Sunday meetings and public forums on ‘Race and Racism in American History’
August 25, 2020

Omar Ali, Bree Person, Tamera Jones

We are teachers, students, civil rights attorneys, artists, scientists, musicians, historians, retirees, former police officers, editors, office workers, parents, brothers, sisters, sons, daughters.

We came together in early June to connect emotionally-socially-politically in response to the outrage of the killing of George Floyd and countless other black people by the police. We kept meeting every Sunday evening as we were shaken.

We created community with each other to give us strength to move forward by connecting with and looking to our history.

We spoke about the things we were involved in on the ground, in Greensboro, Durham, Goldsboro, Raleigh, and New York. We read and listened to the words of Frederick Douglass, James Baldwin, John Lewis, and Kimberly Jones, among others. And we took our discussions to the broader public with a series of forums on “Race and Racism in American History.”

The forums we created off of our Sunday meetings were a continuation of the community-building, healing, nurturing, and demanding we all do in the face of systemic and brutal acts of racism in the nation and the world. And we keep building with our passion, our pain, and our joy—creating new possibilities.

It is the hope and expectation of these discussions to enlighten and enable us to have further dialogue with friends, neighbors, colleagues and co-workers; to hear and be heard; to learn about each other’s experiences, and create new ways of being, feeling, and thinking; to self-reflect on our actions—the things we say, the things we do; the things we don’t say, the things we don’t do—and how this affects others and ourselves in the environments that shape us, even as we shape these environments … moment, by moment, by moment.

As Baldwin wrote, “History is not the past. It is the present.” We, all of us, make our history. Join us in creatively building community, whatever that looks like to you and wherever you are. We are with you.
A poem by the Sunday group participants
(directed and compiled by Lalenja Harrington)

In the face of
confusion
stress
being tired
of being tired
stress
trauma
exhaustion
emptiness
sadness
disappearing
wandering
paralysis
loneliness
isolation
forced joy and fear
there comes hope
and faith in divine intervention
that we will have the strength
and will
to move forward
to listen
dialogue
document
expand knowledge
be in solidarity
empower
liberate
break out of boxes
contemplate
mobilize
collaborate
and meditate
our way
into the future
Thank you to all who either led or participated in the series of public forums. We are especially grateful to the following community-builders:

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Lalenja Harrington  Dominick X
Nodia Mena  Kasia Sanchez
Mariah Hunt  Nadja Cech
James Stephens  Gavin Douglas
Derick Jones  Andrea Hunter
Aliyah Ruffin  Brittany Rodman
Linda Dunston-Stacey  Tsion Hailu
Torren Gatson  Alexis Brown
Portia Harris  Rebecca Muich
Justin Demeanor  Julia Mendez-Smith
Darrenta Haley  Aisha Chaudhry
Sangeetha Shivaji  Lucy Mary Ali
Xan Marshal  Jennifer Feather
Kenneth Wilson  Andrew Hamilton
Armondo Collins  Patricia Lynch
Janet Harrell  Bret Mazzei
Mike Cauthen  Amanda Josiah
Steve Haines  Mike Harris
Justina Licata  Noelle Morrissette
Theo Barklage  Sherine Obare
Hewan Girma  Arthur Durham