

CHECKING IN:
**REMEMBERING
SEPTEMBER 2016**
ONE YEAR LATER

In September 2016 residents of Charlotte found themselves in the national narrative – a police-involved shooting that was the impetus for demonstrations, protests and civil unrest. Charlotte was shocked but should not have been surprised when affected community groups expressed their anger and frustration over issues that had been buried in our ground for way too long. Many could not believe what we were seeing and experiencing in the Queen City. We heard people say, "This is not who we are." But, too many knew that sadly this is exactly who we are – and that what happened affects us all.

As our community began to accept the reality of what was happening - and to take steps to address long standing concerns around equity, fairness, inclusion and police/community relations – Community Building Initiative (CBI) and the Community Relations Committee (CRC) served on the front lines as a ready resource as people and organizations responded. We supported the crafting of a “Statement of Commitment” signed by over 2,000 people and created a Dialogue Guide (“Talking Together in Challenging Times”) shared with partners and stakeholders and made available on-line. Deep, enduring relationships allowed our two organizations to be a resource in a time of crisis.

As we approach the anniversary of September 2016, CBI and CRC are once again offering resources to people, organizations and our community. We know there is value in looking back and in looking forward as we prepare to commemorate, observe and continue to learn from what took place last year and what is underway as a result. We are also painfully aware of the turmoil and tensions that erupted in Charlottesville. We have seen demonstrations and rallies in Charlotte and in cities throughout our country in response. We continue in our commitment to confront long-term racial divisions and discrimination, to build a more fair and just community and to support constructive dialogue between allies and across difference to increase understanding, inspire action and promote accountability. We invite you to use these resources for your own “Check In” and let us know how you - and we as a community - are doing.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY “CHECK IN?”

A friend has likened last September to having a heart attack – catastrophic and surprising though perhaps inevitable because of family history or years of not paying attention to troubling signs. Once we move through the initial trauma of a heart attack, we face the necessity to institute changes. We may adjust our behaviors, improve our diet, embark on an exercise program and take other preventative steps. Periodically, we submit to a “check in” to see how we are doing and what additional actions or adjustments may be needed.

Reflections & Connections

What We Are Offering:

1. Food for Thought

- The September 2016 “Statement of Commitment” that was signed by over 2,000 people. A copy of the Statement is included.
- Reflections on the “Statement of Commitment” from people in our community.
- A Question for You:
In light of what happened in Charlottesville, what is most relevant about the Statement of Commitment for you today?

2. Conversation Guide

- The enclosed “Checking In About September 2016: One Year Later” Conversation Guide includes questions for reflection and guidelines for participants and facilitators.

3. Calendar of Events

- An evolving Calendar of Events provides ways and places that you can engage and connect with others during September 2017.
- The Calendar will be updated as additional activities and opportunities are publicized.

What We Are Asking:

1. Share the “Statement of Commitment” and Personal Reflections with others and encourage them to reflect and connect. Consider writing your own reflection and share it in 200 words or less.
2. Use the Conversation Guide to engage your co-workers, family and friends in meaningful, impactful dialogue. Let us know how it goes, and please reach out to CBI or CRC if you need a volunteer facilitator for your conversation or if you have any questions about the guide itself.
3. Share public events that you hear about or plan to attend so that we can add them to the calendar.
4. Let us hear from you in person or on-line:
 - Share your reflections on the “**Statement Of Commitment;**”
 - Let us know how the **Conversation Guide** worked AND what took place;
 - Share your experience at one of the public events included in the **September Calendar;**
 - Use **#checkin2017 @CBCharlotte** to post your reflections (200 words or less) online in written OR video format.

“Statement of Commitment”

SEPTEMBER 2016

The recent shooting and death of Keith Lamont Scott and the subsequent protests have struck a chord deep within our community. They have surfaced questions of who we are, what we think, how we feel, and what we value. To those questions, we would simply say that we are a community which understands that:

- The anger and pain are real;
- The issues connected to the reality of racism are not new;
- The work requires change in systems and structures;
- Our work will be on-going and long term and must include additional voices, leadership and perspectives;
- The changes required will not be easy or comfortable;
- We must have the courage to listen, to respond and act now.

THE STATEMENT WAS SIGNED BY OVER 2,000 INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS/ORGANIZATIONS IN CHARLOTTE-MECKLENBURG AND APPEARED AS A FULL-PAGE AD IN THE CHARLOTTE OBSERVER ON OCTOBER 2, 2016.

CONTACTS

Dianne English, Director
Community Building Initiative
704.943.9761 | denglish@cbicharlotte.org

Willie Ratchford, Director
Community Relations Committee
704.336.2195 | wretchford@charlottenc.gov

REFLECTIONS

SEPTEMBER 2017

BISHOP CLAUDE ALEXANDER, Senior Pastor, The Park Church

At the one-year anniversary of the police shooting death of Keith Lamont Scott and the subsequent protests/uprisings comes upon us, I have been struck by the following:

- How quickly times flies.
- Arresting attention is one thing. Maintaining attention is another.
- How little time you have to absorb one event before you are inundated by another.
- How much commitment and concentration must be given to see any degree of short or long term improvement.
- How much grace and patience it takes to achieve consensus around priorities.
- How far we yet have to go.
- How much more resolved we must be.

We must resolve to assume personal responsibility for going further than others are willing to go, drawing more closely than others are willing to do, seeing more clearly than others into the lives and conditions of those who are hurting, inconveniencing ourselves so that we may enter the lives of others in a healing and helpful way, ignoring the normal excuses that we are prone to make, and sacrificing privilege, schedule, and resources to have long-term impact.

AMALIA DELONEY, Founder, Co-Learning Action Project

“That we do not feel safe in this country is expected, but I did not think I would feel the same way in my own city.” LATINA ON CHARLOTTE’S EAST SIDE

This represents what many community members I talked with this past year feel. Black, Latinx, Asian, Trans, formerly incarcerated, migrant and/or poor, these storytellers are deeply traumatized. They do not feel more secure, valued or heard; rather, this year has brought increased violence to their lives in the form of displacement, immigration raids, unequal public accommodations and poverty. Well-framed headlines, provocative editorials, progressive local campaigns, and new initiatives have done little, if anything, to improve their sense of belonging or agency. *We let them down.* We all deserve to call Charlotte home. Yet, to do this will require transformation of more than policies; it will require that we become a trauma-informed city, where our reaction is no longer to punish, but to empathize and assist with healing. It will require that we create new learning spaces that are opportunities for sharing, and that we use these spaces to interrogate systems of power that cause harm and work to transform those systems. It’s not easy, but it’s necessary. Who’s in?

MICHAEL MARSICANO, President & CEO, Foundation For The Carolinas

As you turn the pages on the Leading on Opportunity Report, made possible in part by Foundation For the Carolinas, it does not take long to reach a striking photo of the September protests. In fact, that single photo makes everything in the report seem more real, proximate and urgent. I have no doubt that this important document is more honest and more profound in its narrative and in its corresponding recommendations than it otherwise would have been had the protests not transpired.

We have long been accused of being a city that does just enough to avoid conflict and not enough to achieve meaningful resolution. Some have said there can be no resolution without conflict, a prophecy I have never wanted to face. Well, we have experienced the conflict, and it shook us to the core. If the prophecy holds, we are now on the way to resolution.

I hope the Leading on Opportunity Report can serve as a pathway to meaningful change as this first anniversary of both the shootings and the protests coincides with the launch of the volunteer council helping to implement the recommendations.

JUSTIN PERRY, LCSW, LCAS, CSI Owner/Therapist, Perry Counseling Healing and Recovery PLLC

Charlotte, I love you, but you exemplify why I don't believe in scared straight interventions. Last September you temporarily were scared after briefly losing your most precious addictions, money and image. But like many first-time quitters, after being discharged from the detox of protests, you didn't work your program. You claimed a spiritual awakening; however, when a fresh batch of money and image came to town, you again traded your soul for a new high. You subsequently cut off the sober supports of protestors through trumped up criminal charges to get back to the business of relapse without nagging 12-step members in your ear.

The issues connected to the reality of racism are not new. However, many of us comfortably rewrap the same oppressive gifts. Not creating a racist system does not absolve us of being complicit enablers of said system. The question remains: Do we have to feel more pain to hit bottom or can we raise our bottom by fighting together against the addictive systemic enablers of White Supremacy, separate and unequal schools and housing, disproportionate suspensions and arrests, and serial displacement of residents?

PS: Can we get the developers, Charlotte's actual bosses, on the line?

KERR PUTNEY, Chief, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department

A year ago, I signed this very public commitment, pledging that CMPD would double-down on its efforts to strengthen our community. As promised:

- We listened. First, we listened in the streets as angry individuals in crowds of protesters shouted racial slurs and hateful accusations. Then, we listened at neighborhood forums, where individuals expressed distrust and frustration. We also heard a significant amount of support from the community for those in uniform. Finally, we went into middle and high schools and asked youth to share their thoughts.
- We responded. We put body-worn cameras on the majority of our officers. We made the release of video as timely as the law allows. We opened our doors to give the community more ways to get to know us, to provide feedback, and to learn more about our responsibilities and expectations.
- We took action. Thanks to many community partnerships, we contributed to economic mobility by employing 190 teenagers, including 40 charged with a felony. We supported hundreds of at-risk youth through at least a dozen other CMPD-initiated programs.

The time for talking about what needs to be done has passed. The work is nowhere near complete. Today, I invite you to join us. Attend a community safety forum, participate in one of our workshops. Volunteer for a program that empowers or educates those looking for a better future, or simply make a donation to a reputable nonprofit.

For this effort to be successful, every one of us must get involved.

RABBI JUDY SCHINDLER, Associate Professor of Jewish Studies and Director of the Stan Greenspon Center for Peace & Social Justice, Queens University of Charlotte

Last September woke Charlotteans up to the racial inequities, injustice, pain and anger that exist in our city. At this one-year anniversary, I reflect with tempered optimism on the positive steps we have witnessed. Race Matters for Juvenile Justice's Racial Equity workshops (formerly Dismantling Racism workshops) have been filled to overflowing. The Opportunity Task Force issued their report identifying barriers to upward mobility and laying out strategies for working towards a solution. Many houses of worship have engaged in education on issues surrounding race.

At this one-year anniversary, I reflect with regret on seeing how little we have done. The November election created paralyzing polarization that captured our community's attention. Energy was invested in protests, vigils, and marches that brought people together but did not engage people in active initiatives that would create greater safety, equity and justice.

Now is the time to move from listening and education to advocacy and community action aimed at achieving justice through systemic change. One year later, let us ask ourselves not what needs to be done but what we each will do. Let us not make more statements of commitment but let us make statements through our action.

CHECKING IN:
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CONVERSATION GUIDE

PURPOSE To provide a safe space for conversation, engagement and the sharing of feelings, thoughts and ideas in response to the anniversary of the events of September 2016.

TIME 90 minutes

NUMBER 10 to 12 people are an ideal number for one moderator.

ROOM SET-UP & SUPPLIES

- A **circle of chairs** is ideal. You can have more than one circle in a larger space if more people are engaged/involved.
- A **table for resources/refreshments** (if provided). Unless the conversation is taking place at lunchtime, beverages and a simple snack are adequate.
- **Nametags** are helpful if group members do not know one another.
- The **Conversation Packet and a pen** should be available for each participant.
- The **Conversation Packet** should include three (3) items:
 - 1) The “Checking In” Overview;
 - 2) The “Statement of Commitment;”
 - 3) Questions for Reflection.

GETTING STARTED

- **Identify a moderator** for each circle if one has not been provided. The moderator should be familiar with the **Guidelines for Moderators**.
- A **scribe** to record highlights from the conversation is optional.

GUIDELINES FOR MODERATORS

ROLE

Your role can be as simple as starting and ending the conversation, ensuring that everyone is encouraged to speak and that everyone is listening to others.

Two key elements of your role are to support:

1) **Authentic personal sharing; listening and giving space to others.**

This is not a “debate” or a problem-solving discussion. You are not trying to come to a singular conclusion but rather to express and better understand the multiple realities that may be in the room.

2) **Listening to others and accepting views and experiences that may be different from one’s own.**

The hope is that there is a new shared understanding in listening to each other.

GETTING STARTED

1. Begin with a round of simple **introductions**.
2. Share the **purpose of the conversation** in a sentence or two.
3. Review the **Guidelines for Participants** with the group.
4. Read together the “**Checking In: Remembering September One Year Later**” overview.
5. Read together the “**Statement of Commitment.**”
6. Review the “**Questions for Reflection.**”

PROCESS

1. Ask participants to **reflect on the questions in silence for a few minutes** (2 - 5’).
They may write down their responses, but that’s not essential. However, a few moments of silent reflection are crucial.
2. Take the **questions one at a time** and **let each person respond** before you move to the next question. These questions are offered as a way to promote reflection at both the personal and community levels.
3. **Summarize and paraphrase** what is said. Ask follow-up questions as appropriate.
4. **Move through the questions as time allows.** Do not be concerned if you do not get through all of the questions. It is more important that each person be able to speak and have the experience of listening to others.

CLOSURE & NEXT STEPS

1. **Closing Question:** How has your understanding increased through listening to others’ responses to the questions?
2. Encourage participants to **provide feedback** about their experience by using the hashtag **#checkin2017 @cbicharlotte**.
3. Encourage participants to **download the “Checking In” Packet**, to consider hosting their own conversation(s) and/or to attend some of the events included on the **Calendar of Events**.

GUIDELINES FOR PARTICIPANTS

- Speak your feelings and thoughts by making "I" statements.
- Use "both/and" thinking, rather than "either/or."
- Listen for understanding rather than judgment.
- Be open to thoughts and feelings different from your own.
- Build on what each other has said in the conversation.
- Remember that it's OK to disagree but NOT to attack, shame or blame.
- Honor confidentiality.
If you or any participant asks that a personal attribution stay in the room, that request should be honored.

OVERVIEW

In September 2016 residents of Charlotte found themselves in the national narrative – a police-involved shooting that was the impetus for demonstrations, protests and civil unrest. Charlotte was shocked but should not have been surprised when affected community groups expressed their anger and frustration over issues that had been buried in our ground for way too long. Many could not believe what we were seeing and experiencing in the Queen City. We heard people say, "This is not who we are." But, too many knew that sadly this is exactly who we are – and that what happened affects us all.

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QUESTIONS for REFLECTION

1. As you think back to events of Fall 2016 in Charlotte, what stands out for you?
Have the events of September 2016 had a personal impact on you?
2. What issues were brought to the surface by the events of September 2016?
3. What evidence have you seen, heard or experienced that supports you to believe that change is taking place in our community – or not?
4. What changes do you think need to happen? What would you like to be part of in the year ahead?