



OUR COMMITMENT TO SELF AND SOCIETY

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JANUARY NEWSLETTER

PLEASE HOLD THE DATE!

DATE: SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2022

TIME: 6:00 P.M.

LOCATION: VIA ZOOM

TOPIC: A HISTORY OF RACIAL EQUITY IN FORT COLLINS

PRESENTERS: TO BE FINALIZED (INFO WILL BE SENT OUT
AT LEAST A WEEK BEFORE THE EVENT)

Articles in this Newsletter:

“Why We Need More Equity,” by Rev. David Williams

“Needed: Truth and Reconciliation In America,” by Nina Rubin
(please scroll down for this article)

“Why We Need More Equity,”

by Rev. David Williams

Our Commitment Founder

Why are we seeing unprecedented absenteeism and call-offs from work by employees like never before? And just yesterday, local grocer King Soopers had picket lines outside circling their businesses. What is the impetus for such actions? Essential workers are tired of carrying the responsibility of giving of themselves for the betterment of companies and yet not being adequately compensated for their efforts.

Teachers on strike in Chicago, the third largest school district in the country, are demanding safe practices and pay incentives for the work teachers do on a daily basis. This is nothing new or the result of a crippling pandemic. Teachers nationally for decades have been underpaid and lowly compensated for their gargantuan responsibility of educating today's children for future leadership positions.

People will continue to display no sense of loyalty to a company that shows no loyalty in return. The revolving door to the company down the street will forever be an invitation to seek out higher wages to stabilize an individual's economic needs. As long as CEO's feel it's okay to

make wages 400% x the wage of the lowest paid employee in their company, this trend will continue.

Our Commitment To Self & Society exists to reveal this malady in our local businesses and institutions. This inequity between employer and employee breeds nothing short of contempt, distrust and lack of loyalty both inside the company and in the community. It is high time companies take a pause and review best practices and compensation to their dedicated employees and not just higher profit margins.

This year 2022 OCTSS is targeting three to four major companies or institutions in our community to take the lead in publicizing their commitment to be a more just and equitable entity in Larimer County. As we closed the 2021 year we reported Fort Collins Hewlett Packard Corporation has officially become our first major employer to step up and sign on with OCTSS and this initiative. Together we can work with companies to see the need to appreciate their employees monetarily and fairly. In the long run it will make a more united community to live in.

“NEEDED: TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION IN AMERICA”

BY NINA RUBIN

OUR COMMITMENT EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

I recently had the opportunity to spend time in Montgomery Alabama. While I was there, I was able to visit the new Legacy Museum which opened this fall and the National Memorial for Peace and Justice, which opened in April of 2018.

Both the Museum and the Memorial are the work of the Equal Justice initiative. The EJI was started in 1989 by attorney Bryan Stevenson. EJI is committed to ending mass incarceration and excessive punishment in the U.S., challenging racial and economic injustice, and protecting basic human rights for the most vulnerable people in American society.

Founder and Executive Director Stevenson has noted that, to actually address the injustices in our society, it is not enough to assist those wrongly accused or inappropriately sentenced. There are bigger societal changes that need to be addressed. He writes that, when he arrived in Montgomery in the 1980's, there were dozens of monuments to the Confederacy that seemed to celebrate and romanticize the most shameful and cruel era in American history; but not a single reference to the brutal and devastating institution of slavery existed.

Stevenson noted that, in places in the world with horrific histories of injustice and genocide, such as Germany, South Africa and Rwanda, people have been able to move forward because of their commitment to the work of truth, followed by repairs, recovery and reconciliation. In each of these communities you will find monuments and museums dedicated to education and reconciliation

Visiting “The Legacy Museum, From Enslavement to Mass Incarceration” is a powerful experience. It starts with an emotional art installation representing the brutal “middle passage” from Africa, followed by the reality and brutality of slavery, including the separation of families and the abuse inflicted on these people. After emancipation there are documents of freed people desperately and almost always unsuccessfully searching for loved ones. After a brief period of reconstruction when the federal government intervened to protect the rights of the newly freed, they were abandoned to the former slave holders and power brokers, who quickly reversed all rights. Slavery was replaced by state sponsored terrorism in the form of lynching. Thousands of African American men, women and children were murdered in full view of the community in festive events where people took photos and body parts home as souvenirs. Both the United States Supreme Court and the Congress refused to take any action to stop this terrorism, in spite of multiple cases brought and bills presented. Abandoned by the rest of the country, Black southerners fled to the north and west in hopes of finding a better life.

The museum goes on to document the mass incarceration of black men, which amounted to renewed slavery. These arrests and convictions have not always been based on any evidence, or even crime. Slave labor was allowed for convicts and in that way southern industry continued to flourish with this free labor. The museum’s exhibits continue to document continued injustice through to today.

The national Memorial for Peace and Justice, is a monument to the thousands of people lynched in this country. While the majority of these took place in the South, there were lynchings throughout the country, including in Colorado. Contrary to the suggestion that these were acts of “frontier justice,” they were actually acts of terrorism used to control and keep black people “in their place.” Here is a link to the history displayed at the Memorial:

<https://eji.org/news/reconstruction-in-america-report-changes-picture-of-lynching-in-america/>

Without a commitment to ourselves and society for truth and reconciliation, our community and our country have been unable to build an equitable future for all. Keeping history in mind, our work must be to create greater equity in all parts of society. And we can only do so together!

WE VALUE YOUR INPUT!

Please share any thoughts, responses, and ideas about these articles, about possible future newsletter articles, and about the work of *Our Commitment to Self and Society*. We can’t do this work without you! Our email address is at the top of the Newsletter.