Kerry Hansen ([00:00](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=3hgkTqBPBV3kHLBCJhHVKLIgJeOfJ6tlodC9G5GjqiAUfPO1wdacMUbbj7x4lRnnxni5ljLlyw_Q6rrlqkxUdhIQFh8&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=0.24)):

Hello, and welcome to the next audio cast of our new series, Racial and Social Injustice: Continuing The Conversation. I'm Kerry Hansen. I'm the editor of Public Management Magazine for the International City County Management Association. Joining me is Opal Mauldin-Jones, city manager of Lancaster, Texas. Opal, thank you for speaking with me today.

Opal Mauldin-Jones ([00:19](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=jdKRvkucSRQp0AjcdFpeHMF35kfAbg2eks4fbQJcWlrjnheZmH3dPHgyiF4Bw_ndGXMO9RXmp4ZpO9KQEMHCgluiI24&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=19.55)):

Thank you for having to Kerry.

Kerry Hansen ([00:21](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=55QZq612yf7wV8Wuc4LpWRfvcsOM8_xTeCHKVtbtzpLman5Y-aHo-d-ZG0A4buh6RxeGR5VJmB4W1zzu_INRM1bieZM&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=21.8)):

So, a little bit more about your background. Opal began her municipal experience as community relations coordinator and public information officer for the City of Lancaster in 2003. And then, she progressed to her current position. Her public service career began in 1993 on the staff of US House of Representative member, Ernie Bernice Johnson of the 30th District of Texas. And she also worked on the staff of representative Bob Filner 50th district of California. She was a member of the 2010 leadership ICMA class. And she completed the July, 2018 Harvard Kennedy School of Executives in state and local government.

Kerry Hansen ([00:57](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=B3IhslEWqvlfpN-aOkjtlSCc9Oefb1zTz4zzZt5XpYfZGn696VhFFJPTTC8sDPU_NTHxy1qP3gs5LkDkdGkJBG_SHXw&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=57.92)):

So, given your extensive background, ICMA called upon you to contribute to our special magazine supplement. It's called Moments of Change: Leading with Courage and Commitment for Racial and Social Justice. Opal wrote an article in the supplement titled Let Us Be The Change. So, I wanted to speak with you today to get more insight into what inspired your article and your experience as a city manager. So, let's get started.

Opal Mauldin-Jones ([01:20](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=TstSEMT38p0fusa5Bymro8QgjZA62nJgb8X32znz-Ja1lFksgaJdqdpkIe_GppDZcaeeW_J5Gq2od1AC3o9u4y84CZw&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=80.17)):

Sounds good.

Kerry Hansen ([01:20](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=rYSzLWasPLBDN8MqgzInEwl5JpcnPNq3ZHmyzACr5OjYCJ3obZMkAnnAn-RxbKZziSN6ffz-_lYhLb_rFcWi1IzCdRc&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=80.49)):

So in your article, Let Us Be The Change, you begin by comparing the COVID-19 pandemic with the pandemic of racism that Black Americans have experienced for over three centuries. So, the coronavirus has really brought to light a lot of the racial inequities inherent in our country. So, have you seen this in Lancaster?

Opal Mauldin-Jones ([01:42](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=n1sxpRuw8BiM55vAmSsxj6pbN9Op5IXFpgO0j3gaR-HTIPd7dDeKaUF3CWQquIVovGwuWGJ5mNCqZ5faHlJeF9BOQzM&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=102.2)):

So, Kerry, Lancaster is predominantly a minority community. Over 68% of our population is African-American and Hispanic. And so, while even with a predominant minority community, Lancaster believe it or not experienced some racial bias and injustices amongst the community. And why I say that is because oftentimes individuals believe that to have racial bias it means you're a bad person. However, oftentimes, racial bias is simply just the fact that you don't see beyond the lens of your own personal experience, and recognize the experiences, or attempt to recognize the experiences of others.

Opal Mauldin-Jones ([02:31](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=zRiNPKT2zV_P5ZPnaeNEwRkr7xaNAuFDf-ZjF1290ZY_erlckQWj0gyxYW75HhSNKg0WG4R9MowIpZYbBNPzl3ujl-s&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=151.22)):

And so, some of the things that we've been doing to address that is we have been looking at and exploring our policies to make sure that those policies do not have systemic challenges our practices within them that further contribute to, or erode the rights or the privileges of African-American and Hispanic, or people of color in general. An example of that is just looking at our public safety policies to ensure that how they are carried out is equitable, fair, and without bias as much as possible for all people.

Kerry Hansen ([03:14](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=BgnT5dMym6GdkcT1nQs0nlqM2QtwfVbyx1M9god33d_elRI4mqgXpcQbdl09N62i5S6c3uqWv6VZ6GZeLYAFlmilqko&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=194.04)):

Oh, that's great. So, in your article, you quoted John C. Maxwell, who said that, "Leadership is seeing the possibilities in a situation, while others are seeing the limitations." So, what's one possibility for your city that you think has come, or could come out of this time of civil unrest?

Opal Mauldin-Jones ([03:31](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=-ngLYtgsL5uiEXcYLN1xNve3h0Gxum6ukiUFNhkWYNQbGt1YG3EpmPO3fk3iuNtl8pIl5P1hvTucG-hRbT4L67xoCHA&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=211.76)):

The possibility to have those uncomfortable, critical conversations for opportunities for change is what I believe has come out of this time of unrest. Oftentimes, we look at challenges as being something to avoid. During this period of time, I think the possibility has come back, it opens up the opportunity to have those uncomfortable conversations regarding race, regarding gender, regarding socioeconomic statuses to really dive into what are the ground root, or the foundational implications of some things that have happened in our country over the last three centuries, four centuries, actually, that impact the people? And so, that is an opportunity and a possibility that I do not believe would have necessarily surfaced without a situation like this occurring.

Opal Mauldin-Jones ([04:39](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=q3qT_iDENItS4-Lcxa2gG4T2bHL-j26351b-h7vJX5FYJbjyY_YGjmBYuzPFowhpxxFjBAHkm2wQV0tyyTdOZxO5BAY&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=279.38)):

It's unfortunate that it has happened around the country. However, these incidences have opened up an opportunity to have that dialogue. To really create a space to have those uncomfortable conversations. And being placed in a position to have those uncomfortable conversations. As managers, oftentimes, we look at these issues as being political, or being something that policymakers need to take a look at. But however, as a manager, we have a role, we have a responsibility, and often an obligation to make sure that whether it's implementation of practices or policies, whether it's in our hiring that we look at the possibility, and we see it as an opportunity versus a challenge.

Kerry Hansen ([05:27](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=ibWW112fWmyU6BBqa6OzHF_o-7RmpmV_C6athoFXBjfZ4gK5Xard4nuP_c-gcsWLKL3gKg1_i1-5L6zDutXXA7nDXa0&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=327)):

Yeah, that makes a lot of sense. So, what advice do you have for local government leaders, and how do we build on this momentum now and use it to shape our future?

Opal Mauldin-Jones ([05:38](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=CyJK_QOH1Ke4PstXHgeHE7YeuHrLXsioVBte-FkCaexvaIURR2eyvQ4tz_RNBoGtPZYPV1K1_VQBbo4oCdH1tE-vIOQ&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=338.63)):

The advice that I would give is be willing to be uncomfortable, be willing to be the voice in the room. I believe that we have a ethical responsibility to speak up, to encourage the conversation, to look for the opportunities, to have the dialogue, to implement the policies that are being directed by our governing bodies to make long-term and lasting change. Even if it's within the hiring of the personnel, or within the selection of the personnel that we select for hiring. I believe that, as local government leaders, it's important for us to be the voice, to stand up, step up, and implement even those things that may create fear for us. Sometimes it's the fear of the unknown because of the uncomfortableness of change. But as a local government leader, I think that we have that duty and that responsibility because it will change the future. It's going to change our present, and it will also impact our future.

Kerry Hansen ([06:49](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=wQNfjwFqfiu6ws2413N7KFN-PtCaaRp7YQ6ywvt4zb2CowGjU77JhePk-AY087LMcdsGES6bwK7mrA0AElHzWPW1fec&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=409.18)):

So, this is clearly an important moment in history and, hopefully, the start of meaningful lasting change. And so, thinking to the future, what can the next generation of local government leaders learn from this moment in time?

Opal Mauldin-Jones ([07:02](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=x5rM-LNcyxlFtQINyDoNDURcmRBYXlKEOkqCoiAk9w__Vz3B4dvSa-7Rv2QPT8owD2Y5YtLF66nF36h5CDmlxU5gnp8&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=422.11)):

What I believe that we can learn is that we must know and understand our past. But we cannot dwell on, or believe that our past has set, and that that has to be our future. I believe that we need to be willing, again, to be uncomfortable. We need to be willing to have the dialogue. We need to be willing to be that change that we're expecting to see.

Opal Mauldin-Jones ([07:29](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=elJAomasps1EAYZ7qNmrDdgeAHov_jS3_B4crPXdAPWhCtN6u4dYrzR-VKM_KShYTsMaY3kzJNKEn6TaIMWxiueADZM&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=449.68)):

I think that as the next generation of local government leaders, we need to be willing to listen. And truly actively and with engagement listen. We need to also be willing to learn from our past. And also learn from others outside of our normal fear of influence. And I also think that just some good human kindness, and love, and respect for one another is going to be critical for the next generation of leaders. And just like I ended my article with the quote by Arnold Bennett, where he said, "Any change, even change for the better, is always accompanied by discomfort," I think we need to be willing, or the next generation of leaders needs to be willing to be uncomfortable, so that change can occur, lasting change can occur for the betterment of our entire country and our profession.

Kerry Hansen ([08:27](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=ZYmDxaIk_Zh1gN8vE1hJRFEZoAU6k6d3aYrfFgT85NlS49Pan6IXrAi84coOevh-tr-8Jp6AdngqM8cheDMGIANrnkY&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=507.92)):

Yeah, absolutely. Well, this has been great. Thank you so much for speaking with me today.

Opal Mauldin-Jones ([08:34](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=lGXvzzFBz004p8QuzgELSdJn9hAr380afSnJV43LqWTIqo1wKlUw8B99oQDb-aVtZMP7K_MSJLbceY9abXLTzB1Dzb8&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=514.44)):

Thank you so much for having me, Kerry. I really appreciate the opportunity to share.

Kerry Hansen ([08:38](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=pnRrCI7gqpwoAuIv8WlL54sQeBjmPiZRgkdVKqGCbIzhw6QK6FSgy9wkl31SPkelrXBjRZUOFmqMieHRsHj36Mx1Rbc&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=518.83)):

Well, we're glad to have you. And for those listening, thank you for tuning into ICMA's new audio cast series, Racial and Social Injustice: Continuing The Conversation.