There is a better way! Truth -- deep truth -- is the most compelling need in our nation to combat falsehood. Our 2021 End of Year Review, not only describes our work over the last year, but also sets forth a direction for amplifying the voices of truth in the coming period. We, the people, must strive to walk towards each other, seeking a quality of truth that promotes mutual understanding, respect and endurance. We must nurture a sincere unity that can save and improve our fragile democratic republic.
OUR MISSION

Our mission, working together with others, is to forge and continually expand a quality of leadership and beloved community to guide Greensboro, North Carolina, and beyond into a new era of equitable economic sufficiency, peace, social, gender and racial justice that can serve as a model and inspiration for ourselves, our region, and our nation.

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A NOTE FROM OUR CO-EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS

In this 2021 End of Year Review, we have sketched out some of what we've been doing over the last twelve months. We also set forth plans for an ambitious, but urgently needed, North Carolina Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation Commission initiative (NC-TJRC) for the coming years. We believe that a high quality NC-TJRC process will have positive implications for similar, much needed, work around the nation.

The BCC is now more than thirty years old. Over the years, we have been faithful stewards of the resources entrusted to us. We ask you to make a generous financial contribution. We know that this period of great dangers is also rich with great opportunities. Remember, alone we can hardly move at all, but "together we can move mountains." We are so grateful for those who have supported us throughout the years. For those new to the BCC family, welcome. Love, peace, and blessings.

- Reverend Nelson Johnson and Joyce Johnson

All photos, unless otherwise noted, are courtesy of Lewis A. Brandon, III.
In 2021, the Black and Brown Women’s Community Dialogue focused on voter education to effect policy change. Intentionally focused on truth telling to combat the many falsehoods emerging to confuse and/or disenfranchise voters, the coalition extended its quarterly virtual convenings to provide a platform for truthful information sharing.

Topics of discussion included two highly divisive politically charged issues, COVID vaccinations and protocols and culturally relevant teaching. State and national medical experts dispelled COVID-related myths and misinformation, sharing with the virtual audience truthful data pertaining to the FDA approval process, vaccine efficacy and evidence of the effectiveness of COVID protocols. While, NC educators shared the hostile resistance they experienced when introducing a more truthful, inclusive, culturally responsive curriculum. They explained the difference between their efforts and the intensely divisive debate around Critical Race Theory. Additionally, they warned of the threat to educational accuracy and autonomy of educators to teach truth in their classrooms. Lost in all the heated debate is the truth of a flawed history currently being taught in which many children do not see themselves at all.

Truth-telling is foundational to all aspects of life and voter education, and necessary to encourage ongoing voter participation, full civic engagement, and policy change. As such, it is an essential component in the statewide TJRC movement. We have the capacity within us, North Carolina, to engage our past truthfully, reconcile its missteps, and set a new, just, and equitable course for the future. Let us walk toward each other, making it happen; join the NC-TJRC Movement today! For more information, contact us at info@belovedcommunitycenter.org.
LAUNCHING THE NORTH CAROLINA TRUTH, JUSTICE, & RECONCILIATION COMMISSION INITIATIVE

It should come as no surprise that our nation would again find itself trapped in a vicious circle of belittling, blaming, fear and violence. After all, its very founding was built on contradictions and falsehoods. Even as our “Founding Fathers” wrote of such eloquent and lofty ideals as:

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness…”

they entrenched into law the unequal and unjust treatment of some people, declaring the "Negro" to be ⅗ of a person. Similarly, they asserted that those native to this land were mere savages and set out to annihilate and/or forcibly restrict them to a small fraction of the territory they once freely inhabited. How can a nation, built on such a deceptive house of cards not one day be called into account, having never adequately admitted, or even faced up to, the hurt and pain of its beginnings or reconciled with those hurt by its flaws?

Perhaps that day has come, as we now find ourselves locked into a cycle of blaming, devaluing and uttering threats of violence at one another that grows increasingly into episodes of violence aimed towards one another. This vicious cycle, built on falsehoods, makes others “the enemy” and in so doing, breeds anger and mistrust among those devalued and mistreated.
All of this has been simmering and intensifying for years. If the current trend continues unchecked with more outbreaks of targeted and random violence, it will lead to a familiar end -- civil war. This is not mere hyperbole; our history gives evidence to the ultimate consequences. The previous diagram reflects the trend of a people posturing for war.

Those who see this trend are challenged to find a better way. We are convinced that we must face the bitter truths of our tortuous, deceptive and often bloody yesterdays. This must be done in a way that affirms the dignity, worth, equality, and enormous unrealized potential we (all of us) have as human beings. We all have the potential to change, to grow, and to find a better way. We need to help each other muster the moral courage and commitment to do so. If this movement can grow in North Carolina, we believe it will inspire others to do similar work in other states.
The NC-TJRC will be a grassroots movement of residents of both rural and urban areas, of diverse genders, of all races and nationalities, with an emphasis on the poor. Guiding us will be a national Advisory Council of 45 people, at least 25 from North Carolina. We have identified six areas of focus, in our Declaration of Intent, around which we will build this truth, justice and reconciliation movement. We will focus on addressing the historical and current blocks/impediments to the six following areas:

- Financial security and wealth creation
- Inclusive voter access and genuine democracy
- Adequate housing
- Police accountability and judicial equity
- Quality healthcare (including mental health)
- Climate justice and ecological sustainability

Building on the successful Greensboro Truth & Reconciliation Commission Process, the statewide NC Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission process (NC-TJRC) is already well underway. BCC is in active dialogue with a diversity of rural and urban residents, organizations and institutions from all three regions of the state.

Numerous Zoom meetings and calls have also been held with residents of Robeson County, Wake County, Halifax County, and New Hanover County. Additional in person and/or Zoom consultations are scheduled prior to the end of this year. You may access the Declaration of Intent for NC-TJRC here. For more information, please contact the Beloved Community Center at info@belovedcommunitycenter.org or by phone at 336-230-0001.
BELOVED’S PHOTO GALLERY:

Archbishop Desmond Tutu, one of the leaders of the South African TRC, shaking hands with Nelson Johnson in Greensboro, NC.

Some 500 community members gathered for the swearing-in ceremony of the historic Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commissioners in 2004.

Joyce Johnson shares the vision of the NC-TJRC with Charlotte residents at Mayfield Memorial Baptist Church in October 2021.

Nelson and Joyce Johnson elaborate on the significance of the NC-TJRC with residents of Asheville and the surrounding counties at Stephens–Lee Community Center.

Young Marcus, son of Marcus Bass and Bree Newsome Bass, listens intently while community leaders share the importance of truth in Charlotte, NC.

We ask people of all races, gender diversities, and economic levels, all across the state of North Carolina to receive our humble effort to change the trajectory of our society. It is the people, walking towards each other and eventually walking with each other, based on community truth and mutual respect, that will change the direction our state and eventually our nation.
GRASSROOTS HISTORY, ARCHIVING & COMMUNICATIONS

The Beloved Community Center’s Grassroots History & Archiving Project stems from decades of grassroots social justice struggles that have shaped and influenced the way we approach social change in the present day. At BCC, we believe that to truly understand the issues we face today, it’s necessary to understand the often untold and forgotten stories of those who stood before us. Sharing our knowledge and understanding of Greensboro’s grassroots history has been and continues to be a key portion of our work.

Over the last 60 years, we have amassed an extensive archive of documents, photographs, pamphlets, VHS tapes, and oral histories from grassroots leaders.

The BCC is especially mindful of the long history of ignoring, distorting, and/or co-opting the rich, vibrant history of people of color, especially as it relates to the struggles for social transformation. The Grassroots History & Archiving Project strives to authenticate and preserve the historic accuracy and integrity of the social change movement of Greensboro and beyond, and to share it with the community through tours, seminars, displays, and online communications. We must learn the truths of our past to help shape our future. With the assistance of a diverse group of student and community interns and fellows, led by Lewis A. Brandon, III, the BCC is organizing its collection, which will serve as a resource for analysis and a reference point for future organizers and initiatives. For more information on our archival work or our ongoing Grassroots History project, please visit our website at www.belovedcommunitycenter.org. 
THE STRUGGLE FOR POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY

#JusticeForMarcusDeonSmith

September 8th, 2021 marked the third anniversary of the killing of Marcus Deon Smith. In the throes of a mental health crisis, Smith cried out to Greensboro police officers for help. Ignoring his pleas to be taken to the hospital, the officers instead hogtied him, locking his hands and feet together behind his back as he lay gasping for air on the pavement. In the footage recorded by police body cameras, the officers’ blatant disregard for Smith’s life is striking, but unfortunately not surprising. Minutes after calling out for help, Smith was restrained like an animal, ignored, and killed by the very officers he depended on for support.

For many members of the Greensboro community and beyond, specifically Black and Brown people, Smith’s story is all too familiar. According to a 2019 study published by the Proceedings of the National Academy of the Sciences, Black men are 2.5 times more likely to be killed by police than their white counterparts. From 2014-2018, Greensboro police officers hogtied approximately 300 people. In the nine months prior to Marcus Smith’s death, Greensboro police hogtied 50 people, 76% of whom were Black, and 48% of whom were women.

In the nine months prior to Marcus Smith’s death, the Greensboro Police hogtied 50 people.

76% of these hogtlying victims were Black.

From 2014-2018, the Greensboro Police hogtied approx. 300 people.
This pattern and practice of abuse present within the country's police forces, including the Greensboro Police Department (GPD), has only become more evident in recent years.

In 2021, The Beloved Community Center continued our ongoing fight for justice in the Marcus Deon Smith case and pursuit of police accountability. The BCC also joined with the NC Poor People's Campaign, NC Council of Churches and others to seek justice in the police murder of Andrew Brown in Elizabeth City and full pardon of innocence for Dontae Sharpe. In November 2021, Sharpe received a full pardon from the governor, after serving twenty-five years for a crime he did not commit.

On September 2nd, a letter was sent to the U.S. Department of Justice by a coalition of twenty-four community leaders, including Rev. Nelson Johnson of the BCC, urging an investigation into the racially and sexually discriminatory practices present within the GPD. In October, we hosted a “Storytelling for Movement-Building” meeting in collaboration with the Greensboro Justice Coalition, the Pulpit Forum, and the Greensboro NAACP, during which survivors of police neglect, intimidation, and brutality shared their stories.

One of the six areas of focus of our statewide Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation Commission Process is the historical abuse of police power and judicial processes, with an emphasis on its impact on people of color. This justice work is underway in locations throughout NC.

Pictured are Greensboro residents at a weekly gathering in support of justice in police murder of Marcus Smith. Also pictured are Mrs. Mary Smith, mother of Marcus Smith, at rally in support of Marcus, and citizens from across N.C., demanding justice in the police killing of Andrew Brown in Elizabeth City last summer.
OUR BELOVED STAFF

Rev. Nelson N. Johnson
Co-Executive Director

Joyce Hobson Johnson
Co-Executive Director

Lewis A. Brandon, III
Grassroots History & Archiving Director

Brigette Rasberry
Operations Officer

Abigail Mosley
Communications Manager

Terence "TC" Muhammad
Hip-Hop Caucus Liaison

Wesley Morris
Southern Vision Alliance Liaison

SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR FALL 2021 INTERNS

Camari Alexander ( Guilford College)
Christen Bass ( UNCG)
Leah Bell ( Guilford College)
DeShawn Elam ( NC A&T)
Candace Fant ( Guilford College)
Angela Freckleton ( Bennett College)
Trey Irby ( NC A&T)
Bailey Wadlington ( NC A&T)
THE FIERCE URGENCY OF NOW
A REQUEST FOR FUNDING

We are a deeply, bitterly divided nation. The great challenge of our time is to grow a culture of truth, justice, healing and reconciliation throughout our society. **We, the people, must strive to walk toward each other, seeking deep truths, promoting mutual understanding and growing sincere unity.** The Beloved Community Center of Greensboro (BCC) has chosen to focus on forging a statewide Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation Commission Process (NC-TJRC), a process that has the potential to commend itself to the nation. We have already begun this work.

The American Heritage dictionary defines truth as "the body of real things, events, or facts." Truth is the ultimate glue that holds our reality together. No people, society, or nation can long endure if it continues to massively violate truth. One deeply human truth is that we are all called to honor the dignity, worth, and potential of each person and all peoples, as well as the Earth itself. The failure to do so causes on-going conflict and violence, and ultimately lays the foundation for civil war. In the spirit of unity, the BCC encourages and supports the many other social justice movements that are life-affirming, including reparations.

The Beloved Community Center will require about $6 million over a three-year period to effectively carry out a high quality NC-TJRC process, while modeling and contributing to similar efforts around the nation. We ask for your moral and financial support. **We ask that you make a generous contribution or, even better, a monthly pledge. Thank you, and let us continue to walk toward each other.**

- Reverend Nelson Johnson and Joyce Johnson

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336-230-0001

**Enclosed is my contribution of:**

$2,500  $1,000  $500  $100

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Mail your tax-exempt contribution to:

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belovedcommunitycenter.org

Walking towards each other...