

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

“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.

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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.

YOUR PERSONAL REFLECTION

In light of what happened in Charlottesville, what is most relevant about the “Statement of Commitment” for you today?

Write your own reflection (200 words or less) and share it with us in written or video format using #checkin2017 @CBCharlotte.