

LISTEN + LEARN

A CONVERSATION WITH MRS. VIRGINIA ALI, OWNER OF BEN'S CHILI BOWL

March 28, 2021

Everyone has a memory and a story to share of Ben's Chili bowl—whether they have been once or are a regular customer. We had the honor to hear from one of the founders, Ms. Virginia Ali. Ms. Ali started Ben's Chili Bowl with her husband at age 24.

Ben's Chili Bowl and its founder are the embodiment of resilience—staying open through the riots of the 1960s and the pandemic today. Over the years they have hosted presidents, activists, politicians and musicians, and of course all the DC locals—welcoming them all.

Reflection Questions

- Ms. Ali talked about filling a need with Ben's Chili Bowl by welcoming everyone and creating space for connection. What are steps you can take in your community to make space for connection, and welcome those who may look or think differently than you?
- "I love people. I find them so interesting." Is this your outlook? How can you shift your mindset to love people well and seek to understand them?
- What is your hope for Washington, DC or the city that you call home? Is there something you can do to contribute to that happening?

Action Steps

- Ben's Chili Bowl is a DC icon and part of the rich history of the city. Take some time to explore [DC women's history](#) and [Black history and culture](#) in our home city.
- Donate to [Ben's Chili Bowl Foundation](#): they donate money and meals to many organizations throughout the DMV.
- Support other restaurants/businesses: Could you only go to BIPOC or women-owned businesses for one week?
 - [Black-chef restaurants](#) in DC
 - Find Black-owned restaurants using the [EatOkra App](#).

- ❑ [Women-owned businesses in DC](#)
- ❑ Visit [Ben's Chill Bowl](#) and say hello to the Ali family, or order online!

Additional Resources

- ❑ For additional resources and to find the recording of this Listen + Learn, visit ncc.re/reconcile.
- ❑ If you want to keep up to date with Listen + Learn events, follow us on Instagram or Facebook at [@listenandlearndc](#).