

MOVING FORWARD: RECOMMENDATIONS

The retributive justice system is by nature oriented toward the individual, and separates that individual from the community in which both perpetrators and victims live. In so doing, this system fails to address wider community harms. Aside from (unequal) opportunities to serve on juries, everyday community members are not often viewed as stakeholders in the process, which is controlled by “experts” who often cannot relate to the experiences and perspectives of communities of poor people and people of color. As a result, most of the community has no involvement in righting wrongs.

As an exercise in transformative justice, we have taken a larger view and examined context within which these events occurred, the wide range of stakeholders harmed by the events of Nov. 3, 1979, and by official decisions surrounding it. Our recommendations seek to address the direct harm of those who were killed, wounded or psychologically traumatized, as well as what we believe were indirect harms suffered by groups including:

- residents of the City of Greensboro, which lost ground on human relations progress made after school desegregation;
- relatives and associates of both CWP demonstrators and Klan-Nazi shooters, who were stigmatized and suffered various forms of backlash;
- progressive grassroots organizers whose work was made more difficult by such processes as red-baiting;
- mill workers and other low-income residents who would have been beneficiaries of more successful organizing for racial and economic justice.

Recognizing that there is no way to undo the harm caused to individuals and communities on Nov. 3, 1979, we believe there are positive steps toward reconciliation, justice, and reparations that can be undertaken. With these goals in mind, we offer the following recommendations to the residents of Greensboro, to the governments of the City and Guilford County, and other local institutions. Previous commissions and review boards have gone before us and offered their own recommendations, some of which we wish to place again before the public since they have yet to be implemented.¹

1. General steps toward reconciliation

This section includes steps taken to recognize rights and responsibilities and acknowledge that wrongs were committed and harms occurred. Usually such steps are called reparations and aim to make restitution, compensate for harms, rehabilitate, provide satisfaction to victims and take measures to prevent future abuses. Nothing can restore a loved one’s life that has been taken, or fully restore the health and well-being of those battered by the events, but we believe that some meaningful gestures toward acknowledgment and redress can help those most harmed see a better future ahead. We believe that facing the truth about the past is an important first step toward repair. This section also includes measures to incorporate the information about Nov. 3, 1979, into the city’s official history and collective memory, attend to the second generation of survivors, promote dialogue and commemorate what happened.

- a. The City should formally recognize that the events of Nov. 3, 1979, provided a tragic, but important occasion in our city’s history; it should make a proclamation that lifts up the importance of that date in the history of the city.*

- b. Individuals who were responsible for any part of the tragedy of Nov. 3, 1979, should reflect on their role and apologize – publicly and/or privately – to those harmed.***

Throughout this truth and reconciliation process, some individuals (Roland Wayne Wood and Nelson Johnson, for example) have issued apologies – in private, in the media and at the GTRC’s public hearings – about the roles they played in the events of Nov. 3, 1979. Such apologies offer hope that community reconciliation is possible around these events. We believe that sincere apologies, even after 26 years, are important because they open up the possibility for a renewed relationship and dialogue between otherwise alienated individuals and groups.

- c. The Greensboro Police Department and the City of Greensboro should issue public apologies for their failure to protect the public – specifically, the Communist Workers Party demonstrators, Morningside Homes residents, media representatives and others present at the shooting site. These institutions also should issue an apology to city residents for not appropriately acknowledging the event and taking the necessary steps for community healing.²***
- d. Others who were involved in the shootings on Nov. 3, 1979, and who regret the role they played are encouraged to offer restitution to the victims by making contributions in their name to support the public monument commemorating this tragedy (see recommendation 1.h) or to organizations advocating for civil and workers rights and other economic justice initiatives.***
- e. The Greensboro Historical Museum and the International Civil Rights Museum should work either collaboratively or independently to create exhibits commemorating the tragic shootings on Nov. 3, 1979.***
- f. As described in its Declaration of Intent, the Greensboro Truth and Community Reconciliation Project, along with GTRC Report Receivers, should host community forums at which this report will be reviewed and discussed.***

A portion of these discussions should offer opportunities for former members of the Communist Workers Party, former residents of Morningside Homes, former Klan and Nazi members, and others directly involved and impacted by the events to engage in meaningful discussions.³

- g. The religious leadership in Greensboro should plan and facilitate a healing workshop or retreat for the children of CWP members, shooters and others directly involved in the events of Nov. 3, 1979. Furthermore, these children should be actively consulted in all of the reconciliation and reparation efforts recommended in this report.***
- h. A public monument should be built on the site of the shootings to honor those killed and wounded on Nov. 3, 1979.***

A committee should be formed under the auspices of the City’s Human Relations Commission for the purpose of planning and fundraising for this monument, and should include representatives from the surviving demonstrators and their children, former residents of Morningside Homes,

neighborhood associations, and other grassroots groups. The committee should decide on the design of the monument.⁴

2. Institutional Reform

This group of recommendations is intended as part of the effort to prevent future abuses and ensure that when wrongs do occur there is an adequate response.

a. City and County Government

i. All city and county employees should be paid a living wage; all city and county contractors and sub-contractors should be required to pay workers a living wage.

Our research into the context and consequences of Nov. 3, 1979, revealed a socio-economic divide that underlies the events of Nov. 3 and continues to plague our community. The City of Greensboro and Guilford County should adopt and fully enforce an ordinance that requires that all employees of the city and county, as well as all employees of those companies that contract or sub-contract to provide services or products to the city or county, be paid a “living wage” as determined by the North Carolina Justice Center.⁵

Additionally, we recommend that the city and county jointly seek enabling legislation that will allow them to provide incentives to businesses that pay a living wage to all of its employees.

ii. All city and county employees should engage in anti-racism training

The City of Greensboro and Guilford County should contract with a training group, such as the People’s Institute for Survival and Beyond⁶ to prepare and conduct an anti-racism curriculum – like the Institute’s “Undoing Racism” workshops – as part of the orientation required for all new employees. This training should include developing a definition of racism, both institutional and personal; developing an understanding of the ways that it impacts mental health for individuals; and developing ways to recognize it and work towards its elimination. The training should sensitize employees about the impacts of racism on the community.

Furthermore, every employee already working for the City or County should be required to complete anti-racism training within a period not to exceed two years. Descriptions of the contents and outcomes of the trainings should be made available to the public. Following the training, employees should have opportunities to engage with the community members they most affect in their work in order to help them gain greater insight from residents about how racism has impacted their community relations (e.g. police officers should meet face-to-face with residents in the neighborhoods they serve in order to better understand the role racism has played in poor police/community relations).

a. City Government

i. The City should issue annual reports on race relations and racial disparities.

The May 1980 Citizens Review Committee made the following recommendation: “The Human Relations Commission should be adequately staffed to monitor human and race relations and to possess the capability of in-house research and documentation.” While this has largely been accomplished, we recommend that the City go further by regularly consulting with and informing residents about the status of race relations and progress on erasing racial disparities within city government as well as within the city as a whole. Such an annual report will ensure continued discussions and work toward ending racial disparities and the impact of racism. Community leaders should issue their own report on racial disparities and racism to complement the City’s report.

ii. The Mayor’s Mosaic Project⁷ should be continued and expanded as planned to include more people from all sectors of the community.

The May 1980 Citizens Review Committee recommended the following: “The City Council and other organizations in the City should provide leadership in an effort to break down the barriers which separate the citizens in our community.” We believe that the Mayor’s Mosaic Project is a substantial response to this recommendation. Given the low levels of cross-cultural trust in Greensboro, the city needs trust-building programs like the Mosaic Project, the value of which has affirmed by its first participants.

iii. A citizen’s committee should be established immediately by the Human Relations Commission to create both temporary and permanent police review boards. The committee’s role would be to determine the respective boards’ purposes, powers, funding, and relationships to the city government structure.

In light of the overwhelming current public call for truth-seeking and truth-telling with regard to racism and other corruption in the Greensboro Police Department – including allegations of links between this corruption and the historical events including Nov. 3, 1979, and even the Dudley/A&T Student Revolt in 1969 – we recommend that the City of Greensboro immediately establish a short-term citizen’s review board to examine these allegations.

We recommend the permanent board in the interest of ongoing police accountability and community trust. Its members should rotate on a regular basis.

Both boards should have subpoena power as well as significant enforcement power and should include representatives from each City Council district. In addition, the review board should include representatives from the Human Relations Commission, the Greensboro Bar Association, the Greensboro Neighborhood Congress, the Greensboro Chamber of Commerce, the Greensboro chapter of the NAACP, and representatives of the community’s spiritual leaders. The organizations represented should appoint their own

board members.

b. County Government

- i. *The Guilford County Board of Commissioners should commit to addressing the need for increasing funding to Departments of Social Services and Public Health, two key agencies serving low-income residents, in order to expand and enhance staff and services, and to fund staff sensitivity training.*
- ii. *Social work departments should work in conjunction with advocacy and faith organizations to: (1) document the need for increased funding based on information from service providers and clients, and (2) urge state & federal policymakers to increase funding to Social Services and the Health Department commensurate to meet the need in Guilford County.*

Significant reductions in federal, state and county funding available to Social Services and the Health Department has resulted in understaffing of these agencies and increased case loads for the remaining staff, which contributes to insensitivity to clients and inability to provide needed services.

- iii. *The Guilford County Schools should create a curriculum based on the events of Nov. 3, 1979, for use in public elementary and secondary schools.*

The Commission recommends that the Guilford County Schools contract with an appropriate curriculum development provider⁸ to create a curriculum for elementary and secondary schools about the context, causes, sequence and consequences of the events of Nov. 3, 1979. This curriculum could include the following topics: the actual events of Nov. 3, 1979, the history of many civil rights organizations, labor movements and white supremacist organizations; and related legal issues (definitions, roles of prosecutors and defense, jury selection, the importance of jury duty, retributive vs. transformative justice, etc.). The GTRC report itself could be made part of this curriculum.

The curriculum also should include segments and open discussions that address related context issues including anti-racist education about slavery and respecting diversity.

c. Justice System

- i. *Citizens as well as city and state officials should push for enabling legislation, if necessary, to create a community justice center in Greensboro, then make sure its existence is well-publicized.*

The outcomes of the three trials following Nov. 3, 1979, highlighted the limits of our retributive justice system, reflecting a need for more opportunities to apply restorative justice. These limitations, combined with the low levels of trust in the justice system

among people of color and poor people lead us to recommend the creation of a community justice center in Greensboro. A good example is the Red Hook Community Justice Center (RHCJC)⁹ in Brooklyn, N.Y. Through the RHCJC, the Red Hook District Attorney's office used the center to process misdemeanor cases by first assessing underlying problems that led to the alleged criminal activity. Care is taken to ensure the public's safety; sentences incorporate available RHCJC services including intensive drug treatment, mediation, anger management, high school equivalency classes and youth groups.

- ii. *Citizens as well as city and state officials should push for enabling legislation to expand the pool of potential jurors to be more representative of the community as a whole.*

Currently, potential jurors are selected from a list created by the Department of Motor Vehicles which compiles the list using driver's license and voter registration data. Because these lists are not representative of the community as a whole, we recommend that state law be modified so that the pool of potential jurors can be drawn from additional lists such as utility bills, welfare rolls and U.S. Postal Service's database of address changes.

a. Local Media Outlets

- i. *The city's largest local newspaper, the News and Record, should act alone or in concert with other media outlets including the Carolina Peacemaker, Yes! Weekly, and the Rhinoceros Times to host a citywide citizen group that would comment on news process, content, quality and ethics.*

The absence of in-depth local news coverage of the context of Nov. 3, 1979, and its aftermath played a central role in the community misunderstanding of that event. As Greensboro community members struggle decades later to reconcile the competing views of why the tragedy occurred and what should be done now, the media can play an important role in helping community members move beyond contested facts, frames and claims to a common understanding. In addition to informing the public, media can and should play a role in fostering dialogue and exchange of views.

Also, a diverse citizen group could improve local journalism and the community-building role it can play. Citizen input should be solicited for: story development, source development, recognizing other perspectives, critique of news coverage, commentary on newspaper practices, and suggestions for better addressing community concerns.¹⁰

b. Other Institutions

- i. *Other community organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce should engage in anti-racism training similar to that described in Recommendation 2.a.ii.*
- ii. *The City of Greensboro and other organizations should provide resources to support*

the participation of grassroots leaders in local or out-of-state programs and activities that affirm and enhance their leadership ability.

Many of the existing leadership programs sponsored through prestigious organizations like the Center for Creative Leadership are generally cost prohibitive to low income grassroots leaders. Citizens are rarely empowered to hold institutions and power figures accountable for injustices in the community. Community institutions that impact the entire community across race and class lines are usually composed of middle/upper class and highly educated people. This leadership needs to be more diverse to include lived experience of all sectors of the community so all perspectives can be given adequate consideration in the policies and practices of the city and its institutions.

Reconciliation can happen when diverse leaders are in the same room, learning from each other and developing personal relationships. These leadership programs should be easily accessible to the widest range of leaders from diverse racial and socio-economic backgrounds for the maximum benefit to all involved. ¹¹

iii. In response to unresolved crises or lingering issues in the community, such as the issues surrounding the events of Nov. 3, 1979, city officials, religious leaders and civic organizations should play an active role in acknowledging, investigating and providing open forums for discussion.

3. Criminal Justice and Civil Remedies

- a. The current investigations into the alleged corruption in the Greensboro Police Department, including the surveillance of citizens, should be thoroughly and expeditiously completed. We recommend that the reports of these investigations be publicly released once they are finalized and a town hall meeting held to solicit citizen questions and feedback. If appropriate, criminal prosecutions or civil action should be pursued to help heal the damaged credibility of the police department and reassure the citizens that there is accountability for illegal acts done by the city's agents.*

4. Citizen transformation/engagement

- a. Recognizing the role they play in creating the environment for events like Nov. 3, 1979, individual community members must commit to understanding issues of capital, labor, race, poverty, oppression, privilege and justice, and exploring ways to have a positive impact on the way they play out in the community.*

Individuals should take the initiative to engage in study and dialogue within diverse groups to understand various ideologies or other beliefs present in the community, especially unpopular ones. They should seek to understand their own part in community problems as well as their potential role in finding workable solutions.

Institutions should exist for the welfare of ALL citizens in a healthy democracy. The process of pushing institutions to become accountable to the citizens they are supposed to serve assumes and involves a collective citizenry that understands and practices principles of democracy and participation. In a large democracy such as ours, this is a learned skill that includes responsibilities, rights, and privileges.

- b. Individuals, like institutions, can benefit from anti-racism and diversity education programs, and we encourage people to take advantage of pre-designed programs they first evaluate for both breadth and depth.***

Unless individuals learn based on an alternative analysis of the society we live in and unlearn biases and misinformation at the same time, many diversity programs may become mere “Band-aids” rather than solutions. The following questions should be asked of any such program: Does it provide an historical perspective on power, privilege, oppression, and economic and social injustice? Do people learn about the various manifestations of racism, classism, sexism, and other forms of oppression? Are participants given the opportunity to examine their individual roles?

The way forward

While the above recommendations are directed toward specific institutions, we recommend that all grassroots community organizations, religious leaders and, specifically, the Greensboro Truth and Community Reconciliation Project, work collectively with each other and city and county government to advocate for the effective implementation of these recommendations.

To other communities considering processes to seek the truth and work for reconciliation around tragic, unjust events in their own histories, we heartily recommend the truth and reconciliation model as such a tool.

We believe the truth and reconciliation process in Greensboro opened up the debate around Nov. 3, 1979, in a positive way and has successfully engaged a broad spectrum of the community in an effort that offers hope for reconciliation. As a Commission that looks a bit like Greensboro in microcosm, we found that this process –and our own struggle to hear and understand each other- had a profound impact on our perceptions of the issues we explored. Our individual and collective commitment to the truth helped us persevere. And the human stories and emotions we encountered along the way moved us to do our best to leave behind a legacy we hope will serve Greensboro for years to come. We cannot say what the future will hold for this community or what the long-term impact of this process will look like, but we hope that this process also serves as a learning tool for others in this country who, like Greensboro, are burdened by a legacy of hurt and inspired by the possibility of honestly coming to terms with their own history.

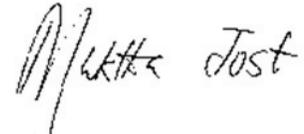
Respectfully submitted to the residents of Greensboro, the City, the Greensboro Truth and Community Reconciliation Project and other public bodies on May 25, 2006, by the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission:



Cynthia Brown



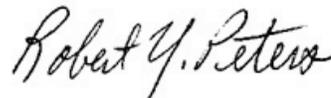
Patricia Clark



Dr. Muktha Jost



Angela Lawrence

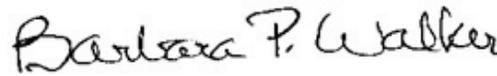


Robert Peters

(subject to his concurring opinion)¹⁷



Rev. Dr. Mark Sills



Barbara Walker

■ Notes

¹ If organizations to whom recommendations are made feel financially unable to act on them, we recommend that they make use of the extensive grant library housed in the Glenwood Branch by the Greensboro Public Library. www.greensborolibrary.org

² For examples of institutional apologies, we recommend that the Greensboro Police Department and City look to the recent institutional apologies offered by Wachovia Bank for the role their predecessor company played in financing slavery and by the United States Senate for failing to enact anti-lynching legislation.

³ One model for such meaningful dialogues around tragic events can be found in the work of Father Michael Lapsley at the Institute for Healing of Memories (www.healingofmemories.co.za).

⁴ One Commissioner has suggested that the monument be in the form of a sculpture made from guns voluntarily donated.

⁵ www.ncjustice.org

⁶ www.pisab.org

⁷ www.ci.greensboro.nc.us/mosaic

⁸ One possibility is the Center for Diversity Education (<http://eduweb.unca.edu/diversityed/>) or the North Carolina Association of Educators (www.ncae.org).

⁹ http://www.brooklynda.org/Redhook/red_hook.htm

¹⁰ Grants are available to involve citizen input in newspaper reporting from foundations such as the Pew Center for Civic Journalism (www.pewcenter.org). Other resources are available from organizations such as the Kettering Foundation (www.kettering.org), Grade the News (www.gradethenews.org), and Community Journalism (www.rtnda.org/resources/cjgs.pdf).

¹¹ An example of a program with similar goals and methods is the Greensboro Civic Entrepreneurship Initiative sponsored by the Pew Charitable Trust that took place from 1998 through 2000

