
2021 ANNUAL REPORT

BELOVED COMMUNITY INITIATIVE

FOR RACIAL JUSTICE, HEALING, AND RECONCILIATION



FOR RACIAL JUSTICE, HEALING, AND RECONCILIATION

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IN GRATITUDE

The COVID-19 pandemic forced changes on all of us. It also laid bare places where racial inequity in this country continues to dramatically affect the lives, experiences, health outcomes, and financial resources of People of Color. Although we could not offer in-person programming and events for much of the year, this report will highlight how very much was accomplished, thanks to the faithful and expanding leadership of both the community and diocesan advisory boards, our Dismantling Racism Trainers, and the Reparations Task Force. Iowa's work was featured by The Episcopal Church in their webinar in December 2021, "Truth-telling Ministries: Highlighted Examples and Lessons Learned." We offer this report in deep gratitude for the continued support of the Episcopal Diocese of Iowa, Bishop Scarfe, and now Bishop Monnot. — Rev. Meg Wagner, co-founder of Beloved Community Initiative

TELLING THE TRUTH

HIGHLIGHTS

John Lewis: Good Trouble

Why is Iowa So White

Community Book Groups

History of Race in Iowa Map

Virtual Library

Diocesan History

Congregational Guide Resource

Invisibility in Iowa is amplified as the state stands out for racial disparities in criminal justice, school suspensions, and poverty.

- In a study released in 2020, Iowa ranked the **worst Black-White racial disparity in marijuana arrest rates** (a ratio of 7.3 black-white)
- According to a 2018 Sentencing Project report, Iowa ranks **third from the bottom** in Black-White racial disparity in **imprisonment**
- According to UCLA's Civil Rights Project, Iowa ranks **4th from the top for the worst racial disparity in Black and White high school suspension rates**, with a 20 percentage point difference
- Iowa's ratio of Black-White **poverty rate** is **fifth from the bottom**.



Who are we? What things have we done and left undone regarding racial justice and healing? How can we provide space and opportunity to share about the history and realities of race in Iowa? Beloved Community Initiative engages this work through educational programs, re-examining local stories, and partnering with allies and accomplices to illustrate both the stories and the alternative visions.

Beloved Community Initiative offers educational programs on the legacy of slavery and Iowa's role in the Underground Railroad, the civil rights movement in Iowa, the history of the indigenous tribes of Iowa, the Doctrine of Discovery, and the nature of racism and racial bias today.

Beloved Community Initiative is collecting resources and supporting the work of the Reparations Task Force to help churches and individuals uncover their history and tell their stories.

As health conditions allow, Beloved Community Initiative will again make its large and small space available for local artists, writers, and musicians as well as space for theatre, film screenings, concerts, art and other cultural events that expand our historical and cultural understandings of race.

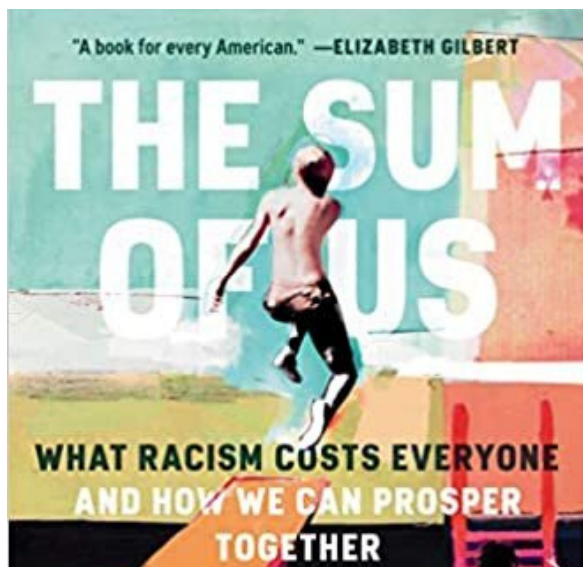


JOHN LEWIS: GOOD TROUBLE

In January, BCI partnered with FilmScene to virtually screen *John Lewis: Good Trouble* during MLK week. Using interviews and rare archival footage, *John Lewis: Good Trouble* chronicles Lewis' 60-plus years of social activism and legislative action on civil rights, voting rights, gun control, health-care reform and immigration. Using interviews with Lewis, Porter explores his childhood experiences, his inspiring family and his fateful meeting with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in 1957.

WHY IS IOWA SO WHITE?

Dr. Charles Connerly walked us through Iowa's history—from the Indigenous nations who resided here until the land was taken from them to the establishment of "black codes" that restricted who could move here. He highlighted the ways that Iowa has at times welcomed and also excluded different groups of color. We looked at some of the milestone civil rights decisions in Iowa as well as some of the decisions and events that serve more as millstones, weighing us down and holding us back from becoming a place where every Iowan can thrive.



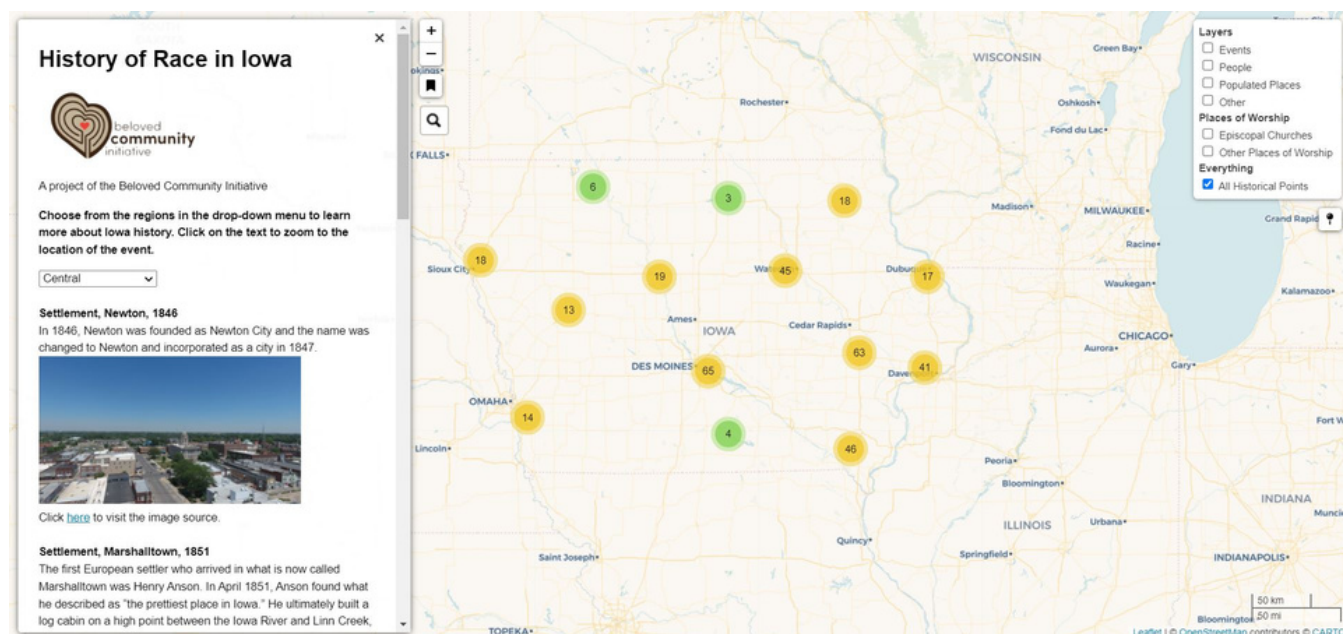
COMMUNITY BOOK GROUPS

We hosted monthly book groups and read two books throughout 2021: *How to Be an Antiracist* and *The Sum of Us: What Racism Costs Everyone and How We Can Prosper Together*. These books explored the concepts of racism and equality, and the lesson that generations of Americans have failed to learn: Racism has a cost for everyone —not just for people of color.

HISTORY OF RACE IN IOWA MAP

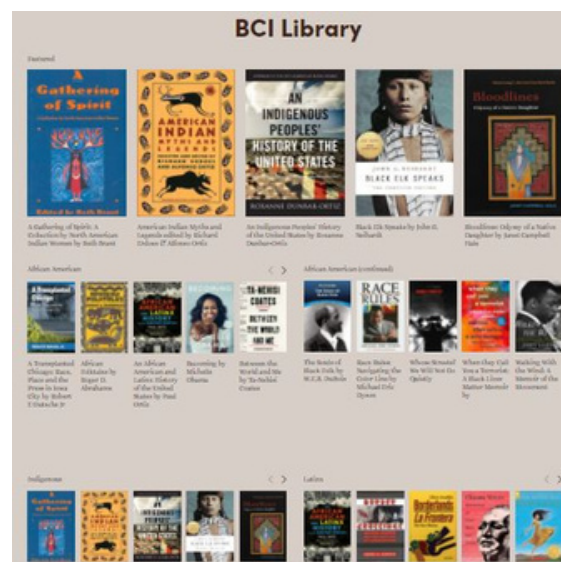
In 2020, the Episcopal Diocese of Iowa passed a resolution at its annual convention calling for a Season of Truth and Healing during which we will take tangible and enduring actions towards healing the sins of slavery, indigenous genocide and displacement, and racism through earnest and sacrificial actions. One of those actions is to review and share the history of Iowa's and our churches' part in benefiting from the legacies of slavery and indigenous genocide and displacement. This digital, interactive mapping project is part of that work. The map is a work in progress and new points will continue to be added.

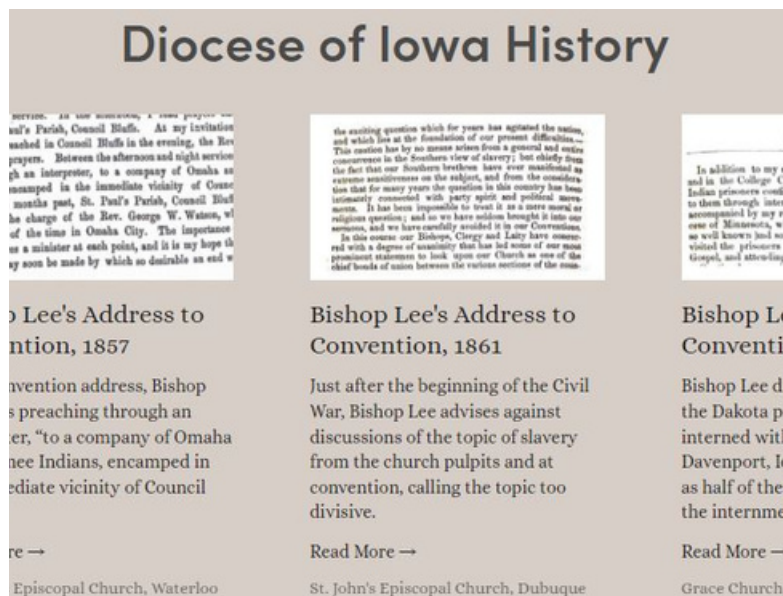
becomingbelovedcommunity.org/raceiniowa



BCI LIBRARY

Throughout the year, we continued to develop our resource lending library and online library. We added new books and rearranged the physical library. There is now a new page on our website for the library, with each book categorized by genre.





DIOCESE OF IOWA HISTORY

As part of our work on truth-telling, we are in the process of reviewing our diocesan archives and examining our history with race. In 2021, the diocese engaged the help of a museum studies major to help begin the process of scanning and digitizing diocesan journals, examining them for our shared history with race and adding them to the website.

CONGREGATIONAL GUIDE RESOURCE

This congregational guide is intended to support investigations into and conversations about history. We hope that it will help congregations have active, truthful and loving dialogue about our racialized past; lead us into active discussions about our current experiences with race and racism in our congregation and community; and encourage courageous steps towards reconciliation and repair.

THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF IOWA A SEASON OF TRUTH AND HEALING

At the 168th Annual Convention of the Diocese of Iowa, delegates passed Resolution 168A calling for a "Season of Truth and Healing." The resolution commits the diocese to taking "tangible and enduring actions towards healing the sins of slavery, indigenous genocide and displacement, and racism through earnest and sacrificial actions."

As part of that commitment, each congregation is asked to review and share the history of Iowa's and our churches' part in benefiting from the legacies of enslavement, genocide and displacement.

This congregational guide is intended to support investigations into and conversations about that history. We hope that it will help congregations have active, truthful and loving dialogue about our racialized past; lead us into active discussions about our current experiences with race and racism in our congregation and community; and encourage courageous steps towards reconciliation and repair.

BECOMINGBELOVEDCOMMUNITY.ORG

Reparations Task Force

Invited by Bishop Scarfe, the Reparations Task Force began meeting in the Spring of 2021. The Task Force plans to work together with the BCI Diocesan Advisory Board, the Dismantling Racism Trainers, and others to visit and spend time with each congregation in the state for conversations about Iowa's history with race and the work of truth and healing.

As part of the visits, we hope to hear each congregation's perspectives on the work and share resources like the conversation guide we have developed that includes practical information on doing archival work to preserve, investigate, and share your church's history.



PROCLAIMING THE DREAM

HIGHLIGHTS

***Healthy Inside,
Happy Outside***

***Ladder to the Light
Retreat Day***

JustChurch



How can we publicly acknowledge things done and left undone? What does beloved community look like? What behaviors and commitments foster healing and reconciliation? Beloved Community Initiative engages this work through interfaith gatherings for reflection and spiritual practice, seeking repentance, developing liturgical resources, and rebuilding systems and structures.

Beloved Community Initiative offers opportunities for interfaith prayer, meditation, and worship to find inspiration and support for the work of justice, healing, and reconciliation. We also offer special times of prayer and celebration for the entire community.

As the pandemic eases, we plan to return to offering more in-person retreats that explore ways for people to reflect on and engage in spiritual practices of repentance and explore a spirituality of restorative justice.

In working with JustChurch, Beloved Community Initiative is creating litanies and liturgies focused on justice, healing, and reconciliation to be shared with the wider faith community.

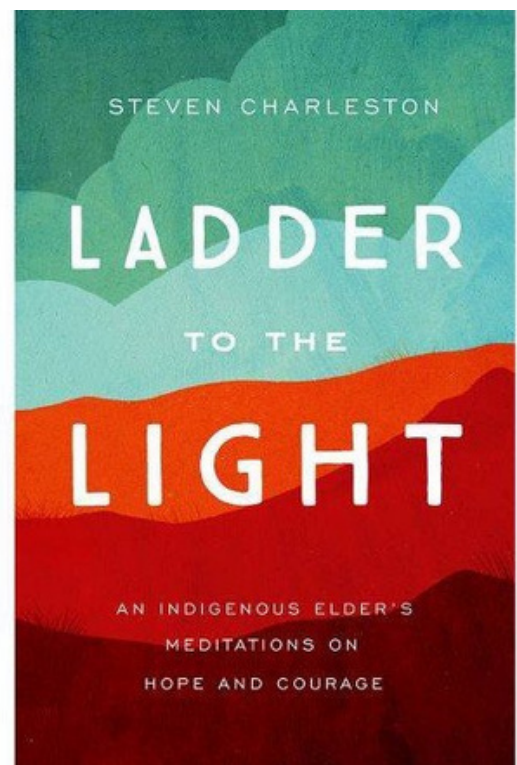


HEALTHY INSIDE, HAPPY OUTSIDE

Yoga training was facilitated by Gabriela Tobias (she/her/hers) - 200-hour yoga teacher with a multicultural and multidisciplinary background. She is the founder of Nangpa Community, a project that offers meditation and yoga to people with limited or no access to this kind of self care practice.

LADDER TO THE LIGHT RETREAT DAY

In Advent, BCI partnered with Christ Church in Cedar Rapids and the Daughters of the King, Order of St. Luke on a day of reflection, walking the labyrinth, and building community, based on Steven Charleston's book, *Ladder to the Light*. Bishop Charleston provided an introductory video for the day.



JUSTCHURCH

Since its founding, one of the dreams of the core team of founders of Beloved Community Initiative was to include a worshipping community as part of its ministry, intentionally steeping the works of justice in a praying community. Our original intention was to make it an interfaith community, but were never able to bring that to a true, authentic fruition.

In the fall of 2021, BCI was approached about the possibility of “adopting” a small worshipping community called JustChurch – an ELCA community that had begun as an offshoot of a local ELCA church, Gloria Dei. With Bishop Scarfe's (and now Bishop Monnot's and Bishop Current's) blessing, talks began with the ELCA.

A synod representative, Rev. Erka Uthe continues to help us explore the possibilities of a joint ELCA-Episcopal ministry, as part of Beloved Community Initiative, and the shape that could take.

JustChurch describes itself as post-denominational and as an open and affirming congregation that believes to know Jesus is to do justice. JustChurch is intentionally focused on worship steeped in ancient Christian tradition expressed in new, simple ways. Since JustChurch wants money to do the most good it can do, it strives to be an 80/20 worshipping community (dedicating 80% of its income for maximal impact on justice while using 20% to cover intentionally low operating costs).



*JustChurch is an
open worshipping
community in Iowa
City, IA dedicated to
furthering justice
through action and
faith.*

PRACTICING THE WAY OF LOVE



How will we grow as reconcilers, healers, and justice-bearers? How will we actively grow relationships across dividing walls and seek Christ in the other? What does the spiritual practice of dismantling racism look like? Beloved Community Initiative engages this work by providing space (online and in person) for public story-telling, offering training opportunities for all ages, facilitating leadership training, and coordinating pilgrimages.

In 2021 our work with Interfaith Alliance of Iowa deepened, and Beloved Community Initiative helped create interfaith resources for faithful conversations about race, practical teaching and messaging resources for advocacy and local engagement, and hosted ecumenical Sacred Ground Circles.

HIGHLIGHTS

Dismantling Racism Training

Sacred Ground

Faithful Conversations about The 1619 Project

TRAININGS IN IN 2021:

- Jan 16, 2021
- Feb 20, 2021
- April 10, 2021
- May 22, 2021
- June 12, 2021
- Aug 14, 2021
- Nov 20, 2021

76 LEADERS WERE TRAINED IN 2021

The pandemic taught us that Dismantling Racism Trainings can be offered online. We plan to continue hosting online training in 2022 to fulfill the church-wide canonical requirement that all clergy and lay leaders complete this training AND commit to ongoing work to dismantle racism.

DISMANTLING RACISM TRAININGS

Dismantling Racism: Training for Church Leaders has been redesigned to include all the canonically required elements and to help ground this work in our spiritual development as people of faith.

The 4.5 hour training includes:

- Prayers and scripture woven throughout the day
- Sharing of personal stories and experiences
- An introduction to the historical and structural components of racism in this country and in the Church
- Exploration of the dynamics of power, privilege, and oppression
- Discussion about colorism and the effects of white supremacy culture
- Engagement with activities and discussions
- Practical resources for church leaders



Sacred Ground is a film- and readings-based dialogue series on race, grounded in faith. Small groups are invited to walk through chapters of America's history of race and racism, while weaving in threads of family story, economic class, and political and regional identity. The 11-session series is built around a powerful online curriculum of documentary films and readings that focus on Indigenous, Black, Latino, and Asian/Pacific American histories as they intersect with European American histories.

In 2021, BCI offered 4 circles that were so positively received that we are offering circles throughout the year in 2022.



The New York Times' The 1619 Project by Nikole Hannah-Jones et al. is a valuable vehicle to begin a conversation within the context of faith. BCI leaders worked with faith leaders in the Faithful Voices for Racial Justice project of the Interfaith Alliance of Iowa to design a series to pull together the pieces for community conversation, intentionally layering in questions regarding one's faith and how it might inform our approach to the issues raised by The 1619 Project.

In 2021, BCI hosted 1 session of Faithful Conversations and will offer another in Lent 2022.

HIGHLIGHTS

**Johnson County
Interfaith Coalition
- South District
Voter Engagement**

**LEAD
- Agents of Change:
Youth Leadership
Conference
- Murals for Liberty
High**

**2021 Dr. Martin
Luther King Jr.
Virtual Celebration**

**Juneteenth
Education and
Resource Fair
Vendor**

**Earth Day Every
Day: Meet Dawson
Davenport**

**March on Old
Capitol for Voting
Rights**

**The Truth Will Not
be Whitewashed
Fashion Show**

REPAIRING THE BREACH



What institutions and systems are broken? How can we participate in the repair, restoration, and healing of people, institutions, and systems? Beloved Community Initiative engages this work by building community partnerships, offering space for community groups, creating and offering justice initiatives, and supporting restorative justice practices.

Beloved Community Initiative partners with organizations and institutions that share our commitment to racial justice, healing, and reconciliation.

Partner groups are welcome to use the multi-purpose space at the Initiative for meetings and can arrange through the Initiative to host large events in the ballroom space.

We publicly support and work to offer justice initiatives that will improve the lives and lived experiences of People of Color in Iowa.



"These voting awareness events are so important and need to consistently happen. Thank you JCIC and other orgs involved for collaborating to lead the way to how to do it in neighborhoods!" - Angie Jordon

JOHNSON COUNTY INTERFAITH COALITION

Johnson County Interfaith Coalition (JCIC) is a collection of churches, the synagogue, the mosque, and other community organizations that have covenanted to work together to address racial justice issues in Johnson County. They meet monthly with Beloved Community Initiative via Zoom.

This year, JCIC worked to pass a hate crime ordinance in North Liberty, similar to the one they had helped pass in Iowa City. North Liberty will now prosecute, fine and possibly jail defendants charged with a misdemeanor hate crime.

JCIC hosted several Voter Engagement Events in the Iowa City area with the hope of encouraging more participation from African American voters and new citizens. This allowed community members to meet the Iowa City Community School District Board election candidates, the City Council candidates for Iowa City, and obtain information about voting from the Johnson County Auditor. In addition, members could learn more about local and state issues affecting their community, get a free COVID-19 vaccination, and register/update their voter registrations.





“

*"The students were highly appreciative of this opportunity, one they had never experienced before."
- Carmen Gwenigale*

LEADERS FOR EQUITY, ADVOCACY, AND DIVERSITY (LEAD)

In 2019, Beloved Community Initiative applied for a grant to begin an Ethnic Studies Leadership Academy. We envisioned a culturally responsive program for African and African-American girls in 7th through 9th grade where youth would learn about equity from the lens of African American historical figures, cultivate leadership skills and engage in community activism.

Right as we were beginning to launch ESLA, the pandemic hit, and in-person activities were put on indefinite hold. The program director did not want to try and adapt it for an online experience and so we waited and were grateful the granting committee allowed us to pause and regroup. We met with our partner organization, Sankofa Outreach Connection, a Black women's empowerment community group, and set out to partner with an existing group, LEAD, at a local high school and find ways to support them during the pandemic, through what has been a time of fear, stress, and uncertainty.

LEAD (Leaders for Equity, Advocacy, and Diversity) is a group of BIPOC students that seek to create opportunities for students to explore advocacy and leadership, and build skills around diversity, equity, and inclusion. Their main goals are to introduce BIPOC students to leadership resources within our community, empower students to take actions towards positive change in their schools and communities, and inspire students to reimagine their perspective and outlook of the world around them.

During a regular school year, the student group would meet once a week to check-in, share life experiences, provide support for each other, learn leadership skills, and grow in knowledge about equity, diversity, and inclusion. Thanks to our partnership, their work continued online, with academic, self-care, and other supports during the pandemic.





AGENTS OF CHANGE: YOUTH LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

The LEAD students organized a district-wide conference that provided opportunities for youth to develop their skills, knowledge, and attitudes to take on leadership roles in their schools and communities. This platform was created for youth to discover their voice and realize their ability to make a positive impact on their learning environments. Students helped facilitate a forum for the exchange of ideas, concepts, projects, and reflections that address school building needs and community issues.



MURALS FOR LIBERTY HIGH

With funds from the BCI grant, LEAD students at Liberty High were able to "bring color and diversity to the wall of the school, celebrating identity and a sense of belonging." Students carefully selected and hung 14 murals that represented the unique and varied identities of all the students at the school.

STUDENT LEARNINGS FROM AGENTS OF CHANGE



“

"Never be scared to use my voice and make a difference."

“

"Creating change is hard and it takes time. However, it is easier to accomplish when we work together."



“

"When you work with a team in a respectful manner you can accomplish great things and even things you think are small problems can affect people in big ways."



2021 DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. VIRTUAL CELEBRATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

BCI partnered with The University of Iowa and community groups on a virtual Dr. King celebration during the pandemic. The video included local leaders, musicians, artists, and dancers to honor Dr. King, Jr.'s life and legacy and a virtual resource fair.



VIRTUAL RESOURCE FAIR

- Center for Family Services Network
- DVIP
- IC Human Rights Commission
- Iowa City Climate Action and Outreach
- Iowa City Fire Department
- Johnson County Disproportionate Minority Contact Committee
- Johnson County UNA
- Monsoon
- MYEP
- NAACP Iowa City
- PSR
- Sankofa Outreach Connection
- UAY
- Veterans for Peace

JUNETEENTH CELEBRATION

BCI helped sponsor the community celebration of Juneteenth, which included both in-person and virtual options for participation.

During the Community Conversations "Real Talk," members discussed the following topics:

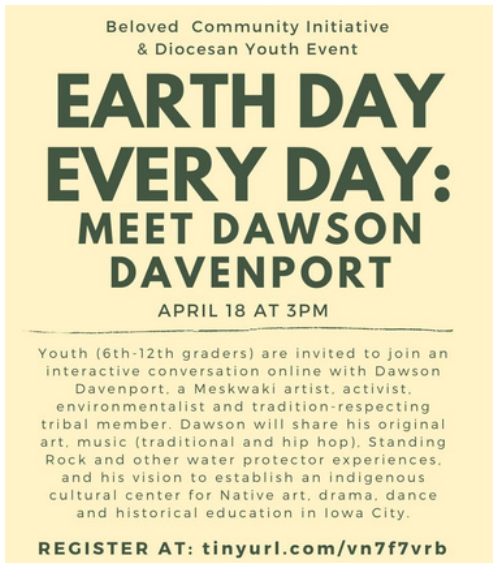
- The importance of commemorating Juneteenth
- Schools and if they are a reflection of our community
- Police Reform
- How have movements like Black Lives Matter changed how we advocate for social justice



Keshia Fields, Inclusion and Equity Specialist and Johnson County Supervisor
Royceann Porter

THE HYBRID JUNETEENTH CELEBRATIONS INCLUDED:

- Community Conversations "Real Talk" (panelist discussion)
- On Juneteenth by Annette Gordon Reed (book discussion)
- Education & Resource Fair (virtual)
- Iowa City Block Party
- Miss Juneteenth Film Screening
- Blood Drive
- Juneteenth Meal Drive-Thru



EARTH DAY EVERY DAY: MEET DAWSON DAVENPORT

Youth and others were invited to join an interactive conversation online with Dawson Davenport, a Meskwaki artist, activist, environmentalist and tradition-respecting tribal member. Dawson shared his original art, music (traditional and hip hop), Standing Rock and other water protector experiences, and his vision to establish an indigenous cultural center for Native art, drama, dance and historical education in Iowa City.

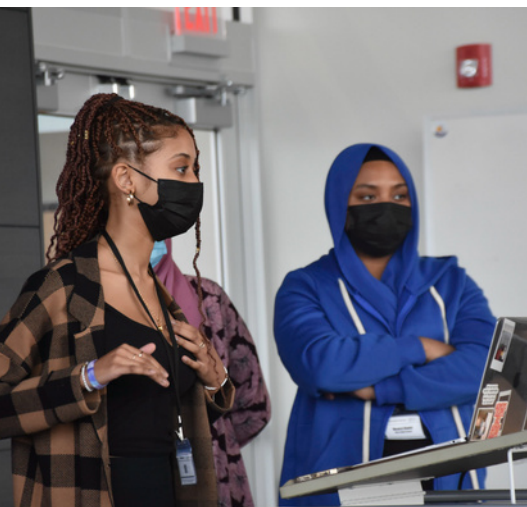
MARCH ON OLD CAPITOL FOR VOTING RIGHTS

Since January, 48 states have introduced 389 bills that amount to outright voter suppression, and many have already become law. These laws suppress voting methods that enrich our democracy and lead to high turnout. We marched to shine the light of truth on what is happening in state legislatures, ensure that Americans understand what's at stake, and give people a mechanism to demand action on this most urgent issue of our generation.



THE TRUTH WILL NOT BE WHITEWASHED FASHION SHOW

BCI is a proud sponsor of this BIPOC fashion show celebrating Truthsgiving, Transgender Day of Remembrance and demanding an end to the ban on diversity training in Iowa. On November 20th, to celebrate Truthsgiving (an alternative to Thanksgiving), Humanize My Hoodie and Great Plains Action Society organized a fashion show and political engagement event focused on demanding an end to the ban on critical race theory in Iowa, aka, diversity training.



2021

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BECOMINGBELOVEDCOMMUNITY.ORG
