

## **Special Commission on Equity, Inclusion, and Racial Conciliation**

### **Historical Perspective**

Charleston (formerly Charles Town), founded in 1670, flourished in the 17th, 18th, and 19th Centuries from a robust economy centered around the production of rice, indigo, and other commodities made possible by the labor of enslaved people. Charleston prospered due to the expertise, ingenuity, and hard labor of enslaved Africans who were forced to endure inhumane working conditions, being denied the wealth their work produced for many others.

The institution of slavery did not just involve physical confinement and mistreatment; it also sought to suppress, if not eradicate, the cultural, religious, and social values of Africans by stripping them of their ancestral names and customs, humiliating and brutalizing them through sexual exploitation, and oftentimes selling relatives apart from one another without regard to the connection of family, a universal human condition.

*Approximately forty percent of enslaved Africans arrived in North America through the ports of Charleston, and today, hundreds of thousands of African American citizens can trace their ancestry to Africans arriving here.*

As a result of the adoption and legalization of the institution of slavery from the 15th to 19th Centuries, more than 15.5 million Indigenous Peoples and Africans were subjected to enslavement to develop North America, South America, and the Caribbean, with an estimated two million Africans not surviving the Middle Passage.

For a time, in spite of our Declaration of Independence's tenet that all men are created equal, federal law as embodied in the Constitution did not recognize enslaved Africans as equal. They were denied citizenship either in number or by way of access to the basic rights of due process and equal protection of the law; a condition that persisted until 1865 with the enactment of the 13th Amendment to the Constitution and in 1868 with the enactment of the 14th Amendment to the Constitution requiring State compliance with Constitutional mandates.

Notwithstanding the 14th and 15th Amendments to the Constitution, systemic racism continued in many parts of the country with the enactment and enforcement of laws that would come to be known as 'Jim Crow,' designed to separate African Americans from

their fellow citizens by suppressing and intimidating their exercise of basic rights - such as voting - and to stifle educational opportunities that would create long-term loss of their personal and economic advancement.

## **Charleston in 2020**

We believe in the acknowledgment and apology for the City of Charleston's role in regulating, supporting, and fostering the institution of slavery within its boundaries and the past wrongs inflicted on African Americans here and elsewhere. We also believe in an acknowledgment and expression of gratitude for the significant contributions made to our community by talented and skilled African Americans that are reflected in the agriculture, architecture, artisanship, arts, and cuisine of the City.

In recent times, the City of Charleston has supported civil rights and social justice and taken measures to advance racial equity. Examples include: The City of Charleston Public Accommodations Ordinance providing equal enjoyment and privileges to public accommodations; the City of Charleston Fair Housing Practices Ordinance making discrimination in housing illegal; the creation of the City of Charleston's Minority and Women Business Enterprise Development office; partnering with Charleston County School District and education-focused organizations and programs to improve the quality of education in our schools and to encourage children to stay in school; and supporting efforts of institutions and churches, including the congregation and community of the Mother Emanuel AME Church following the tragedy of June 2015.

The story of enslavement, discrimination, and segregation of African Americans and the dehumanizing atrocities committed against them should not be purged from or minimized in the telling of Charleston's history. Moreover, the faith, perseverance, hope, and triumphs of African Americans and their significant contributions to the development of this State and nation should be embraced, celebrated, and retold for generations to come.

The City of Charleston acknowledges that these efforts to strive for equality, equity, and opportunity in all areas of life for African Americans in Charleston must persist and, therefore, commits to the necessity of continuing to undertake and promote effective measures to assist in the amelioration of remaining vestiges of slavery. While we have made substantial progress, structural inequities continue to persist in areas such as

education, health care, transportation, housing, economic opportunity, and criminal justice.

We honor the labor that has brought us to this moment. The Special Commission on Equity, Inclusion, and Racial Conciliation specifically acknowledges the work of the Avery Research Center and College of Charleston in writing *The State of Racial Disparities in Charleston County, South Carolina 2000-2015*. Black labor has been foundational to the growth of the City of Charleston. The work of this Commission is built upon the foundation created by this report. We honor their work and sacrifice and intend to implement the recommendations of their report.

### **Purpose of the Special Commission**

This Special Commission on Equity, Inclusion, and Racial Conciliation is charged with making the City's Apology for Slavery and 'Jim Crow' more than just a promise; it is committed to revealing and dismantling systemic racism and to sharing a more comprehensive, inclusive, and diverse story of our history.

The Special Commission has 90 days to deliver its first set of action steps that can be enacted to ensure a more equitable and inclusive City of Charleston. These initial recommendations will have a lasting and far-reaching effect in rebuilding the City of Charleston now and for generations to come as an actively anti-racist government.

### **Membership of the Special Commission**

#### **(6) City of Charleston Council Members**

- William Dudley Gregorie (co-chair)
- Jason Sakran (co-chair)
- Marie Delcioppo
- Keith Waring
- Harry Griffin
- Carol Jackson

#### **(7) At-Large Community Members**

- Daron Lee Calhoun, II (Internal Review)
- Crystal Rouse (Youth and Education)
- Alvin Johnson (Economic Empowerment)
- Tracy Doran (Housing and Mobility)

- Michael Better (Criminal Justice Reform)
- Dr. Felice Knight (History and Culture)
- David Rivers (Health Disparities and Environmental Justice)

Each at-large community member will chair one subcommittee. Subcommittees will be comprised of the at-large community member (chair), vice-chair, and 5 subcommittee members representing the public.

(7) Subcommittees

- Internal Review
- Youth and Education
- Economic Empowerment
- Housing and Mobility
- Criminal Justice Reform
- History and Culture
- Health Disparities and Environmental Justice

Each member will undergo training to help them develop a common language and understanding of equity and inclusion principles, including shared definitions of racism and racial equity.

**Mission and Directives**

We pledge to pursue initiatives that honor the contributions of those who were enslaved; ameliorating the remaining vestiges of slavery; and fundamentally changing our local government to reflect equity and inclusion for all people. In doing so, we strengthen our entire community. We will:

- Address structural racism as a public priority. The City of Charleston will commit itself to an inclusive and aggressive effort to end racism and poverty. This effort will include: a well-publicized campaign to inform public officials and the general public about the current state of racial disparities and a comprehensive plan to achieve racial equity in all sectors through legislative, administrative, and financial support.
- Require a racial equity framework for City.
- Require all City departments that collect program service data to calculate demographic data (e.g. racial, ethnic, and poverty data) and to make this data

publicly available with all necessary measures to protect personal privacy.

- Make the Slavery Apology a living document that brings forth action toward the historic problem of racial and ethnic segregation and exclusion. To counterbalance remaining conditions, the City will use a market-conscious approach to the causes of gentrification. We will embrace new principles that allow for an inclusive development paradigm through a racial/ethnic equity lens. We also recommend the City recognize how public investments can affect the private market and formulate ways to anticipate housing demand and market changes.
- Call on community partners - higher educational institutions, civil rights organizations, business alliances, cultural organizations, and private sector - to work as resourcing “agencies” to flesh out the mission of the Commission and its subcommittees.

### **Subcommittee Descriptions and Directives**

After extensive research, we have identified seven key areas in which systemic racism presents itself. Each subcommittee is tasked with studying in-depth one of these key areas, reviewing where inequities do or could potentially exist in current policies, procedures, and legislation, and making recommendations for changes, amendments, or other alterations the subcommittee deems necessary.

#### **Internal Review**

**This subcommittee will work to create an infrastructure and mechanism that holds the City accountable for advancing racial equity in its internal practices and services provided to the community.** This committee will review current policies, procedures, and legislation and make recommendations for changes it deems necessary. Examples may include but are not limited to:

- Review City policies, practices, budget, hiring and recruitment, personnel training, procurement, zoning, and other matters determined to be appropriate related to addressing racism and racial inequities and to make recommendations to City Council on ways to promote racial justice and racial equity within the City as an organization and its services provided.

- Make recommendations to City Council on the development of a racial equity criteria that will serve as a framework to analyze, influence, and improve decision making.
- Create proactive and engaging racial equity teams throughout the organization.
- Develop a method for measuring success of programmatic and policy changes with baselines, goals, and progress measurements.
- Review the Slavery Apology Resolution for recommendations to implement.

### **Economic Empowerment**

**This subcommittee will have a Minority and Women Owned Business (MWB) engagement focus to facilitate access to capital and eliminate barriers to entry. It will develop model examples for positioning firms to win supply chain/sub/prime contract opportunities on municipal and corporate bids and identify opportunities for job creation through local small business initiatives.** This subcommittee is expected to work in partnership with the City of Charleston Community Development Committee and Minority Business Enterprise Advisory Board as well as local, regional, and national organizations centered around economic development opportunities. This committee will review current policies, procedures, and legislation and make recommendations for changes it deems necessary. Examples may include but are not limited to:

- Address chronic poverty in the workforce by exploring a City-wide minimum living wage policy.
- Enhance unemployment insurance for seasonal workers.
- Increase wage theft protections.
- Address barriers to work, including expensive and unreliable transportation systems; high-quality, yet unaffordable, childcare; and business management practices that make hourly work schedules insupportable.
- Offer public transportation and parking vouchers using revenue from tourism and hospitality taxes geared toward low-income workers in the service and hospitality industries.

- Increase re-entry employment programs to thwart recidivism of those returning home after incarceration using examples from other cities around the country.
- Develop “Community Benefit Agreements” between local community groups, developers, and government agencies and officials to create tax breaks in exchange for hiring local residents rather than outsourcing to other markets or recruiting out-of-state workers.
- Deploy public awareness campaigns to educate the public about predatory lending practices that target the low-income populace.
- Expand access to financial services by establishing these services in banking deserts.
- Expand access to working capital in the form of small business loans.
- Create a pipeline for the promotion of black civil servants in mid to senior-level positions; as upper-level civil servants, a focus on racial equity in filling those positions should be prioritized.
- Audit and address the hiring practices in City departments to dismantle systemic barriers to hiring qualified black candidates and establish percentage hiring rates with target years.
- Establish diversity management training requirements for all City of Charleston supervisors, managers, and staff.
- Authorize and empower an Internal Auditor and Equity, Inclusion, and Racial Conciliation Manager to identify and address discriminatory practices in hiring and employment experiences of black candidates and employees.

### **Housing and Mobility**

**This committee will review the intersection of people’s ability to secure stable and affordable housing, proximity to economic hubs, and the ability to move between the two.** This subcommittee is expected to work in partnership with the City of Charleston Traffic and Transportation Committee, Community Development Committee, Bike and Pedestrian Advisory Committee, and Planning Commission as well as local,

regional, and national organizations centered around affordable housing and transportation opportunities. It will review policy and recommend any changes it deems necessary to ensure that impediments to fair housing choice are eliminated; consider the passage of a Fair Housing Law substantially equivalent to the national Fair Housing Act; and enforce affirmative marketing and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act for benefit, services, and participation. This committee will review other applicable current policies, procedures, and legislation and make recommendations for changes it deems necessary. Examples may include but are not limited to:

- Work to preserve existing subsidized and affordable housing as well as expand the supply of project- and tenant-based housing subsidies. Explore mechanisms for the creation of new vouchers to assist the lowest-income and most disadvantaged households in finding safe quality housing in high-performing school districts.
- Acknowledge that a comprehensive affordable housing strategy should consider solutions addressing both supply and demand.
- Recommend policies and take steps to “affirmatively further fair housing.”
- Recommend statutes, regulations, and ordinances that prevent involuntary displacement of tenants and other residents from lower-income, largely black, urban neighborhoods undergoing redevelopment, revitalization, and gentrification; and ensure residents of such communities are the equal beneficiaries of employment, housing, and overall economic benefits generated by redevelopment and revitalization. Additionally, ensure compliance with existing civil rights laws aimed at the elimination of discriminatory tenant- and other housing-related screening practices.
- Decrease racial disparities in housing by creating “purple zones” in up-and-coming and depressed areas of the City. For our purposes, purple zones would include mixed-income residences, affordable homes for purchase, and subsidies for low- to middle-income households seeking homeownership or small business opportunities. Purple zones are syncretized communities seeking to reflect and uplift Gullah/African American culture.
- Recommend improvements for all modes of transportation, including walking, cycling, vehicles, and mass transit. Work with the City, County, and State to

embrace the concept of “complete streets” by providing strategies and policies to improve equity in mobility.

- Address with developers, zoning and planning boards and commissions, City, County and State transportation departments, regional organizations, and business partners the need for alignment in development and infrastructure, especially the effects on traffic congestion, walkability and bike-friendly, public transportation options, and safety.

### **Criminal Justice Reform**

**This committee will deep dive into ordinances and policies that would have a positive change toward police reform.** This subcommittee is expected to work in partnership with the City of Charleston Public Safety Committee and Citizen Police Advisory Council as well as local, regional, and national organizations centered around public policy, activism, and criminal justice. This committee will review current policies, procedures, and legislation and make recommendations for changes it deems necessary. Examples may include but are not limited to:

- Require racial and ethnic equity statements for all criminal justice legislation. These statements can help assess disparities at various stages of the criminal justice process and reveal discriminatory outcomes, whether purposeful or not.
- Eliminate policies and practices resulting in disproportionate arrests and incarcerations of people of color.
- Ensure formerly incarcerated individuals can and do have access to housing and employment, including how criminal records can be used. Create a dedicated outreach program to ensure housing providers and potential tenants are aware of the new law and Department of Housing and Urban Development regulations.
- As addressed in the Racial Bias Audit, work with the Police Department to mandate collection of data on race, gender, and ethnicity. Policing data should include information about police encounters including traffic stops, frisks, searches, seizures, summonses, arrests, and use of force incidents. The data should also include information on both crime rates and rates of parole by race.
- Using other Cities as models, develop and incentivize quarterly weapons buyback and amnesty programs.

- Using the Racial Bias Audit as a guide, ensure the City's Police Department training and curricula are using a racial equity lens to address unconscious bias as well as generational and cultural differences.
- Expand local mental health institutions' partnership with law enforcement agencies to improve how supervisors and patrol officers deal with residents who have mental and emotional health challenges, including but not limited to post-traumatic stress disorder, psychological and psychiatric conditions and diagnoses, domestic violence, and alcohol and drug addictions.
- Expand de-escalation training for all levels of law enforcement officers with a special focus on agencies who work with youth and young adults.

### **Youth and Education**

**This subcommittee will support Charleston and Berkeley County School Districts with recommendations on how to improve the ways in which teachers and other staff understand their roles in creating schools that are more culturally responsive to diverse student populations.** This subcommittee is expected to work in partnership with The Recreation Committee, The Commission on Children, Youth and Families, Charleston and Berkeley County School Districts, as well as local, regional, and national organizations focused on educational reform. This committee will review current policies, procedures, and legislation and make recommendations for changes it deems necessary. Examples may include but are not limited to:

- Establish summer employment programs for low-income teens that provide administrative/technical training and expose them to professional skills and opportunities that can help them navigate their way out of poverty.
- Investigate the impact that charter schools have on student achievement and determine whether the City should explore a potential charter school partnership or similar effort to ensure access and opportunity.
- Establish 529 College Savings Plans for low-income youth workers with a match to use for college, vocational, and/or technical training institutions.
- Invest in learning programs that go beyond the regular school day, including after school, expanded learning time, internships, and summer learning.

- Expand the full-day, high-quality preschool program to all low-income pre-K children in their respective school districts.
- Reform school disciplinary procedures to emphasize service instead of punishment to disrupt the school-to-prison pipeline.
- Ensure Charleston and Berkeley County School District students involved in the juvenile justice system receive quality instruction and successfully transition back into the educational system through the delivery of innovative twenty-first-century pedagogies that equip students with appropriate grade-level skills and competencies.
- Develop and implement effective strategies for addressing teacher quality and teacher shortages, with special emphasis on black teachers in general and black male teachers in particular. Look to programs such as Call Me MISTER® and create a formal pipeline between education departments and programs at historically black colleges and universities and the Charleston and Berkeley County School Districts through a memorandum of understanding.
- Support schools and districts identified for improvement by earmarking funds to assist in correcting resource inequities.
- Require all Charleston and Berkeley County School Districts Board Members to formalize their commitment to diversity and racial equity in the delivery of public education in Charleston and Berkeley Counties. Formal statements should detail what their vision for diversity and racial equity is in their district and indicate their plans for implementation.
- Provide parents and families with comprehensive information about school and district performance on state and district report cards. In order to present a complete picture of how schools and districts are performing on other indicators that impact students' academic achievement and socio-emotional development, we urge the Charleston and Berkeley County School Districts include the following:
  - Staff-to-student ratio for support staff (e.g. counselors and social workers)
  - The number of police officers assigned to schools

- o The use of evidence-based restorative practices, PBIS, and other positive approaches
- o Data on teacher recruitment, retention, and teacher absenteeism
- o The school-level and district-wide poverty rates
- o Access to extracurricular activities
- o Data indicating teacher and school leader diversity

### **History and Culture**

**This committee will work to expand history and cultural awareness and opportunities. Their work will include: methods/programs to enhance access to public spaces, to create more public spaces in underserved areas, and to challenge those spaces to offer more deliberately diverse and inclusive storytelling.** This subcommittee is expected to work in partnership with The City of Charleston Commission on Arts, Commission on History, and Recreation Committee and other cultural and historical organizations and academics with the breadth of knowledge and interpretive skills needed. The committee will also review and address historical markers, memorials, and monuments within the City’s purview with the goal to tell a more comprehensive history of the City of Charleston, inclusive of all her people. This committee will review current policies, procedures, and legislation and make recommendations for changes it deems necessary. Examples may include but are not limited to :

- Take inventory of historical markers, memorials, and monuments and make a determination regarding whether or not they should be removed
- Identify additional spaces to showcase a more complete story of Charleston
- Develop a plan to memorialize the contributions of individuals and groups not appropriately represented in the cultural landscape.
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- Work with Youth and Education subcommittee to provide suggestions for History curriculum
- Any other matters this subcommittee deems appropriate to bring before City Council

### **Health Disparities and Environmental Justice**

**This committee will address racial disparities in health, the healthcare system, and access to wellness programs and opportunities within the City of Charleston as well as investigate the connections between environmental justice and the health of communities.** Health inequities are reflected in differences in lifespan; quality of life; rates of disease, disability, and death; severity of disease; and access to treatment. This subcommittee is expected to work in partnership with The City of Charleston Health and Wellness Advisory Committee as well as local, regional, and national organizations centered around healthcare reform, preventative care and education, and access to healthy living and wellness programs. This committee will review current policies, procedures, and legislation and make recommendations for changes it deems necessary. Examples may include but are not limited to:

- Reducing health disparities and increasing access to quality healthcare
- Access to healthy foods and nutrition programs
- Fitness and exercise centers and programs
- Smoking, alcohol and drug cessation and rehabilitation programs and facilities
- Mental health services
- Wellness and lifestyle initiatives
- Community Gardens
- Adopt –a-Drain Program
- Partner with Active Living