



Information Sharing and Truth Telling Speaker Series

Present Trends and Disparities

[June 17, 2021](#)

Comments and Questions from audience members at the event

Transcriptions

“My name is Brandon Mays. I’m speaking on behalf of my father, Herschel Mays. He’s a graduate of Stephens Lee 1957. J Hackett, you touched on some interesting points dealing with businesses that we had in Asheville and just thinking about how they came about. During the times of segregation, black people, they needed a place to go for common things and needs they had. You had the funeral homes, the grocery store. I remember, my dad gave me a list of hotels. I mean it’s a substantial list of successful black businesses and business owners. And then what that led to was apprenticeships and then sons and daughters coming in and learning from that. Then when it was taken from us, and my father, he mentioned along the lines of everything flourished until integration came. Then we ended up dispersing from these black businesses and things were taken from us in our buildings. Now, we’re in a position where even going downtown, I can count on one hand how many black people I see. Back in the day, from what my father and my mother told me, it was a safe haven for black people to go out to these black communities, these events. You didn’t have the rivalries from different communities because you had segregated schools. So even if you lived in different communities, you still came together. When you went to the pool hall or you went to the hotel, go to Six Points, you know, stuff like that. I’ve never been to any of those because I wasn’t a product of segregation. But from the stories that told me, it was a very flourishing time. Now we’re in a position where there’s \$2.1 million set aside. What are we going to do with that? We have a plan of action in place. And then you mentioned it, J Hackett, and I remember Rob, you’re talking about how much time we can put in. My fear is, if we wait too long, looking at the cost of living in Asheville and looking at opportunities for black professionals and then black businesses catering to the black people, how many black people will actually be here years down the road, 5 or 10 years? I mean, me personally, I’m looking at a 5-10 year plan, is it more beneficial for me to go elsewhere and do something? So I appreciate everything you all said. Thank you.”

“My name is Delores. It’s good to see everybody. Great to hear the comments; this is very great work. I had a prepared statement when I walked in here, but then I saw my classmate, Sheneika Smith. And 25 years ago on June 10th, we walked across that stage and received our high school

diploma. I sat in that row right back there, eight rows back. I remember saying to myself, I'm going to leave here and change the world. I came home and saw that nothing had changed. It was heartbreaking to see what my parents had gone through. I'm eight generations in. My family's blood is sealed on the pavement of these streets and buildings downtown. My parents were the first license holders in the city of Asheville. That says a lot. They owned the first night clubs where people could go safely without having to worry about ill walking in and knocking the lights off and knocking your head off too. That says a lot. I grew up in a position, and I have to thank my parents for that, to put me in it. It's called being black and privileged. I will tell you that I am the black and privileged, but because I am black and privileged, my duty is to speak for the people who are not. So I come to you today in a position that I did not think that would have to come to you. Because most of the time, when I do come before this city, I say things that people think, why did she say that? And that's because it needed to be said. This is going to be a truth telling process. We need to tell the truth. So with that being said, I ask people here in the city, as well as other people did, why would you not show up? One of the reasons why people told me they would not show up was because they were scared that they would lose their housing, because they live in the housing authority in the city of Asheville. They said, if they're on camera, if people hear what they say, if certain people are in the room, they could lose their homes. So let me tell you something that is the truth. I've seen it happen before. We're not under any type of different circumstances. We're just in a different year. We're just amongst different players with new words. As I look across this community, and most of us, everyone in this room I see who is black, have tried our best to the depths of our soul to fight for our people. A lot of times we have been aligned, not by ourselves, but by people who look like this audience. Because I don't see my people here. I see a group of people who have been told to come here sometimes just to watch and see, and make sure we don't get any further than what we have. I get heartbroken when I walk into this auditorium, because Lakesha walked across this stage. I walked across this stage. So many of you have walked across the stage and we did not have the same opportunities. It was simply because of what we came from, who we were, and a lot of times, what our last names are. It has been a terrible situation. This is the truth. And until we tell the truth, there will be no reconciliation. I have seen projects in this city put forth that was said to help us. I have seen the destruction that it can cause. Just because you have an office of something does not mean that we're producing what it says it will. Until the people who are locals here are put into a position to change, it is not going to help. Because I'm going to tell you something, there used to be a myth. If you leave Asheville, don't change your ID because you will not get a job. You will have nowhere to stay if you are black. And I can tell you when I left here, went to Durham, and came back, the best jobs I ever had was as long as my ID did not run out from that area. That is the truth. So before we can move forward, we need to have these conversations, but they will not happen in a room like this. They're going to happen in our backyards where people had their homes taken from. A lot of people will tell you

that I'm a problem. And the problem is that I am the truth. That is my biggest problem. I never have made an apology for what I say and what I do. The only apology I make is that I left here and didn't do it sooner. I wish I had the opportunity cause I did not feel safe here. I felt like the only way I could survive was to leave here and come back with some more knowledge. I'm glad I was around the communities and people that I work with, so that I could come back here and tell you that this is not everything that it's about. It's so sad that we've lost some of the best black people in Asheville, because they did not feel safe. If you look at this room and you look at the demographic and the ratio person to person, this is supposed to be a community event. Where is the community? I see the stage. I see some of us and you see the usual suspects over and over. We're always out. It can't be us. What I wish would have happened, because what's really going on here is the gap, is that people don't know you. And when people don't know you, they're not going to talk to you. Okay? Because every time we talk to people, we don't know our children get took. We get put out of our home. We lose our jobs. We have nowhere to go. Then our families have to absorb our homelessness and our pain and suffering. How much more can they absorb? You're talking about losing homes. We've lost all of our hope here. You're looking at a city of brokenhearted people. And until we have the people who are in charge, who have been instrumental in it, because the cause can never be the cure. And that's what we're expecting here. So one of the things that I ask people is, when you come to these events and you look across these rooms, that kind of lets you know, where the problem's at. Because the problem is that people don't feel safe. They don't feel as if they are okay. And I'm looking at folks here and they're some of the same folks and said some very nasty, you know, reputation assassination is something else. When people tell you something about somebody and you don't really know the truth or what they've been through, and all you do is revisit their trauma. What do you expect people to think about you too? Because this is what the city has said about me. I read it everywhere. I see it. I know what people say, but I don't care though, because I'll be here when nobody else is. Because I owe my people that. I'm not going to run. I'm not going to hide. I'm always telling you the truth, but the truth is you can tell this isn't right either. Thank you."

"To be honest, I'm not nervous about talking to you guys. I'm nervous about talking to the people who are behind me. When the last lady came up and she talked, my body went cold. I'm like, yo, I felt like she just dug into me with that one. But ultimately my question is, to put things in perspective, I'm 25 years old. There were about at least three different people of my same age, who are my color. And what I'm wondering is how can I, I mean, just the little bit I can do, and you've all been saying the same thing. Like, we all need to be involved. How can I get other people to be involved? I mean, my man's in a button up, he goes out to the communities and asks questions. But in these communities, Deaverview, Hillcrest, PBA, etc. I'm from Deaverview. I lived in PBA. I lived in Hillcrest. People like us, we think about things a little differently. So it's

like, when this man comes up to us in the hood, I'm going to keep it real in the hood. And you talk to me about reparations, I'm going to look at your funny, like what are you talking about? And if you start going on explaining, everything that you're into and stuff like that, and I'm just going to think this man's a square. You know what I'm saying? I mean, I'm just keeping it real. I don't know you from nowhere. And it's like, you're talking about reparations coming up to the meetings and stuff, like I barely want to go to school. You want me to go to a meeting? You know what I'm saying? I'm here because my good friend invited me. I've been to the last one, when we had the lady up here on the screen and she was talking. I wanted to make a comment, but didn't fully have that courage at the time. But anyway, my generation. I'm in my twenties. I only know three other people who are in their twenties, my color here. How can I get more of them here? I want them, I want my people to also know and understand, this is important. This is very important. If this is out here, people need to know this stuff. Get them in here. But I also know that people in the hood don't think the same way. People of course will come up with excuses like, oh, I got X, X, Y, and Z to do, you know? Or even if they do come, how many would speak? Or how do I ask a question? Or if it will actually resonate with people the way that it should. But if a guy comes up to me and talks about reparations, I'm in the hood, I'm in a tank top and ripped jeans and dirty shoes, I'm not going to understand what you're talking about. But at the same time, you gotta meet people where they are. Not only that, you have to teach people what they need to know at a level of where they are. Because not everybody in the hood is well educated and well diverse in their speech language. It's different. It really is because they're not like all of you. Politics has never been for black people. Ever since it's been created, Republicans or Democrats, they never really wanted to help black people. They made it seem good but it was never for them. I understand to a certain degree, the misconception of the whole thing. At the same time, how can I, just as a simple 25-year-old, get more of my own age? I know there are people wanting to start their own businesses, doing things under the table, just to make a hustle."

"I would like to thank the panel for your time and your information. Michael especially. You hit me when you said containers and space. I live in East End. East End used to be the East End Valley Street Community. Valley Street no longer exists. What happened to those people? They were contained in public housing. And for generations have not been able to break that cycle. My concern is that space is important. Please know that they are not growing any more land. If you go down Martin Luther King Jr. Drive is where I live, you will notice that many homes there are quite nice. Those are dollar lot recipients. We fought for many, many years just to be called homeowners. But we were always reminded that we were dollar lot recipients. They did not come with landscaping. They did not come with clean backyards. They didn't even come with gutters. So when you look at that community today, know that hard working citizens did that. And if you also look closely at the space that has fencing, those are our new neighbors. I am

concerned that I am a fifth generation homeowner, but with a great granddaughter and noticing that the tax base is going up on property. I wonder in the future, how many of us on Martin Luther and other communities will no longer be there because we can't afford the tax? And with that said, often there is a 5-year, 10-year and 20-year plan on somebody's desk presently. And if you look close, if there is a black community, and I say if because they're all gentrified now, but if there is one, you can bet there's a highway coming soon. Now what I would also say is that often when it's the African-American community, it's like squirrel, and we hop over there. Well, let me say this in closing. Everything is about a job and who has it. For many years, our space, we were contained there because we were a pay check to somebody."

"Hello to everyone on the panel. I have a personal connection to each and every one of you there. I love you for being there. When the urban removal happened, there was public housing. That picks up a lot of land space, and a lot of families that were removed and their homes torn down. People were being removed and put in housing and can't really break that cycle. I'm a third generation in public housing. I'm looking right so that I can become a homeowner. So that my kids don't have to be the fourth generation in public housing and raising their families. I think this conversation is very important. We need parts four or five and six continuing this conversation about how we're gonna get our reparations and not the same people showing up, the same 10 or 12 people that are called upon all the time. I'm glad that this event happened here at the Edington Center to bring it into the community because you have to meet community where they are. You have to bring these conversations into the community. A lot of my community is not here, but there are people here. We need our younger generation like that twenty-five year old young man. We need those people here to really speak out on what they would like and what they want and how they're feeling. But that's the population that's not showing up. And sometimes we might have to take a meeting to the Walton Street Park. But everybody's so afraid because of shootings or whatever happens. Shootings happen everywhere, but we have to meet people where they are. We have to take these conversations into the community. We can flyer the community all the time and say, where's the meeting happening here or there. But sometimes we just have to come outside and really have these front porch conversations. That's what we're missing. The front porch conversations and really sitting down and talking to people because that is so important. I think if we do that and go out here and like Michael Jamar canvassing these communities to really get this information out to people because they don't know. And Delores said it, people are afraid because they might lose what they have. And if they say the wrong thing about the wrong person, then that might be their home. You know, and we don't want that to happen because people need to be able to speak up. If we have a right to vote, if we should have a right to speak, you know? So I really appreciate these conversations. We need to continue these conversations and I'm ready for part four. And how do we make that happen to continue this conversation? Because these two

hours, and then these little, do these interviews and what have you, to me, it's not enough. I'm willing to show up and be present. I had to pull away from a lot of things because I was being stretched at all ends. But from my community and one of our biggest assets here in the south side community, the Walton Street pool and park, we see what we see happening. We see what kind of care and compassion that happened in our community with the recreation space that we had in our community for nearly 80 years is no more. No more swimming.... It's a wrap for it. And that's cold. So that's my spiel. And thank you all again for giving me this opportunity, thanks to the panelists for everything that you've said. And I can agree with a lot of that. And thank you so much."

"My name is Bobbette Kilgore Mays. I've been to every session and it floors me that the difference in what has been said from the past, the present, and now the future. I cannot go. I'm going to try to talk as fast as I can. I cannot go into the future without telling you my past. I am 66 years old. I was in the beginning of the integration of school systems. So the people from Stephens Lee never went to school with white folks. I did. The first day in a white school, they didn't have our records. We had to go in and go into an auditorium and to sit there until they could figure out what to do with us. Because they didn't know how smart we were. You're talking about racism? When the kids would tell you, my mama said I can't touch you. We went home and became friends with some of them. We went home with this young lady that lived right up the street from us and her father called the police on us because we were in the yard playing with his daughter. So you talk racism, let's go to the 1969 riot at Asheville High School. I was a sophomore. See I can tell you about the history, not the statistics, not what someone else told you a story about. I can tell you about being there that day and having to walk out at 9 o'clock in the morning to go stand on the front steps. Because we were trying to say that we didn't get the justice that was due us for all of us. They didn't know how smart we were, but they wanted to make sure we couldn't get into government programs. If it was a student government. I was a majorette and there were 10 but there could only be three black. I had to do the best I could, even above that, just so I could make it because it was a system that was set. But on that day, they said that we rioted. I looked around and all around the front of the steps were police officers with batons as if we were criminals and we were kids. You want to talk about racism? I'm going to tell you about racism. And it got to the point, WLOS came, the principal said he didn't know what to do with us and it broke out. I'm a sophomore. I was probably 15 years old. I lived in Stumptown. There were no buses running. You had to get home the best way you could. They thought we were so powerful that they closed down all the schools. Even people in Shiloh at the elementary school, they closed it down. Let's about the racism and injustice. On that day, there were some people there that they said incited a riot and they expelled them. They never were able to get their high school diploma. I'm going to call you some names. One of them, Leo Gaines, just passed last week and his family wants to know, can

he just get a diploma? These are easy fixes. James McDowell, he's living a life in Shiloh. It's modest but what could've happened if he wasn't expelled and not able to ever get a high school diploma? There was a lady named Shirley Brown. Where is she? Nobody knows. There was a guy named George Watkins, tall burly guy. He had a voice that was so heavy, I guess it scared them. He is deceased now. Where's the justice? That's part of reparations. That's part of the future. That's an easy, easy, easy fix. We talk about communities. We had schools that they closed down, that now the city owns. They're Parks and Rec. Can we put something in focus? The city can help us to gain back our community. I live in Shiloh. People don't come to Shiloh. You talk about communities. We fight every day to keep developers from coming into our community. Because when they do, they either take the land, they build houses. And when they build the houses, the houses go for over \$500,000. So that means my taxes go up. If you talk about where you live, I'm telling you where I live. Shiloh is the last African American or black community. We have the phases of change but our history is rich. We're not afraid of it. My son lives across the driveway from me. We kept our generational wealth. We're living on property that our ancestors owned. That's what we do. My street is named after my grandson. So that he will always have a place. We need to get some control of our communities. If the city would help us with that part of that reparation, so that we can become independent. Because our children, you talk about the 25-year-old young man. I work at a summer camp. You should see our children. I work with a virtual academy when the pandemic was going on. Our children are still behind in reading and math. You want to help us in the future? Just give us back something for our community where we can be self-sufficient that helps our kids. I'm telling you, they do not read well. Something was said a long time ago about white folks: you put it in a book and we'll never read it. Because that's what they said about us. All of you on this panel, you're educated. But you say you want to know where our people are? Because everything that you are saying is above their heads. They're not getting it. You can talk about what we need, what you need, but you don't have a plan for them. It has to start with a basic fix for it. So if you're going to talk about what we can do in the next six months or year? Let's not talk about how much dollars and cents and monies that we're owed. If you want young people to vote, young people have to go out there and encourage them. It cannot be us. I'm an advocate in my community. I am the vice president of the Shiloh Community Association. Deaverview, Hillcrest, Pisgah View. You can establish yourself as a community association and that's where you start. Shiloh has a 2025 plan. East End Valley Street has a plan. Burton Street. We are collaborating with them to even get more grants. This is how we educate. This is how we get past. Because we cannot think that they're going to give us anything. Because reparations does not owe us. They owed our ancestors. Whatever they did to my great-grandfather, he's been gone. The 40 acres and a mule like someone said before, the mule's were so old when they did give them that they couldn't even work. And then they rescinded the order. So learn history, teach history to our kids. Let them know where they came from. Let them know where they can go. We have to

encourage them. We can't continue to talk about the injustice. We got to give them some hope. We for to give them something positive. And that's what I deal with every morning. Because before they know who you are, they want to know that you care. That's what I do. So everybody can take a part in every community. A lot of people here are not originally from Asheville. Asheville is very unique. It's not like any other place you'll ever go. So what we have to do is, I say to you, as we reflect on the future, let's have a plan. Let's have a plan that will work. We start from here because we're so far behind. We can't just start from up here. Young people don't know anything about capital, money. They don't know anything about how you make investments. They've been in survival mode all their lives. So that's why they're not here because you're not giving them the hope that they need to even start from down here. Thank you."

"My name is Paul Howell. The Paul is usually preceded by King. I'm going to turn around here and look at y'all. Y'all are the people that I want to talk with. I don't mean no harm, panel. I was born here in Asheville, North Carolina, 1961. On Burton Street, I stayed out there from 61 to 69. I was the child of a 16 year old parent. She couldn't really take care of me and my sisters. So we stayed with my grandmother and my grandfather in a one bedroom upstairs apartment with the living room, dining room, small kitchen, small bathroom and area where we took our bath and a big tub. We were poor. But the thing about us being poor then, we didn't realize we were poor because of the community that we lived in. From the top of Burton Street at Haywood road, all the way down to Florida Avenue in one direction to Fayetteville street, out to Florida avenue in the other direction to me was a black community. Because that's all I saw was black people. Black people in the community. I left for a little while with my mom, from 69 to 72. We came back. We moved to Montford over on Cumberland Avenue. Again, this was a step up for us because we moved into a two bedroom, but it's still the same amount of people. And then we had a couple of babies by my sisters. So a little bit more space but a little bit more people. We still are poor. But again, the community over there from Three Brother's restaurant, all the way down to Klondike apartments out to Broadway, where it changed to East Chestnut all the way to Hillcrest. Hillcrest was included my picture of Montford, a black neighborhood. I mean, there was nowhere we couldn't go and nothing that we couldn't do and see our people in houses. I would ride my bike over to northside. We've a park. Welcome there. Ride bikes out to Shiloh, ride bikes out the Burton street. Black communities, they were just everywhere. But then when the urban removal came in, the black community started disappearing. I mean, it wasn't just something that you could notice all of a sudden; it just gradually happened. It was here one day and it was gone the next. So for me to listen to talks about reparations and people trying to get upset about why the 2.1 million is not enough. 2.1 million. There's not enough 2.1 million they can give us to even begin to repair what's been broken. Our neighborhoods are gone. You can't replace that with money. You can try to put us in new places and say, well, we going to get y'all

affordable housing. But I've noticed that affordable housing consists of apartments stacked on top of each other. You're not gaining no wealth and owning no property, no land, because you're staying in apartments. You got your name on the lease but that's not your name on home ownership papers, right? So you're still paying somebody else to live. Asheville needs to work on giving us, black communities, establishing black communities. Again, don't just put money at the forefront of what you want to do for us. People don't complain about money. Money is not going to take us so far. If we're going to have generational wealth, we're going to have to have the thing to acquire with. Places for businesses, land for homes, affordable homes for people to live in. We got a whole lot of single parents out here. They can't afford to get out of the projects, public houses, excuse me. They can't afford to get out of public housing. They can't afford to come to these meetings. If they come, they're going to be out of public housing. This is deeper than a two minute comment. Because folks over there realize what the issue is with not being treated as equals in a place that our parents, my grandparents built up the city. I used to run the back of my truck with my granddaddy. They had a picture of Eagle street up there earlier. I remember that picture because I was on the back of my granddaddy's truck riding on the back of it, while he go and run his numbers. That kind of stuff. But he still worked at the school, to clean the school. I'm saying don't try to appease us with no money, your head shakes, and tell me what you're going to do. Because all that is saying to many people that's not here is the same thing you said when you say that pledge of allegiance. You say I pledge allegiance to the flag of United States of America and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God with liberty and justice for all. That's gotta be the biggest lie ever heard with liberty and justice for all. Give us our liberty and give us our justice. That's all I got to say. Thank you. I'm sorry. I got a little bit here myself. I wanted to ask Mr. Hackett about the social science. Because Asheville you to see seems to have a problem with accepting people here, ex offenders here in this city, that does wrong and try to turn their lives around. But they will quickly welcome others from other states to come in here with arms wide open, build them up and push them for a while, holding their own people down. How do we fix that? Can we use the social science to apply to fixing that?"

"My name is Roy Harris and I spoke at the second recent speakers and everything. And I just want to say that the panelists on the stage tonight, you represent hope. You represent hope. What you bring into the city and what you bring into everybody. And I'm pleased that the next generation is represented on that stage. As I thought about it before I came on, I was thinking about the Hayes....all of those that stood before you that took the heat and took everything that you were about to, you're taking now. I took my tutelage under those individuals as they accepted me into the city of Asheville almost 37 years ago. And this come with us. And so I did. And so I'm at this stage, but now to see the ones on the panel, they all black, they're here. And this is like the third group that I've talked to or been around this week. It's the next generation.

But let me tell you about one of the greatest thrills I had just 15 minutes ago. I have what we call a granddaughter. I call her my granddaughter. She calls me granddaddy. And she's out in the Edington Center with her mother selling products and selling some of her jewelry and all of those things. I took some money out and I said...I have a two and a half year old granddaughter too...what would you buy for her? And so she turned around and picked out three things for me. She started to count it up and all of a sudden she said, that'd be \$33. I handed her \$40 and then it sort of fell apart because she didn't have change. But she turned to her mother and they had the little square. You should have seen the look on that young lady's face that she had sold something in the Edington Center on this date. And she represents all of us. She represents us because she's who's coming. She's going to be an entrepreneur. She's going to go on to go to college and she's going to do all of those things. I hope and pray that we will accept her back to this city one day so that she can continue her entrepreneurial spirit. That's my story. And I'm sticking to it. Thank you."

"Good afternoon. And I say to our elders, I know a lot of you personally, I've been able to engage with a lot of you. My name is Todd Johnson. I moved to Asheville as a freshman in high school from a larger city known as bad news. I was indoctrinated into a lot of gangs and other things at a young age. When I came here, what changed me was my first conversation with a peer where he said to me, you ought to talk to the white girls because we don't know how to talk to the white people. After that time at the age of 15, I began working with the city and continue to do so, working with the city, the nonprofit sector, as well as at Ingles market. So I got to see a lot of Asheville and I've continued to do that for 10 years. I worked under a lot of our mentors and so on. So in short, what I noticed was two things. The first is that there's a wealth of resources here, and this generation does not want jobs. We don't want to go into historically white spaces and then have to be the token negro. My brother, who came up here and spoke, he's been working for a long time on his own, hustling on his own. I had to do the same. My senior year in college, after working in Asheville for a whole year with the city manager and district attorney's office, I spent my presentation day in a jail cell because of a weed charge. And that led to me not getting my bachelor's degree. I came back here and was told that I was unqualified for positions after five years of college attendance, because I didn't have a certificate. The issue was that a lot of the people who are quote unquote leaders are doing a lot of lip service, and they're not actually doing a lot of the work. We have the NC business school. We have AB tech, we have code think, think we have on track financial management, pishah legal services. It takes nothing but a competent structure to actually connect with the black youth and let them know that they can do what they want to do. Right now, I have a brother who stays up the street from Stephens Lee who wants to teach garden to youth. You have the talent, you have the people here. You're not listening to them. It's not their fault."

"I just wanted to say that there are a couple of things that you probably need to know. My name is Dorothea Goodman Williams. I want to publicly apologize to her for the life that I've led in the city that has also led to her being pointed out as a troublemaker. These things are intergenerational. When you start a movement and you become visible and you speak truth to power, it not only takes you, but it takes your family. So there's collateral damage. And you folks who've been involved with criminal justice understand when I say collateral damage. Also want to say that just because you are educated does not mean that you're given opportunity. I wish that were so. Statistics tell us that a white high school dropout still has more wealth than a black college educated person. There are some other data statistics that we all need to be mindful of. The only two ways to create wealth in the United States of America are home ownership and business ownership. Those are the only two ways. And these young people want opportunity. And at the tip of that is economic opportunity. Why do you think they sell dope? Why do you think that? Because they have no other avenues and guns are just tools of the trade. We have to get real about what we're doing. The people that need to be in this room are not. I also want to pay homage to two people who were mentioned, who were my clients, my business development clients. There's somebody who's contracted by the minority business development agency, J McDowell, great entrepreneurial McDowell family movers who never got a high school diploma. I started out in the first grade with J McDowell. Leo Gaines who recently passed away because he was involved and led the walkout organized it and never got a high school diploma. So those kinds of things are traumatizing. And for me to see Dolores and the hurt and the harm that I caused her just by serving the community. Let me tell you something. Everybody's not like me. Louis Grant and I operate out of there. We renovated, I think, 4,000 square foot in that church and turned it into an economic development engine down there. He says that I take a lick and you keep on, but Dolores isn't me. I've had to learn how to make a living by being blackballed in the city. I have three degrees. And the only job that I could get was working as a maid in a hotel. Okay. I have three earned degrees, not one's honorary. Okay. And the first black valedictorian to walk across this stage in Thomas Wolfe Auditorium. So you need to know that. That is historic. But I want to say to her that you have to have a positive attitude. And the other thing is that when people just because you disagree with somebody, don't ostracize them. Because you don't ever know who you're dealing with either, do you? I don't stand up here in this suit for nothing. Let me tell you something. I couldn't have, if I had depended on the good graces of other people, bought a home in Kenilworth, paid for it, and paid off a university of Alabama for her, okay? You don't know who you're dealing with and you need to. One of the nuances about being somebody who's been maligned and ostracized, you know how to make money. D Williams and Company Inc is a C Corp. And let me just say it. And I want to pay homage to the Dogwood Health Trust, who is the first foundation that's ever given me a chance to flex my intellectual muscle. Okay. They were there today with the president and everybody else from Dogwood. We have a \$2.5 million negotiation, a community reinvestment

with First Citizens Bank Shares next week. So sometimes even late in my life, I got a chance. So I want y'all to know, not to give up. We have a hundred black churches that they're going to fund to build affordable housing. I'm talking about take housing choice vouchers, and also work through a system where people who live in public housing, can graduate to home ownership and to own mixed-use space. So look for that. But I tell you, the other thing is when you start excluding people, sometimes you exclude the best talent in the room. Okay? I'm living proof of that. I don't want Delores treated the same way. I told her. If you got any sense, you get the hell up out of here. Because I don't want you going through the grand jury investigations that I've been under and having to pay \$80-100 thousand dollars in legal fees. Okay? I don't want that for her. She's not built that way. And so I just want to say to everybody, sometimes we do need to tell the truth. William Buster of the Dogwood Health Trust is off to pay for a real truth and reconciliation process and they have the bankrolls to do it. Okay. And that means going out into the community and actually getting people who are national experts, et cetera. And those of us, I just want to say one last thing, quit leaving us out. Because when you do, you leave out competency, okay? And when you leave out competency, as we can see from this pandemic, innocent people get hurt and they die. And that's what has happened is that every program that the city has invoked. We've got the data, we've got a black data initiative. The minority business office is failing; half of a percent of all contracts going to black contractors. What? That is ridiculous. Those departments ought not to be able. Why wouldn't they put that contract out for competitions or that departmental budget? 50%. I got a degree in accounting and another one in business administration. I can read a budget. There's some of y'all who do too. We need to look at how these folks in these departments are serving or not serving us. And I have the courage to stand up and say it and call it. Now who'll go with me? That's all I ask. And power comes from the people. It does not come from the elected officials. They work for us. We don't work for them. And we need to have that attitude. We live worse than any other black folks in the state of North Carolina. It is absolutely appalling the way we live and the way we continue to live. We have failed institutions that the city and the county and other foundations continue to fund at the expense of people who are our most vulnerable people. And that is a shame and a disgrace. We need to start telling the truth about how we treat each other, too. We exclude each other, all to the detriment of other people, to put a quarter in our pocket. And most of the stuff we put in our pockets is chump change, let's face it. Okay. So we're going to have to start telling the truth about how we treat each other, before we start talking about how white folks treat us. All right. Y'all have a good night."

"My name is Robin Baxter. I relocated to Asheville in August. I'm originally a native New Yorker. And my comment for this evening is when I moved here, I had to learn what gentrification looks like in a neighborhood that is not mine. Because the first thing I'm like, okay, where are my people? Where is my community? And where are my folks at? How do I identify things here?"

Because I don't just assume...I kind of did for a little bit, but even still, I don't assume that it's going to look like what it looks like in my hometown. I know actually a lot of people that are not native Ashevilleians that have been here for 10 years plus, and so this conversation still applies to them. When you go down the streets, like, right before we get to the main part of Merrimon or you're passing that on underpass, and I'm looking at that bridge and you know, anytime you've got a Whole Foods or a Trader Joe's, you know, this is a white neighborhood. I'll go to my Trader Joe's nonetheless, but I can recognize it as my neighborhood and my community being taken from me. So you pass by that and you see that mural and I'm like, why would there be a mural of two black men playing chess? And what is the quote unquote downtown area where there were a lot of whites, just not a non-black presence? So that tells me that this used to be a black neighborhood. And I see that happening as well in the River Arts District. I've been here. So when we're talking about reparations, the first word in reparations is repair. What has been broken that needs to be repaired? What has been taken from the community that needs to be given back and repaired? Shout outs to the panel and a lot of the people that don't want it. Because I thought I was listening, y'all got very, very specific about what the needs of the people, the needs of the community and, you know, just really direct. With that, I also want to emphasize, we know we need to be direct with how we use that terminology and stop referring to us, especially in terms of needs as people of color and minorities. Because in 1965 civil rights act, a lot of the benefits that we were supposed to receive to help repair this situation, got circumvented to other people of color, other minorities because they use that terminology. So instead of it actually coming to people, the African diaspora, particularly African-Americans, most of the benefits from things like affirmative action really benefited white women. So we need to pay attention to that, learning from our history for that, and making sure that we're being just as specific about referring to ourselves as people of the African diaspora, people of African descent and particularly, you know, African-Americans as we are going to repair the legislation. And that's what we're talking about, who are we giving the benefits to? Whether it's funds, whether it's resources; and prioritizing that and prioritizing black families. Because one of the other things that I've heard about almost right after, or right before I moved to Asheville and it was like, are you moving to the right place? Because Asheville just approved the reparations plan. And one of the other things I had to tell some of my friends when they called me to check in was I said this was probably, I've never seen so many biracial relationships in my life and I've seen a lot, you know, I've got a few of them in my family. So it's a high concentration of that. At least that's what is visible on a day to day basis. So I find it interesting that they chose this town for that thing. And if that's your bag and that's your interest then that's fine. But when you're talking about redistributing funds to the community, you know, in that relationship. You're getting to kind of opt out or some of the struggles, because your partner kind of gets the benefit, I guess the benefits that comes with systematic oppression and what not. So they're benefiting to a certain degree. So it kind of lessens the stress, the strain on you. But for those of

us that are in relationships as black people with other black people, we're not getting that. So we're equally both having to go through that same struggle. So I say, let's prioritize black families and make that an active part of this mission as well.”

Written Comment from comment cards and emails

“Hi. I just wanted to share that I support all and any reparations made and discussed for Black Asheville. I have watched one and a quarter of the panelist presentations so far and I will continue watching. I did not grow up in Asheville. I grew up in the Chicago suburbs and have lived in Asheville since 2008 with some breaks. Right now I am in New Mexico for graduate school. As a white person, I just wanted to say that I whole heartedly support this process and this conversation. It was a bit painful to see the white male lawyer make his comment in the first discussion saying that reparations wouldn't work and that it put a burden on people who did not cause the harm. I feel so differently. I feel all in. I want to see a Nation that is talking about these things and owning the damage done. The debt is so enormous, it can never really be repaid. The least we can do as white people is everything and anything that is asked of us and that we can possibly think of. I commend the city of Asheville for setting this up and doing this and having this discussion. Thank you. I watch from afar.”

Comment by: Suzanne Joy Teune

“Concerning the AHS Student Demonstration of 1969: I was a student there then and remember Leo Gaines as being inspirational and courageous, and voicing the concerns of many of our generation. Please add my name to those asking that both the student participants of the peaceful student demonstration and the three students unfairly singled out for leadership be publicly and forever exonerated. Thank you.”

Comment by: Peggy Gardner

“I am in favor of Mr. Leo Gaines receiving his high school diploma in the effort to right a wrong done to him regarding his education and participation in a peaceful demonstration. I was a student there at AHS at the time and was a Junior. Mr. Dan Lewis has done a remarkable job of researching the facts regarding this incident. I, myself have an entirely different view of what happened that day and would like to support this as part of the Asheville Reparations.”

Comment by: Citizen

“Dear Staff:

I had many discussions with Leo Gaines of the pain and unfairness of being singled out for “creating a riot” at Asheville High. As the years have passed, I have learned more and more of the actual history of how the black community was treated before and during the integration of schools, have seen how the response to problems is as important as the voicing of problems. Leo Gaines, who recently passed, was always the “flame” to me - honest, authentic, a gentle fire. He was the victim of a system of dealing with problems. He deserves his high school diploma, deserves to be publicly honored for his courage and to be apologized to for the pain he endured by his treatment.

I so agree with the paragraph below:

With recent talks of reparations in Asheville, it is now time to correct the racially slanted historical record of the peaceful student demonstration at Asheville High School on September 29, 1969, which was escalated into a riot by overt actions by the Asheville School board, city government and police department of the era, along with a group of local agitators who entered school grounds to clash with police attacking students. We request that the true history of these events be published, and that both the student participants of the peaceful student demonstration and the three students unfairly singled out for leadership be publicly and forever exonerated.”

Comment by: Citizen

“I want to ask that when thinking about Reparations and going forward. Please help families hold on to the family property. Please remember how issues such as zoning and property taxes families in African American Communities lose family homes to contractors who can afford to Flip a house. Thank you for the opportunity to share”

Comment by: Alma

“I respectfully request that the student who was unjustly expelled from AHS in 1969 be granted the appropriate high school diploma. This would be justice earned. Thank you.”

Comment by: Patricia Nieman

“Dear Reparations Committee, I am writing to request that 3 students be exonerated for their leadership participation in the demonstration that day. In addition, please bestow a diploma to Mr Graves posthumously. It is time for justice in this case.”

Comment by: Cynthia Snyder

Questions to Consider - From questions on comment cards

1. **As you start this reparations journey with the City of Asheville, what is important for you to learn/share?**

“To show up physically.”

Comment by: Citizen

“How reparations can be achieved. What steps are feasible?”

Comment by: Citizen

“I want to learn what the concrete plan/action items will be for reparations moving forward.”

Comment by: Citizen

“Hold the city accountable for not implementing policies that counteract harmful practices/systems toward the black community.”

Comment by: Citizen

“Who is deserving? The existential community of persons of color or whose families endured the indignities of Jim Crow or the Af. Am. community @ large.”

Comment by: Citizen

“As a white woman, it’s important for me to listen to black voices and better understand how I can best support their needs.”

Comment by: Citizen

“Can we do a seminar on 1969 High School sit in? Our role as artists for our community. Educational therapy.”

Comment by: Citizen

“People do not feel safe - figure out why? Do not allow white led organizations take over this process. Do not allow white led individuals dictate what this journey looks like for the community. City of Asheville most importantly please show up this time and do not fail the people with empty promises, do not take over. Buncombe County do the same.”

Comment by: Citizen

“To listen. How to champion black community in Asheville.”

Comment by: Citizen

2. What, if anything, resonated with you most during the truth telling and information sharing speaker series?

“I loved the resources for resiliency part with MC and Michael. They are terrific leaders! (I want them in my classroom)”

Comment by: Citizen

“Narrative is critical. For reparations to make sense, people need to know the facts - the history - that make reparations imperative.”

Comment by: Citizen

“Equity and efficiency are at odds. Largest urban renewal project in Southeast - 400 acres - what was really done and said?”

Comment by: Citizen

“Take the conversation to the housing communities. Listen/engage every black voice in this process.”

Comment by: Citizen

“Need to review the city’s budget to see where funds are allocated (particularly tourism budget).”

Comment by: Citizen

“So much lost to history. Justice system/prison pipeline in Asheville. Urban Renewal. Valley Street? Southside Comm.?”

Comment by: Citizen

“Economic community. Dogwood trust funding reparations, truth telling initiative to uncover the corrupt white supremacy that is rampant in Asheville, county, state politics.”

Comment by: Citizen

3. What next steps are important for you?

“Keep showing up. Talk about this with others.”

Comment by: Citizen

“Getting people informed and involved.”

Comment by: Citizen

“Business opportunities, home/land acquisition assistance, better access to health care, education, and equal resources for the African American community. Building blocks to start the process are crucial.”

Comment by: Citizen

“I need to continue to follow this conversation and educate other non-bipoc friends and colleagues of what is being said in these important forums.”

Comment by: Citizen

“Economic justice. Environmental justice. Housing.”

Comment by: Citizen

“Tourist should be leveraged to support the black and working class community. Hotels and foreign investors make all the money off of the backs of the Asheville people. Property taxes should be higher % for homes valued at over rather than across the board increases. As well as funds to offset the property tax increase available to those that apply and income qualify.”

Comment by: Citizen

4. What is *my* role in the next steps?

“Pray protection for participants.”

Comment by: Citizen

“I want to know what I can do.”

Comment by: Citizen

“Honestly, I’m still trying to figure this out. I can do a better job educating myself so that when political elections are held, I can vote for initiatives that best benefit black community members. But need to not wait until elections to take action.”

Comment by: Citizen

“Honest conversation on cultural appropriation. How do we reference culture appropriation? Could we tax non original?”

Comment by: Citizen

“I am actively working with several panelist in the community coaching other in racial equity. The future requires all generations to come together to make incremental change which leads to bigger long lasting impact for change.”

Comment by: Citizen