End of Year Review: 2022

Together, we can move mountains!

Alone, we can't move at all

Walking towards each other to forge a better Greensboro, stronger North Carolina, and equitable Nation

Confusion, Fear, Falsehood, and Force Are Not The Way!

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**WORDS OF WISDOM**

_Above: From Generation to Generation: Passing the Baton_  _Below: Grace Lee Boggs, (friend of, and co-laborer with BCC, served and lived for 100 yrs.) Past Social Justice Leader_  _Right: JahNesta Murray, (9 yr. old speaker at 2022 NC-TJRC Summit) Future Social Justice Leader_

_You cannot change any society unless you take responsibility for it, unless you see yourself as belonging to it and responsible for changing it._

—Grace Lee Boggs—

_I support NC-TJRC because some people are going through it in life, and some people are losing people to gun violence. I just want to tell them that you got this even if you are scared, you can still do it._

—JahNesta Murray—
Towards An Enduring Solution

As we come to the end of 2022, we are deeply appreciative of the many friends who have invested in the work of the Beloved Community Center (BCC). Few will disagree that a crippling spirit – reflected in flawed public policy, religious distortions, and irrational individual behaviors – has taken root in our nation. This spirit is tragically splintering the population, driving us further and further apart.

Let’s face it: we are currently confronted with and challenged by a complex, trying reality. The question of “what is to be done?” confronts all of us.

Is electoral work necessary? Yes, electoral work is absolutely necessary! However, what can and should be done in addition to traditional electoral work to help heal the painful wounds lingering from a long history of devaluing, exploiting, and abusing other human beings and the earth itself?

No doubt, there are multiple answers to the question. We, therefore, urge and encourage every individual and organization to do the work to which you are called. We at BCC, together with people across the state of North Carolina, have chosen to grow a well-rooted statewide Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation Commission (NC-TJRC) process. The BCC carried out the nation’s first truth and reconciliation commission process from 2000 to 2006 in Greensboro. We will build upon that successful undertaking.

This End of Year Report will seek to capture the gist of all of our 2022 work. However, we are convinced that truth – deep truth – is the antidote to falsehood, which breeds both fear and force. Truth is the primary door through which we can seek justice, reconciliation, and healing. Please find some quiet time to thoughtfully read through the content of this end of year report. We hope you will sense the value of our work, especially for this period.

Over the next two years, we at BCC are challenged to put local organizers on the ground in each of the state’s three regions, along with providing consistent support and training to an increasing number of grassroots advocates, partnering organizations, and a broad spectrum of allies. To accomplish this task and guide the NC-TJRC process to a successful completion, we will need to raise approximately $9 million dollars. Every dollar counts; therefore, we urge you to give as little or as much as you can afford. We are convinced that if we can grow this process to fruition in North Carolina, it could well become both an inspiration and a model for our nation. We, therefore, also ask, in that spirit, for both your generous financial and moral support.

You may make a secure one-time or monthly tax-deductible donation online via our website at www.belovedcommunitycenter.org, or you may mail a check(s) to Beloved Community Center, at Post Office Box 875, Greensboro, NC 27402.

Many thanks and let us continue to walk towards each other, forging enduring unity.
200 Attended the 2022 North Carolina Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation Commission Summit

When planning began, BCC envisioned a convergence of all segments of the community — young folks, race and ethnic diversities, labor, clergy, social justice workers, lawyers, professors, teachers, and economic/business leaders — with hope that the Summit would reach the most impoverished, marginalized sectors of our communities. Simply put: BCC believed (and still believes) that placing deeply-rooted community truths in the hands of the people is perhaps the most powerful tool with which to counter the falsehoods currently flooding our nation, falsehoods that give rise to a culture of fear and violence.

During the five-day convergence, nearly two hundred people gathered at Bennett College (one of only two HBCUs for women in the nation) and BCC’s Arlington Street headquarters to converse around “the fierce urgency of now” – a time which kindles the need for a statewide Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation Commission process.

Summit attendees heard from a plethora of powerhouse speakers, guided by BCC Co-Executive Directors Rev. Nelson and Mrs. Joyce Johnson. Speakers for the occasion included Rev. Dr. Peter Storey (South African Truth and Reconciliation Process and Author), Rev. Dr. William J. Barber, II (Co-Chair, Poor Peoples Campaign and President, Repairers of the Breach), and Rev. Dr. J. Herbert Nelson (Presbyterian Church, USA). Compelling conversations unfolded during various panels and group discussions.

The Summit concluded with a training session, which focused on how grassroots leaders from across North Carolina can begin to grow local Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation processes in their respective areas through the end of 2022 and undoubtedly onward into the years to come.
The Beloved Community Center (BCC) started the year with the January 20th official launch of the North Carolina Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation Commission (NC-TJRC) process. It was a cold rainy day, with a snowy forecast; yet the inclement weather could not keep people from gathering with others in the state’s capital at Raleigh First Baptist Church for this momentous occasion. Rev. Dr. Dumas Harshaw, Pastor of the historic African American church, prayed a heart-warming prayer that transported attendees beyond the cold, damp, dreariness of the day, to the warmth and security offered by the promise of what we were embarking upon together.

From that occasion forward, we vigorously set out to build **towards the transformative truths, real justice, and quality healing and reconciliation** needed to address the extreme polarization and divisiveness plaguing our state and nation. We were, and remain, convinced that truth, justice, and reconciliation hold great possibilities for a better way forward. So, we took our vision of hope, of possibility to each of the state’s three regions. We shared our message of “walking the state’s diversities towards each other,” so as to ultimately have them “walk with each other” to transform our state, our nation to a place where all are valued, all are cared for, all are given an opportunity to reach their potential.

Eight communities across North Carolina embraced our vision and committed to build with us. They are: Greensboro, Asheville, Charlotte, Durham/Chapel Hill, Raleigh, Wilmington, and the tri-county areas of Northampton/Halifax/Warren Counties and Robeson/Hoke/Scotland Counties. Together we envisioned our work as a kind of wrapping process with the poor and marginalized at the center; and then **increasingly wrapping various other strata and segments of the community around that core anchored by a desire for a depthful examination of truth, justice, and healing.** We made several trips around the state, to both rural and urban areas, visiting with those engaged, learning as we go, building towards some measure of transformative truth, real justice and quality healing and reconciliation.
Visiting Potential Local Sites as We Continued Building Towards Transformative Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation

We also shared and interacted with other important sectors of the community in hopes of building key affiliations, while wrapping a layer of networked collaborative partnerships around our evolving local core groups. Our message was simple. Our country is objectively destabilized and moving in the wrong direction. Currently, a large part of our nation is deeply rooted and hungry for broader and deeper unity, clinging fast to our fragile democracy. Yet, another growing slice of our nation’s population is dissatisfied, angry, bitter, prone to violence, lashing out at anyone with a different viewpoint than their own. Neither slice appears to have a clear alternative to our current reality. Therefore, the battle between opposing ideologies can either carry us forward towards the transformation we desire or push us backward into even greater divisiveness, fear, conflict, heightened violence and even Civil War. That would be sad indeed. However, there is good news!

As we have traveled around the state (NC) in 2022, and to a lesser degree around the nation, we have been urging people to “listen deeply to each other.” Suggesting they build a body of truth based on actual experiences and factual history, while growing a genuine respect for each other. We are happy to report that the message was not only heard, but served as a beacon pulling various segments of the community together in October for our first ever NC-TJRC Summit. Some 200 or more people, representing key sectors of our community, joined with BCC for this 5-day summit and training event. Again, we reiterated the need to build a process with poor and working-class people at the center, increasingly wrapping the different strata of people around them, linked together by a shared community truth. We believe that, if people are increasingly rooted in truth and joined together for the common good, that positive energy could push the nation forward to a better society where the dignity, worth, and enormous unrealized potential of people is affirmed and manifested. That’s what we mean by building towards a transformative, Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation reality.

The challenge now, of course, is to grow the desire and the skills of those at the table to reach across the historical and contemporary ditches of division with this hopeful vision for our state and nation. Every part of our community can play a constructive role in this process if our desire is strong enough, if our spirit is anchored enough, if our patience can stretch far enough, and if our fears are contained enough, we can do it!
More Visits to Potential Local Sites as We Continued to Build Towards Transformative Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation

Pictured above is part of the enthusiastic gathering in Asheville that included residents of several nearby counties.

The Durham and Chapel Hill Site Visit was simultaneously in person and online. The group had many questions but expressed enthusiasm about the Statewide Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation Commission process.

In Charlotte, after rigorous discussion that included Eduardo Gonzales of the Peruvian Truth Commission, attendees gathered for a photo-op.

An interested group from Holy Trinity Episcopal Church in Greensboro had a very inspired discussion with BCC staff about the prospects for a Statewide Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation process.
Amplifying Voices of Those Most Negatively Impacted: The Formation of USSW — *The Union of Southern Service Workers*

*It was Festive; it was Focused; it was Boisterous, but Joyful!*

From November 17-19, 2022, several hundred low-wage workers from the fast-food, retail, healthcare, and other industries congregated in Columbia, South Carolina for a Raise Up The South Summit to launch a new labor union: **The Union of Southern Service Workers (USSW)**. The diverse group of attendees, most of whom were young people, gathered from Southern U.S. states, with some traveling thousands of miles from Arizona and California for the historic moment.

The Co-Executive Directors of the Beloved Community Center, Rev. Nelson and Mrs. Joyce Johnson, were invited to participate and attend. When asked about his time spent at the Summit, Rev. Johnson says, “It was a joy and a blessing to be participants in such an energetic and meaningful gathering. We had the opportunity to join a workshop on building relationships between workers and others in the community. We call this ‘community unionism,’ which has been BCC’s organizing model for years.”

BCC has a long history of building mutually-supportive relationships with low-wage service workers under The Fight For $15 banner, and is committed to continue this work alongside the USSW.

In the coming months, BCC will host USSW workers at the Center in Greensboro, as they strategize ways to press for the full actualization of their demands – **Respect Us, Protect Us, Pay Us.** BCC is also in talks with USSW leadership to solidify their partnership in advancing the statewide NC – Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation Commission process. **Forward Together!**

*Above:* Some 500 workers and supporters gathered at the Founding Conference of USSW in Columbia, SC, November 2022.

*Inset:* From left to right are USSW organizer Cookie Bradley, BCC Directors Nelson & Joyce Johnson, Poor Peoples Campaign Leader Roz Pelles, and USSW Organizer Ben Wilkins.
Struggle for Police Accountability: The Result of Staying the Course

After three years of constant community pressure and demand for justice, both in the streets and in city council chambers, a civil lawsuit filed by the family of Marcus Deon Smith was settled, awarding $2.57-million-dollars to Marcus’s family. You may recall, that in the Fall of 2018 Marcus Deon Smith, a homeless man, died of suffocation while hogtied in police custody after having approached the police seeking assistance in getting mental health services. With eerie similarity to George Floyd’s death, local police and paramedics looked on as Marcus took his last breath; yet the police still took no responsibility for his death. BCC took the initiative to convene six, mainly grassroots youth organizations to form the Greensboro Justice Coalition (GJC) to champion the struggle for Justice related to Marcus’s death. Long after the local media ceased coverage of the story, the community led by the coalition and other partners would not allow Marcus to be forgotten. Over the years, the ‘Justice for Marcus,’ coalition partners held periodic street rallies and demonstrations; community meetings, press conferences, and constantly showed up at city council meetings demanding city leaders do the right thing by Marcus and his family. In 2021, spearheaded by BCC, GJC, the Pulpit Forum and the local branch of the NAACP, a letter to the US Justice Department was written, co-signers solicited, and ultimately sent asking that they intervene to address a pattern and practice of abuse by the Greensboro Police Department.

But even, as the community’s persistence meted some measure of justice for the Smith family, on the night of November 19th, 2021 an unarmed Latino man, Joseph Thomas Lee Lopez, was shot and killed by a Greensboro Police Officer. The police were called to a house where Mr. Lopez was staying in a shed. Mr. Lopez came from behind the shed and was shot and killed by a local police officer. Again, the Greensboro Justice Coalition took to the streets and the city council chambers demanding justice. In this case after several weeks the officer involved was relieved of duty. He was later charged with manslaughter and terminated as a police officer. The struggle for justice and police accountability is a necessary and continuous part of struggle for comprehensive justice. Also, police accountability is inherently a part of the work of the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission process, not just in Greensboro but also throughout North Carolina. Indeed, it is part of the quest for Beloved Community.

Marcus Deon Smith: Gone but not forgotten!

DEATH BY HOGTYING: Marcus Deon Smith died of suffocation while hogtied in police custody.

STREET HEAT: The Greensboro Community stood with the Smith Family for over three years to get a modicum of justice.
Grassroots History Archiving Project

The truth of our history is an inspiration for the current and future generations.

Beloved Community Center’s Grassroots Historical Archiving Project reminds us that we sometimes must reach back to move forward. Originally started in the mid-1990s, The Project has continued to be an invaluable aspect of our work at BCC to this day. The images that follow reflect some of the work completed by BCC in 2022. In every Grassroots History session, we share some of the story of the community building and movement building work in Greensboro and beyond.

Above, left: The Greensboro-based White Voices Against Racism Group learns of Greensboro’s rich legacy of community-centered, justice seeking during a Grassroots History Tour.

Above, center: U.S. Military Veterans, from around the country and every branch of the military, visited Beloved Community Center to gain lessons from BCC’s decades of struggle for dignity, justice, and equality for all.

Above, right: Lewis A. Brandon, III, BCC’s Training and Grassroots History Coordinator (in blue at center) breaks for a picture during a tour for Guilford College students.

Above left: Members of El Colectivo of North Carolina gather at BCC for an all-day retreat and an opportunity to learn of the history of the Black Liberation Movement in the U.S. and the relationship to the struggle for justice and equity by Latinos. Center: Similarly, members of the newly formed Union of Southern Service Workers and other partners from around the country assemble at BCC to strengthen their organizing skills by hearing stories of BCC’s decades-long struggle for worker and community justice in the south and beyond. Right: BCC’s Co-Directors, Nelson & Joyce Johnson pause for a picture in BCC’s hallway during a break from the inspiring training and retreat session, where BCC was joined by national justice leaders.

BCC hosted an intergenerational gathering, entitled “Organizing for Power: Reflections on Resilience, Commitment and Courage,” sponsored by the Carolinas Federation. The program was featured simultaneously in person at BCC and via Zoom for registrants. The program, featured long-time organizers/activists, Mandy Carter, Heather Boothe, and Bill Strickland. BCC Co-Director, Nelson Johnson, served as moderator and presenter.
Black and Brown Women’s Voting Initiative

Putting electoral politics back in the hands of the people is the aim of the Black and Brown Women’s Voting Initiative.

The Declaration of Independence speaks of rights afforded to all persons, such as Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness. More importantly, it indicates “that to secure these rights, governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed...” This doctrine suggests that ‘we, the people,’ should dictate the policy agenda, and not the elected few. Yet, special interest; less than full engagement of the voting electorate in the political process; and disillusionment in the system of governance, itself has led to the current upside down, elitist politics of today.

In 2022, the Black and Brown Women’s Voting Initiative (BBWVI) spearheaded a non-partisan Voter Education and Empowerment sessions, along with Get-Out-The-Vote events aimed at “righting” this phenomenon in the Guilford County area. The group led by the Beloved Community Center and St. James Presbyterian Church, supported by the Pulpit Forum of Greensboro and other partnering entities, set out to establish a series of activities and events that would restore both the confidence and power of the people of Guilford County to influence and effect better outcomes for their community. The BBWVI continued and intensified its work of issue education, prioritizing key issues of importance as identified by the community. Those issue areas were: Housing, Food Security, Environmental Sustainability, Community Safety, Jobs and Economic Sustainability, Education, along with a deliberate campaign to advance paid family leave.

As 2022 was an election year, the BBWVI looked to lead, leverage and link up their work with other local and national non-partisan efforts meant to motivate and inspire the community to cast their ballots. Specifically, the group rallied Greensboro residents to participate in a national call to action; led in distribution of information via setting regular virtual and in-person voter education events. They organized and supported the work of local and national partners in training local canvassers, while also arranging targeted canvassing actions.

Another significant piece of the BBWVI’s work in 2022 was their hosting of three People’s Town Hall Meetings in which the people got to address candidates vying for their vote. Instead of the usual Candidates’ Forum format, where politicians were given a platform to share what they deem important; the community was in full control. The Town Halls started with those from the community sharing from their personal experiences some of the challenges and/or barriers they desired those asking for their votes to address. They then asked questions of importance to them, and indicated their intent to establish an accountability mechanism or structure to hold whomever gets in office to account. The community promised to invite those ultimately elected back in 2023 to see what, if anything, they shared had been advanced by their representatives.

Many community members participating were inspired and empowered by the format; voicing their appreciation for a platform that both gave them an opportunity to have their issues heard, but also that afforded them a chance to hear directly from those vying for their votes on the same issues. Many candidates also commented favorably on the format suggesting it gave them much needed information to be more effective in serving this community.

The success of the People’s Town Hall format spread quickly, as Bennett College, its partners and others later adopted aspects of this model in their own GOTV work during the remainder of the 2022 Election Season.
The Poor Peoples Moral March on Washington

Leveraging national and state mobilizations to inspire, connect, and build across broad sectors and generations is important to movement building.

The Beloved Community Center (BCC) worked its local partnerships and associations to organize two of the fifteen buses arranged to transport NC’s nearly one thousand participants to the June 18, 2022, Poor People’s Campaign’s Moral March on Washington. BCC saw this as an opportunity to not only support and secure key partnerships, but also to inspire local residents to action. Rev. Dr. William J. Barber, II (Co-chair of the Poor People’s Campaign and one of the event’s organizers) also invited Rev. Nelson and Mrs. Joyce Johnson, Co-Executive Directors of BCC, to lead a symbolic “sharing of the light” ceremony on the main stage, signifying an intergenerational social justice movement. The Johnsons having led a similar effort during the “Occupy Wallstreet” Movement of the early 2010s, enlisted an intergenerational collection of Greensboro community members to lead this symbolic opening ceremony. “Lift up the Light. Share the Light,” was the melodic refrain.

During the day, attendees connected with activists and advocates from across the nation and beyond. Feeling energized and empowered on the bus ride back to North Carolina, people ardently discussed possible ways to support non-partisan GOTV efforts for the upcoming midterm elections; while also receiving information regarding BCC’s work to lead a transformative statewide Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation process.

Before an estimated crowd of 150,000, Greensboro Elders and Youth, with animated voices, exhorted the crowd to grow intergenerational unity for fundamental change, followed by the chant “Lift up the Light. Share the Light.”
BCC’s Work, Expertise and Partnership Were Affirmed and Highlighted at “The Well”

During the November 14-16, 2022, gathering of New Profit’s grantees and investment partners, also called The Well, the relationship between them and the Beloved Community Center (BCC) was on full display. Not only was BCC’s work featured on the main stage, as Mrs. Joyce Hobson Johnson and Rev. Dr. Peter Storey spoke of the benefits and success experienced leading prior Truth and Reconciliation Commissions (TRC); but also, of the unique hope and promise BCC’s latest endeavor to lead a statewide NC – Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation Commission (NC-TJRC) offered this nation, and perhaps the world.

As Founder and Co-CEO, Vanessa Kirsch pointed out, BCC’s influences were peppered throughout this gathering of national and global social justice entrepreneurs.

“New Profit’s annual gathering, The Well, was deeply impacted by the work of the Beloved Community Center. We have been inspired by the vision and leadership of Reverend Nelson Johnson and Joyce Johnson who have dedicated their lives, working from the ground up, to help people from diverse populations to walk towards each other.” The Well featured the work of BCC both on the main stage and in our gathering of faith-based leaders. Additionally, throughout the conference, we used organizing principles we learned from BCC around how we talk with each other as we questioned what an American evolution could look like. We are deeply honored to support the important work of the Beloved Community Center and see their work in North Carolina as a model for our country.”

~ Vanessa Kirsch, New Profit

Rev. Nelson Johnson was also featured as a panelist in a breakout session dedicated to the importance of, and how best one might build an intergenerational movement. He shared with the audience BCC’s intentional outreach and ongoing effort to connect their work with others, especially student and youth-led organizations.

In addition, BCC’s Operations Officer (Brigette Rasberry) and its Program Coordinator (Kim Porter) were afforded an opportunity to attend the gathering as special guests, along with a number of thought leaders routinely participating in a bi-weekly call between New Profit and BCC.

Lauren Cunningham, a Greensboro Community Advocate and outstanding Songstress, whom New Profit met a month earlier at BCC’s NC-TJRC Summit, was also invited to participate as a special guest.
BELOVED COMMUNITY CENTER TO ADD 7 NEW DIRECTORS TO ITS BOARD IN 2023 & BESTOW THE HONOR OF BOARD EMERITUS ON 2 OUTSTANDING, LONG-TERM DIRECTORS

JOIN US IN WELCOMING THEM TO OUR TEAM

Rev. Steve Allen
Pastor, Attorney and Former Judge
Greensboro, NC

Keith Bullard
Executive Director Raise Up: Fight for $15 Durham, NC

Alaine Duncan
Trauma Healing Practitioner and Author Washington, DC

Darryl Lester
Philanthropy, Education and Private Sector Liaison Garner, NC

Tinisha Shaw
Educator and Education Advocate Greensboro, NC

Jason Keith, Esquire
Criminal and Civil Rights Attorney Greensboro, NC

Haydyn Foulke
Community Organizer and Cooperative Liaison Greensboro, NC

Mayor Carolyn Allen, Emeritus
Former Mayor and Environmentalist Greensboro, NC

Ms. Mildred Brown, Emeritus
Retired Bank Clerk Greensboro, NC

Let’s Continue to Walk Towards One Another in 2023, building Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation!
Contact us at www.belovedcommunitycenter.org ~ (336) 230-0001 ~ info@belovedcommunitycenter.org
Visit Our Administrative Offices at 417 Arlington Street, Greensboro, NC 27406
Above: Charlotte resident asked question of Peruvian Guest Speaker during NC-TJRC site visit. Below: BCC poses with 2022 Convergence Summit attendees in front of the NC A&T Four Statue while touring Greensboro.

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A Call to Action As We Move into 2023

Now is The Time!

We the people, in all of our diversity, must reach across all the historical ditches of division to build high quality unity within our sphere of influence.

To the Religious/Faith Communities:

Make use of this period to forge deep unity within the religious/faith communities and among all other organizations willing to work towards a collective unity to save and improve our fragile democracy. Now is the time!!

To the Labor and Workers Movements, including retirees and related organizations: Make use of your rich history; broad reach in all states and cities; go beyond the normal restraints; be bold and be creative: Now is the time!!

To the Civil Rights, Women’s, Black Lives Matter, Youth and Climate Justice Movements, and all their component parts: To a great extent you have flooded the court rooms and the streets, carrying the social justice struggles on your backs. Once again the period calls you to duty.; you are challenged to help save and improve our democracy. Now is the time!!

To the array of LGBTQIA+ organizations: You have been abused and scorned, but you have persisted in struggling for your own dignity, worth and freedoms. Keep going beyond the call of duty by reaching out to strengthen unity in your communities, seeking opportunities to join with others to save our democracy. Now is the time!!

To black people, brown people, native people, yellow people, white people, (and numerous groups we cannot name) in all of our ethnicities, nationalities and personal circumstances: Again, keep building an enduring, quality unity. Now is the time!!

Join us in 2023 as we build the NC-TJRC Together!!!