on immigration, urban development and qualitative research methods.
- Jill began her career as a reporter and worked at an NPR affiliate in D.C. Graduated summa cum Laude, Phi Beta Kappa from Yale U.
- Allison's stellar career includes a Distinguished Service Award for her tireless and impactful work in New Orleans; she also was an academic and a published scholar.
- Jill's career includes multiple roles at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C.; serving as a human rights consultant for various organizations; a campaign director for causes like the Dream for Darfur and for the Ms. Foundation's "Take Our Daughters to Work" campaign – among many others
- Allison preceded Jill in coming to ATL for her current role, and she was one of the first people to welcome Jill when she moved here in early 2019.
- Jill actually curated the top floor contemporary Human Rights gallery 10 years ago before there was even a Center.

Key Lessons and Take-aways (Memorable Quotes):

- "There's an information problem in our country. We no longer agree on what's factual. At our museum, we try to tell the history and tell it accurately." (Jill)
- "Hatred can't exist in a vacuum, people are usually equal opportunity haters." (Allison)
- "Human rights is really about the worth and dignity of every human being. Bullies pick on people they think no one will protect." (Jill)
- "From my work in academia I gained insights on how academia and activist communities tend to operate independent of each other, but the work is really intertwined." (Allison)

- “Living and working in New Orleans, I had a profound level of despair after Katrina re the unequal educational experiences and the disappearance of schools.” (Allison)
- “In order to have a way to break down boxes (of thinking), you have to get people to agree on common values.” (Jill)
- “Teaching one of my favorite classes on racial profiling at Hunter College in NY, I had an experience that completely changed my perspective following one student’s email. This experience enlightened me on how one incident can have multiple perspectives and how our different backgrounds inform those perspectives.” (Allison)
- “At the Center, we’re launching an Advocacy Academy that will teach people through case studies of human history. There are techniques you can use to do this work and it’s how to make progress.” (Jill)
- “Sometimes the most important kind of leadership is facilitation – facilitating different opinions and bringing people to end up with the best results.” (Allison)
- “One of the biggest campaigns I worked on was organizing retired military leaders (admirals, generals, etc) to speak out about U.S. interrogation policies. It was a ‘winnable’ campaign...and it’s important to win. I’ve been a professional campaigner for issues, not for political candidates.” (Jill)
- “ADL is a century old anti-hate organization. One of ADL’s areas of work is investigations including analysis of trends involving harassment, vandalism, etc. There was a 66% higher level of these incidents from 2018 to 2019; 100% higher than the past 5 years; and the highest on record in our 40+ year history.” (Allison)
- “One final program to be launched at the Center is called Truth and Transformation. The work is a part of the work Allison and I are doing with interfaith groups. You need truth tellers to overcome atrocities.” (Jill)
- “One community-based example of a Truth Commission is in Maine where their focus is on native American children who were taken from their families.” (Allison)
- “I love working at the Center because it’s permanent compared to other work / campaigns I’ve been involved in. We’re looking forward having an Innovation Lab and building a family gallery as well.” (Jill)

Resources to learn more on this overall topic:

- Web: Equalitydignity.org/interfaith-response -- Atlanta.adl.org -- civilandhumanrights.org
- Books: *The Good Fight – Slavery by Another Name – Caste: The Origins of Our Discontent*
- Movie: *Shared Legacies*
- Podcasts: *Seeing Whiteness - Finding Fred – Seen on Radio*
- MLK Jr’s Letter from the Birmingham jail
- Universal Declaration of Human Rights DA Charter