

Press & Turn The Tables on MLK Day 2016

Slow down and reflect with this curated story from the FRIDAY App.

Let's Talk About: Unexpected Connections

By Kate Thomas

Commuting from New Jersey to New York, I've learned to stick to myself—to sit or stand in a tight space, with many other people around, and pretend they are not there. Sometimes I am content with this sense of individualism and independence, and other times I crave to engage.

I stumbled upon an invitation for interaction in the 42nd Street subway station. I noticed a man giving away free balloon animals, a colorful tiled mural, and then a table set up with posters reading “Free Henna”, “Free Quran”, and “Muslims Giving Back”. My eyes scanned a large banner with the word “Racism” crossed out.

Three Muslim women, wearing hijabs and full veils, were at the henna and Quran table, dispelling negative stereotypes through simple, human interactions. I waited in the short line and then spent the next twenty-five minutes chatting with strangers, unexpectedly connecting with people from a different culture from my own.

I found myself wondering why avoiding connection is so easy to do in such a diverse, full city. In an effort to change this pattern, I placed my hand on the older woman's knee as she drew a beautiful, brown design gently across my skin. It spanned from my left wrist to my fingernails—a flower, paisley, and little dots and lines.

This MLK Day, how can you connect with individuals and communities different from your own?

Kate Thomas was a 2014-2015 Repair the World: Baltimore Education Justice Fellow, and is currently earning her MSW at NYU's Silver School of Social Work.

About FRIDAY

Each Friday, 30 minutes before sunset, the FRIDAY App reminds you that it's time to slow down. Read short stories and questions to light a few sparks and stoke some conversations. “Sunset” your phone into a blissful twilight to help you unplug.

Designed by **REBOOT**  + **IDEO**

This project has come to life thanks to the partnership and generous support of the The Righteous Persons Foundation.



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