Healing the Wounds of Racism:

A Case Study of Richmond, Virginia

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Abstract

Few U.S. cities carry a heavier burden of racial wounds than Richmond, Virginia. From its founding on the land of the indigenous population and its prominence in the interstate commerce of slavery to its role as capital of the Southern Confederacy during the Civil War and its advocacy for Massive Resistance, the city has symbolized America's history of racism. Yet, despite this traumatic history, in recent decades Richmond has demonstrated an effective and sustained approach to healing the wounds of racism which has attracted national and international attention. Starting with the city's first public walk through its racial history in 1993 – a first in the nation – this process of acknowledgment and repair, which grew from an organic citizen's movement, now involves museums, universities, libraries, city government, business, nonprofit organizations, and faith communities. In this former leading slave market and capital of the Confederate states, citizens of all backgrounds are motivated by a vision that the place of great pain might be the place where healing could begin.

Introduction

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Yet, despite this traumatic history, in recent decades Richmond has demonstrated an effective and sustained approach to healing the wounds of racism which has attracted national and international attention. Starting with the city's first public walk through its racial history in 1993 – a first in the nation – this process of acknowledgment and repair, which grew from an organic citizen's movement, now involves museums, universities, libraries, city government, business, nonprofit organizations, and faith communities. In this former leading slave market and capital of the Confederate states, citizens of all backgrounds are motivated by a vision that the place of great pain might be the place where healing could begin.

This case study explores the principles and practices undergirding the movement as well as the challenges facing any community attempting to heal from a traumatic and divided past and to address a legacy of inequity. The approach is based on willingness of individuals of all backgrounds to courageously examine their own attitudes, motives and priorities. It involves narrative change, starting with a more accurate and inclusive retelling of history, honest dialogue among all stakeholders, and multi-sector partnerships to address legacies of inequity. It draws inspiration and insights from the lived-out experience and values of Initiatives of Change, a global network comprising people of all faiths and social backgrounds which has been working for healing and community trustbuilding since the early 20th century.

The case study explores the history of Richmond and its impact on the community today. It traces the origins and foundations of the movement for healing with stories of specific individuals. It describes the public acts of acknowledgment to uncover the city's largely unknown past, and the challenge of dealing with public symbols of oppression, such as Confederate statues, as well as creating new more inclusive symbols. It describes the process engaging a wide range of stakeholders in a sustained process of dialogue. It also discusses the efforts to connect the historical narrative with policies that continued well in the 20th century and which continues to divide the community and maintain inequality.

It is written from the perspective of a racial healing practitioner. The conclusions are based on the lived experiences of people of diverse backgrounds over three decades in Richmond, Virginia.

A History and Legacy of Pain

In 1607, the first English explorers ventured up the James River to the fall line, the furthest navigable point, where the city now stands. At the time, Algonquian-speaking people made their homes there close to the water which teemed with sturgeon. The powerful Powhatan Confederacy was led by Chief Powhatan, whose family name was Wahunsenacawh. The subsequent history of European and Native American peoples in Virginia, as in other parts of the Americas, is one of betrayal, loss and death.

The river continued to play an important role as the first Africans arrived to be sold in Richmond's slave market. It is estimated that approximately 114, 000 Africans were transported along Virginia's rivers from 1698 to 1774. A few miles downriver from present day Richmond, Bermuda Hundred and Osborne's became the most prominent disembarkation points for some 127 ships, mostly from Liverpool and Bristol, which carried 16,000 Africans between 1735 and 1774.[1]

But by far the largest human commerce occurred after Virginia prohibited the importation of slaves from Africa in 1778 (the US Congress banned it in 1807). During the first half of the 19th century it is estimated that 300,000 women, children and men were "sold down the river" from Richmond's auction block or marched on foot to meet the growing demand for forced labor in the plantations of Mississippi and other southern states.[2] Scenes from Richmond's slave market were made famous by the British artist Eyre Crowe.

The slave code of 1705, introduced the word "white" into Virginia and assigned categories by race: "Christian white servant" and "negro, mullato, or Indian, Jew, Moor, Mohametan, or other infidel." [3] L. Douglas Wilder, who became the nation's first elected black governor, wrote in 1983, "Virginia, having singularly provided significant leadership for the colonies from the earliest years, was also credited, tragically, as the leader in the gradual debasement of blacks through its ultimate institutionalization of slavery." [4]

When war broke out, Richmond became capital of the Confederate states. More battles and skirmishes between the opposing armies were fought in Virginia than in any other state. After the war, and the brief period of Reconstruction, Virginia became a leader in promoting the Lost Cause mythology that claimed the war was about states' rights and not about slavery. Statues of Confederate generals on horses were erected along Richmond's Monument Avenue. When a sixty-one-foot statue of Robert E. Lee was unveiled in 1890, fifty former Confederate generals attended the event along with a crowd of one hundred thousand people from throughout the South. These statues were symbols of white supremacy and of grievance by the humiliated South against the Northern aggressor.

A new state constitution, passed in 1902, effectively disenfranchised 90 percent of the black population and 50 percent of the poorer whites through a poll tax and other measures.[5] When the Federal Housing Administration began to facilitate home mortgages in the 1930s, the federal Home Owners' Loan Corporation was tasked with grading neighborhoods in many US cities for their creditworthiness. Every African American neighborhood in Richmond was given a D rating and redlined for mortgages.[6]

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[1] Benjamin Campbell, *Richmond's Unhealed History*, (Richmond, VA: Brandylane Publishers, 2012) 74; Lorena S. Walsh, "New Perspectives on the Transatlantic Slave Trade," the *William and Mary Quarterly,* 3rd Ser. Vol 58, No 1 (January 2001), 168-169

[2] Philip J. Schwartz, "Chronology of the Slave Trade in Richmond and Virginia," prepared for the Richmond Slave Trail Commission, (February 2010 edition)

[3] Campbell, *Richmond's Unhealed History*, 71; Anthony S. Parent, *Foul Means: The Formation of a Slave Society in Virginia, 1660-1740* (Chapel Hill: The University of Virginia Press, 2003)

[4] L.D. Wilder, "Entrenched Racism Has Hampered State's Growth," *Richmond Afro-American and Richmond Planet,* January 29, 1983.

[5] Virginia Museum of History and Culture, "Determined: The 400-Year Struggle for Black Equality," (exhibition).

[6] Campbell, *Richmond's Unhealed History*, 143

In 1954, the General Assembly created the Richmond-Petersburg Turnpike Authority, enabling it to build an extension of Interstate 95 through Jackson Ward, the flourishing business center of the black community. Nearly 1000 homes were destroyed. Five public housing projects were built within one mile of each other in Richmond's East End.[7]

After the 1954 *Brown v Board of Education* decision, Virginia became a leader of Massive Resistance to school integration. One nearby county closed its school system for five years in protest. After the introduction of cross-town busing in 1971, large numbers of white parents moved to the counties or to private schools. By 1976, 12,000 white students had left the Richmond schools and black enrolment had reached 80%.[8]

Remarkably, in recent decades Richmond has made significant strides in shedding its reputation as the capital of the Confederacy and a city resistant to social change. African Americans are now in the majority in city government. Open and constructive conversation about race and racial history is now widespread. Development is booming and the city's population grew by 11% between 2010 and 2017. But the story of Richmond is still "a tale of two cities," one prospering and the other marred by racial and economic disparity" which perpetuates the trauma of its deeply racist history. Federal, state and local policies, and practices like urban renewal, redlining, deed restrictions, exclusionary zoning, highway construction and subprime lending have created a de facto segregated city.[9]

Understanding Racial Healing and the Development of Richmond Model

The Richmond model of healing is rooted in a belief in the essential connection between personal and societal change. There is a need to heal wounded relationships and wounded systems. One without the other is unlikely to succeed. As summarized by Hans Böckler, President of the unified German Trade Union Federation, in 1949, "When men change the structure of society changes. And when the structure of society changes, men change. Both go together and both are necessary."[10] While the proponents of racial healing in Richmond represent a variety of faiths as well as those of no religious affiliation, there is a common understanding that the healing process requires a moral and a spiritual transformation in the human spirit that emanates in changed relationships and in private and public action. Courageous and deep inner reflection is stimulated and supported by – and often ensues in – public acts of acknowledgment, rituals and gatherings; open and honest interpersonal dialogue among all stakeholders; and intentional and sustained focus on building and maintaining explicit and implicit networks of individuals and institutions working for a shared vision of a just, inclusive and reconciled community.[11]

This understanding of a trustbuilding and healing process that bridges historical barriers of race, class, politics and religion, is informed by many decades of work by Initiatives of Change

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[7] Ibid, 154-158

[8] Ibid, 168

[9] Ebony Walden, "We need a commitment to a more equitable Richmond," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, February 16, 2020

[10] Frank Buchman, *Remaking the World*, (n.p.: Blandford, 1961), 172

[11] Rob Corcoran, *Trustbuilding: An Honest Conversation on Race, Reconciliation, and Responsibility*, (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2010), 14-17

in conflict and post-conflict arenas, including its significant role in the reconciliation between France and Germany after World War II.[12]

The Richmond model challenges individuals to identify and overcome their own blind spots. In the words of Howard Thurman, the theologian and civil rights leader, "What I seek to eradicate in society…I must first attack in my own heart and life. There is no substitute for this."[13] According to Martin Luther King, Jr. we may even "learn and grow and profit from the wisdom of brothers who are called the opposition."[14]

Author and journalist Michael Henderson who documented some of the early racial healing work in Richmond, explores the process of forgiveness with stories of individuals in Nigeria, Lebanon, Israel and Palestine, South Africa, Northern Ireland, Germany, India, Sierra Leone, and Rwanda in *No Enemy to Conquer: Forgiveness in an Unforgiving World*.[15] These stories illustrate important aspects of the healing process including reaching out to "the other," overcoming a sense of victimhood and accepting responsibility. One of the commentators in this volume, Donna Hicks, frames the overarching goal of reconciliation as the "restoration of humanity" by honoring the dignity of each individual, which changes the victim and the perpetrator. This helps to distinguish between the *outcome* of being reconnected to "the other" and the *process* it takes to get there.

Marc Gopin, who took part in Richmond's first public acknowledgment of its racial history, writes that destructive conflicts are based on primal emotions that cannot be solved by rational discussion and negotiation. "Indeed, what goes on *between* people cannot be separated from what goes on *within* people." Who we are, deep inside, will determine how well we get along with others, and so, if we want to fix our conflicts, or anyone else's for that matter, we had better get started on ourselves." He notes that the deepest causes of conflict are feelings like dishonor and humiliation. Likewise, the deepest cause of healing involves the opposite: feeling honored, feeling valued, finding meaning in community."[16] This focus on honoring and valuing every individual and seeking ways to extend our sense of community is at the heart of the Richmond approach to healing.

An important advisor to the Richmond project was Dr. Syngman Rhee, who walked to freedom from North Korea in the winter of 1950 after his father had died in prison under the communists. Rhee served as campus minister in Louisville, Kentucky, during the civil rights era and marched with Martin Luther King, Jr. He later became the moderator of the Presbyterian Church, USA. Rhee says that the most important lesson he learned from King was that the oppressed have the key to a new beginning. "This touched me deeply because I considered myself oppressed. I had turned my back on North Korea…. But the oppressed have the choice of revenge or of forgiving and working for a new society for everyone." This conviction led him to

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[12] See Garth Lean, *On the Tail of a Comet, The Life of Frank Buchman, a Small Town American Who Changed the World,* (Helmers & Howard, 1988), and Douglas Johnston and Cynthia Sampson (eds.), *Religion: The Missing Dimension of Statecraft* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994)

[13] Howard Thurman, *Deep is the Hunger*, (Richmond, Indiana: Friends United Press: 1978), 27

[14] Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., 4 April 1967 at a meeting of Clergy and Laity Concerned at Riverside Church, New York City

[15] Michael Henderson, *No Enemy to Conquer: Forgiveness in an Unforgiving World,* (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2009)

[16] Marc Gopin, *Healing the Heart of Conflict* (n.p.: Rodale, 2004) xiv - xv

make more than 30 visits to North Korea in efforts to bring about reconciliation with South Korea.[17]

Healing requires an accurate diagnosis of the wound. It was and continues to be important for the Richmond community to identify, acknowledge, correct, and more accurately document the historical record as a starting point for a healing process. The Richmond model also affirms that both victims and perpetrators and their descendants are wounded, and both have stories of pain and pride that must be heard however difficult. In this sense, both sides need each other to become whole. Therefore, the public actions are intentionally inclusive with the goal of establishing what Joseph Montville calls "an agenda for healing," enabling all parties to "take ownership together of a shared history which for so long has been avoided."[18]

In 2016, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation convened working groups on Truth, Racial Healing & Transformation, to develop recommendations for community action. More than 150 prominent racial healing practitioners, racial equity advocates and national and local partner organizations focused on narrative change, separation, law, economy and racial healing. The working group on racial healing and relationship building called for "strategies that enable people to listen and to be open to hearing about other people's stories, history, triumphs and pain." These strategies, which reflect significant input from the Richmond model, include "authentic and intentional" conversations that build on interconnected values: "safe and sacred spaces to take off our masks and rituals that acknowledge every person's humanity and invoke the presence of the divine." The practitioners emphasize that healing is not a linear process. "It is a journey we undertake together. And what is required is a commitment to that journey even as we continue to heal ourselves and our communities…. Healing happens in relationships. This process will move us to the moral center in terms of our hearts and our relationships with one another."[19]

Taking ownership of our shared history in ways that honor all stories must be the starting point for a commitment to heal the racialized policies, structures, and institutions which continue to wound our communities. Without this there can be no true healing.

First Steps Toward Healing: Personal Responsibility

In 1977, African Americans won control of Richmond's city council, unsettling the white establishment which was now faced with the new majority asserting its authority. Local media frequently highlighted acrimonious exchanges at council meetings. The new mayor, Henry L Marsh, infuriated the business establishment by firing the white city manager.

Richmond at this time was a city "starkly divided along racial lines" and "congenitally resistant to change of any kind," according to Tim Kaine, who was elected to the city council in 1994. He went on to become mayor, lieutenant governor, governor and then to represent Virginia as a senator in Washington, DC. [20]

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[17] Corcoran, *Trustbuilding,* 197-198

[18] Rob Corcoran and Karen Greisdorf, *Connecting Communities*, (Initiatives of Change, 2001) 49-51

[19] W.K. Kellogg Foundation, "Truth, Racial Healing & Transformation," Design Team Recommendations, December 2016

[20] Corcoran, *Trustbuilding,* ix

Amidst the turmoil, a group of ordinary citizens made it their business to reach out to the new leadership and to offer their support. They hand-delivered letters to each member of the council stating their support for a vision that "Richmond can demonstrate to the nation and the world answers to racial division."[21] These individuals did not hold positions of authority and had few resources. They included a retired white secretary who invited Councilman Walter T. Kenney, an African American, to her home for tea. Kenney, who later served as Richmond's mayor, commented that it was his first invitation to a white home.[22]

A remarkably organic movement began to take root, involving people of different races, political beliefs and faith traditions. Many of these new relationships were a result of actions by individuals who had the courage to overcome personal pain, prejudice and fear. Examples of change and new relationships included a senior white bank executive who decided to take responsibility for challenging the established norms of a racialized society; a black couple who worked to build friendships across racial lines as one of the first non-white residents in their neighborhood; the owner of the city's leading cotillion (a dance and manners class for the children of the white elite) who overcame her fears to open her home to interracial groups; the head of the Parent Teacher Association of Richmond Public Schools who was booed publicly by her white peers when she called for open housing; and an African American pastor who developed a dialogue with a leader of the Sons of Confederate Veterans.[23]

Most striking was the action of two black community organizers, Collie Burton, III, and his wife, Audrey, who decided to reach out to A. Howe Todd, a white senior city administrator with whom they had clashed on public policy issues and who they suspected of racial prejudice. A surprising friendship developed between the Burtons, Todd, and his wife, Joyce. The impact of this unexpected new relationship and the ensuing honest conversation caused ripples around the city. One community leader exclaimed, "Howe Todd used to be known as a someone who never listened. Whenever I went into a meeting with him, I always felt the cards were stacked, that the decisions were already made. Now he really listens to what I have to say."[24]

The Burtons' action was the result of a deep process of personal healing from the trauma of living in a racialized society. They were impressed by white Richmonders they met who were prepared to face their prejudice and to change their priorities. They began to practice daily times of quiet reflection. Audrey described this process of healing at a gathering of national leaders in 1996:

> There was a time when I used to wonder who could I blame? Why was I so angry at so many of my brothers and sisters who are not of African American descent? Why was I so angry at some of my brothers and sisters who began to collude and condone the behaviors of people who had negative attitudes and behavior?

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[21] Ibid, 15
[22] Ibid, 28
[23] Ibid, 28-30, 65
[24] Ibid, 40

And so I had to look at my own belief system. The spirit of this nation cannot change unless the spirit of the people changes. I had to be honest about myself. Every time I sat at the table with my brothers and sisters of European descent I wondered what was going on in their minds. What are they going to say that is going to cause me to become unraveled? And now I am a healed and empowered African American who is proud to be in this country. I can stand up and quietly say with love and compassion, 'What is it that we need to sit down and talk about and how do we do this in a way that will bring healing not only for me but also for you?[25]

Numerous such individuals formed unlikely partnerships and a growing level of trust emerged. Leading this movement was the nonprofit organization Initiatives of Change which developed a racial reconciliation project known as Hope in the Cities.[26] A key ally was the Richmond Hill community, an ecumenical retreat center launched in 1989, with a mission of hospitality and of spiritual renewal for the city.[27] These two entities provided a space where diverse groups could come together in honest conversation and develop a vison for the city, underpinned by the belief that "the place where racism was born in its worst form could be the place where healing can begin."[28]

Any group striving for change encounters internal conflict. It has been said that movements seldom fail from the outside; they fail from the inside. It is therefore imperative that those leading movements for healing historical wounds and honest, inclusive dialogue are prepared to build relationships of trust among themselves through honesty, vulnerability and readiness to forgive and extend forgiveness.

In *The Beloved Community*, Charles Marsh writes that the early civil rights movement pursued a form of discipleship that was "life affirming, socially transformative, and existentially demanding: a theology for radicals." It made time for "reverie, for solitude and for rituals that were refreshingly unproductive. A certain kind of contemplative discipline was an important disposition in building community and enabling trust."[29] John Coleman, an African American lay pastor in Richmond, was fond of saying, "We all need to take an inventory of who we are and then be willing to throw away what we don't need."[30]

Those working for healing in Richmond were constantly faced with this challenge of internal work. Individuals who were unwilling or unable to come to terms with it often found the demands of racial healing work impossible to sustain. But, as we shall see, the Richmond experience indicates that the demonstration of genuine new relationships among individuals

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[25] Hope in the Cities, "The National Launch of 'A Call to Community,'" *Hope in the Cities Newsletter*, 23 May 1996, Initiatives of Change archives

[26] Initiatives of Change, "Resources for Resilience", accessed March 11, 2021, https://us.iofc.org/

[27] Richmond Hill, "Richmond Hill's re-opening enters Phase III", accessed March 11, 2021, https://www.richmondhillva.org

[28] Corcoran, *Trustbuilding,* 3

[29] Charles Marsh, *The Beloved Community* (Basic Books, 2004), 33

[30] Corcoran, *Trustbuilding,* 23

who have overcome their deeply rooted prejudices and personal pain can have a greater impact than a reliance only on exhaustive analysis, exhortation or advocacy.

Four key principles emerged for Hope in the Cities and its partners: Model within the group the change and the new relationships that are needed in the wider community. Be inclusive; take the risk of approaching as potential allies even those who are difficult to work with. Hold up a vision of what the community can become; difficulties, if faced honestly, can become assets. Recognize that real change occurs when the hearts of individuals are changed. Recognize that the problems are so intractable and the emotions so deep-seated that only a spiritual impetus can generate the necessary will and persistence for sustained common action.[31]

Public Acknowledgment: Walking Through History and Reframing the Narrative

Starting in 1977, the informal network began to hold public forums which included officials and leaders of civic and educational organizations. In 1993, Hope in the Cities and its allies launched a major international public event with the bold theme: "Healing the Heart of America: An Honest Conversation on Race, Reconciliation and Responsibility." These words were deliberately chosen to describe an approach to race relations quite different from most contemporary dialogue efforts in America:

Hope in the Cities and its allies identified the inability to talk openly about race as the underlying obstacle to progress, but they were insistent that honest conversation could not occur without the participation of all sectors of the community. They held up a vision of reconciliation as an achievable goal. And, most significantly, they called for individuals of all racial backgrounds to accept the challenge of personal responsibility as the means to attain that goal."[32]

A four-day international conference, co-sponsored by the city government, convened 500 people from 50 US cities and 25 countries. The invitation committee included every member of the city council and the county boards of supervisors, and was headed by the mayor, the leader of the business community, and the provost of Virginia Commonwealth University. Their statement read:

> The toxic issue of race seeps through the national agenda, a continuing agony
> which stems from an original sin in the soul of America: two people – Native
> and African American were denied the freedom and dignity we cherish. We are
> still dealing with that legacy. Richmond, a birthplace of American democracy,
> and an early source of leadership, is one city where that legacy lives on. A city
> built on the graves of Native Americans, and a port to which Africans were
> shipped in chains, it became the Capital of the Confederacy, a separate nation
> founded in part to preserve slavery.

The document went on to state the bold vision of the organizers:

> Richmond could become a gateway to the spirit of healing and partnership that
> America needs… We want to unmask our history together and renounce

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[31] Ibid, 75-76
[32] Ibid, 61

whatever evil effect it has on us so that God can help us bring justice and healing to our city. We are all responsible for our common future. Blame, guilt and hostility will not produce what is needed. The energy for constructive change can only come through a transformation in the human spirit, starting with each one of us, not with the other person, the other race, the other group. Might we be given powerful evidences of true repentance and forgiveness which would give a new birth of hope for other cities?[33]

The centerpiece of the conference was a three-mile walk by participants through the city's racial history to mark sites that had previously been too painful and shameful to acknowledge. They included a dock where enslaved Africans had disembarked before being marched to the downtown slave market, and the notorious Lumpkin's Jail, also known as the Devil's half acre, which was used as a holding facility for slaves. In the years before the Civil War, Robert Lumpkin was the largest slave holder in Richmond and was known for his cruelty. However, there is a redemptive aspect to the history of this site. After the war and the death of Lumpkin, the property passed to the mother of his children, Mary Lumpkin, a formerly enslaved woman. She sold it to Nathaniel Colver, a Baptist minister, who was looking for a place to educate newly freed African Americans. The Colver Institute evolved into Richmond Theological Seminary and finally Virginia Union University, where many future black leaders – including Governor Wilder – were to study.

The walk though Richmond's history, led by Mayor Walter Kenney and the Chair of Chesterfield Board of Supervisors, Jack McHale, was designed as an accurate, respectful, inclusive public telling of the history and it attracted people of all races and socioeconomic backgrounds. Mayor Walter Kenney said afterwards, "It is often the thing from which we hide that eventually wounds us – from the inside out – and such had been the case in Richmond…. We did not highlight these places in an effort to hand out guilt or vent anger. We wanted to acknowledge their existence so that we could close the door and move forward."[34]

One of the participants in the walk was Richard Ruffin whose ancestor, Edmond Ruffin, a vocal defender of slavery, fired the first shot of the Civil War at Fort Sumpter. At the end of the war, he wrapped himself in a Confederate flag and shot himself. In a commentary for the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, Richard Ruffin described the powerful experience of the walk and concluded, "Perhaps as white Americans like me put an end to denial and find new visons for what African Americans will give to the world, hope will be born that a new beginning can be made to race relations."[35]

Following this first public acknowledgment of Richmond's racial history, Mayor Kenney established a Unity Walk Commission which subsequently became the city's Slave Trail Commission tasked with developing the trail and the related sites as places for education, dialogue and healing. Over the past decades thousands of Richmonders have walked the trail, as well as people from states across the US and beyond including the UK (including a delegation of Catholic and Protestants from Northern Ireland), France, Ukraine, South Africa, India, Israel,

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[33] Ibid, 61-62
[34] Walter Kenney, address at Brooklyn Borough Hall, 26 May 1994
[35] Richard Ruffin, "Walk from Past to Reconciliation," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 25 July 1993.

Palestine, Lebanon, Australia, the Caribbean, Mexico and Brazil. Many of them reflected on how the experience related to the need for healing in their own communities.

A major challenge in attempting an honest telling of history is the task of uniting communities around shared narratives rather than dividing them along lines of perceived oppressors and victims. Joseph Montville writes that a walk such as the one pioneered in Richmond is not "an exchange of accusations and vigorous defense. Any group can do that, and they often do." Richmond demonstrated "an honest, conversation about the past where informed, intellectually respectable and morally courageous men and women squarely faced their symbolic record of hurt and allows the conscience of large numbers of people to give up avoidance and to be activated in the most positive sense."[36]

A frequent comment by people of Caucasian descent is, "I can't apologize for what my ancestors did," or, "My ancestors were not involved in slavery; we were poor immigrants." The Richmond response to this is: "We may not be responsible for the wounds of the past, but we are all responsible for the acts of repair today."

The Richmond model recognizes the power of narrative in forming identity. These narratives may be positive or negative. When a group feels that its identity is threatened, it is more likely to coalesce around narratives – including false narratives – that provide a sense of group security. Learning to hear one another's stories requires a moral-historical discrimination not easily achieved, says Donald Shriver, writing about the Richmond experience: "Citizens need time to learn hospitality to each other's feelings about their diverse, painful pasts... But suffering itself, whatever its nature and circumstance, can evoke a communal bond."[37]

In the Richmond context, both black and white have experienced pain in different ways. The Richmond history walk acknowledges the grief at the massive loss of life suffered by the South as well as the trauma of the slave market. Remarkably, it was African Americans who understood most quickly the need for healing on all sides. As he stood at the foot of the monument to Confederate Soldiers and Sailors – the only monument in Richmond dedicated not to the generals but to the untold thousands of young men who died in the Civil War – the Rev. Sylvester Turner, a leader of the Richmond initiative said, "When I first saw that monument I saw pain, the pain that I had suffered as a black man." But then he began to look at it "from the perspective of grief," because the Confederates "built that monument out of grief, and they need to be healed as well."[38]

In 2007, led by Governor Kaine, Virginia became the first state to formally apologize for its support of slavery. That same year, before a crowd of 5000 people, a Reconciliation Statue was unveiled at the site of the former slave market.[39] The original, by the British public artist Stephen Broadbent, stands in Liverpool, the leading port involved in the transatlantic slave trade. In December 1999, the city council had issued an "unreserved apology" for its role in the trade.[40]

Later that month, President Mathieu Kerekou of the Republic of Benin invited members of the African Diaspora as well as representatives from slave trading nations to an international

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[36] Corcoran, *Trustbuilding,* 64

[37] Donald Shriver, *Honest Patriots: Loving a Country Enough to Remember its Misdeeds*, (N.Y: Oxford University Press, 2005), 139

[38] Karen Elliott Greisdorf, *Healing the Heart of America*, video film (Cornerstone Production, 1993)

[39] Corcoran, *Trustbuilding*, 229

[40] Special meeting, Liverpool City Council, 9 December 1999

gathering in Benin where he apologized to the Diaspora for his country's prominent role in selling fellow Africans into slavery. "We owe it to ourselves never to forget, to acknowledge our share of responsibility in the humiliation."[41] In 2000, Kerekou sent a government delegation to repeat that apology on the banks of the James River in Richmond.[42] A second replica of the Reconciliation Statue was presented by Liverpool to Benin. Ambassadors of Benin, Gambia, Niger, and Sierra Leone as well as a delegation from Liverpool, UK, attended the 2007 unveiling of the statue in Richmond.

At the site of the former slave market, the city is finalizing plans for a major memorial and heritage center. The project has bipartisan support. Governor Bob McDonnell, a Republican, pledged $11 million in state funds and the city allocated $8 million.

Historical records are often written by the victors or the dominant group. This highlights the importance of oral history. From an African American oral history teacher, the planners of Richmond's first history walk first learned that the site known as Manchester Docks was a point where enslaved Africans disembarked before being taken to the downtown slave market. Institutions such as libraries and museums have access to funds and other resources that are usually not available to community historians. Recognizing this challenge, Initiatives of Change has launched the Narrative Change Collaborative (NCC), supported by funds from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation as part of Truth, Racial Healing & Transformation. The NCC is focused on creating a multi-voice amplification network committed to disrupting the region's skewed and incomplete narrative history rooted in white supremacy and privilege. Grants are awarded to provide stipends to local historians to unearth and innovate counter-narratives to Richmond's histories of structural racism with a focus on housing, health and education.[43]

While Richmond has made significant strides in acknowledging its racial history and taking steps for healing, statues of Confederate generals still line Monument Avenue. Not everyone, white or black, agrees that they should be removed. Some propose adding educational context. State Senator Jennifer McClellan says, "I drive past it [the Robert E. Lee statue] every day on the way to work. [As a black elected official,] I am my ancestors' wildest dreams come true, and I am probably one of those men's worst nightmares." But she says she understands the monuments are part of history. Currently the Virginia General Assembly has jurisdiction over the statues as war memorials. McClellan believes localities should be able to decide for themselves.[44] At the time of writing, the Virginia Senate appears poised to grant the city council the power to move the statues if it so chooses. Meanwhile, in efforts to reframe the historical narrative, Richmond has erected new statues and memorials. In 1996, a statue of tennis champion and civil rights activist Arthur Ashe was erected on Monument Avenue, and in 2019 the Boulevard, which bisects Monument Avenue, was renamed in honor of this native Richmonder. A sculpture of Maggie Walker, an African American who became the nation's first female bank president, now stands on Broad Street.

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[41] Corcoran, *Trustbuilding, 229*

[42] Rex Springsteen, "We Cry for Forgiveness," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 30 April 2000

[43] Initiatives of Change, "The Narrative Change Collaborative", accessed March 11, 2021, https://us.iofc.org/the-narrative-change-collaborative

[44] Gregory S. Schneider, "In the capital of the Confederacy, a new monument and a chance to change the narrative," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, December 10, 2019

Most remarkably, in December 2019, "Rumors of War," a 27-foot tall sculpture by Kehinde Wiley, was unveiled in front of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, the most expensive purchase in the museum's history. It portrays a young African American with dreadlocks atop a horse in a pose strikingly similar to the statue of Confederate General J.E.B. Stuart just a few blocks away. Wiley says, "I couldn't think of any better place to have this than the former capital of the Confederacy, in a place where we see America at a crossroads." He highlights the public conversation on how to grapple with monuments in public spaces. "What do we do with them? Do we throw them into graveyards? Do we melt them down?"

> I believe that conversation is going to be the most important part of this. We can take cues from World War II, the experience with Holocaust deniers, the sense in which history is something that should be returned to, but also kept within the right context. That said, we should also recognize that these objects were designed and created as totems of terrorism. They were designed to terrorize the black communities and to allow them to know exactly where they sat within the social hierarchy. They [the statues] were not built during the Civil War. They were built during the early 20th century as a means of communicating a type of state terror and white supremacy at once.

> I think today we can find new ways of contextualizing those sculptures. Not melting them down but creating more speech that allows the language of domination, of monumentality, to be recycled, towards the betterment of society. To use the language of the monumental towards underserved communities, people who deserve to be seen on the great walls of museums, people who deserve to imagine themselves in their best light. That's what the sculpture was designed to do. I think that's how I want it to be seen within this current political moment.[45]

Honest Conversation, Engaging "The Other" and Building Partnerships

Over the past decades, thousands of people have taken part in public forums and carefully facilitated small group dialogues. These dialogues and the history walks have enabled Richmonders of all backgrounds to collectively confront a traumatic past without fixating on guilt or blame.

The Richmond Hope in the Cities network also convened conversations and forums with leaders in cities such as Chicago, Cincinnati and Portland, Oregon. They developed a manifesto, "A Call to Community," which was launched at the National Press Club in 1996 with the support of multiple city mayors as well as national faith leaders, civil rights organizations and elected officials of both major parties.[46] This call inspired the creation of a six-part dialogue which prompts personal storytelling about participants' experiences of race and the impact of history; it asks questions about forgiveness and atonement; it reviews challenges of the current environment and areas for hope; and it concludes by exploring visions for the future and personal

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[45] Ibid
[46] Corcoran, *Trustbuilding,* 81-83

commitments to action. This dialogue model with a focus on healing wounds of history was picked up by other U.S. communities where Hope in the Cities trained teams of facilitators.[47] In 1998 Hope in the Cities leaders were tapped to help design a dialogue guide for President Clinton's initiative on race.[48]

In one variation of the Richmond dialogue model, "affinity groups" representing different racial, class or religious groups meet separately to ask two questions: What are we doing in our group that is perpetrating the problem? What do we need to hear from the other side in order to begin to build trust? The two groups then come together to report out. This proved particularly useful in facilitating honest dialogues involving business leaders and grassroots activists in discussing difficult community issues, and between Muslim leaders and prominent evangelical Christians following the events of September 11, 2001.

Traditionally, the former capital of the Confederacy had maintained a polite silence about race relations and racial history. Indeed, fifty-one percent of those approached for a 1981 *Richmond Times-Dispatch* survey on the topic declined to participate. Today, the processes of acknowledgment and conversations about repair in Richmond involves city government, museums, universities, libraries, business, nonprofit organizations, and faith communities. Under the leadership of Edward Ayers, President of the University of Richmond, the region's universities, libraries, museums and other institutions formed a consortium, "The Future of Richmond's Past," to mark the 150th anniversary of the Civil War and the beginning of Emancipation. The *Richmond Times-Dispatch* noted that "instead of fracturing along familiar fault lines of race and mistrust," the commemoration had built relationships among disparate groups. The newspaper remarked that a "new focus on the nation's defining conflict has brought out different perspectives on shared experiences and developed a language of respect that enlightens rather antagonizes."[49]

Richmond is now home to the first museum in the nation to tell the story of the Civil War from Union, Confederate and African American perspectives. It was the vision of Alex Wise, the great-great grandson of Henry Wise, the Virginia governor responsible for the hanging of John Brown, and a proponent of succession who subsequently became a Confederate general. Alex Wise became aware of the Hope in the Cities network and was deeply impressed by its work. He met with leaders of the group and described his vison that the center, set in the site of the Tredegar Ironworks that built cannon for both the Union and then Confederate armies, would be a place where everyone would be challenged to "walk in the other person's shoes," and that it might be a place of dawning awareness, civil discussion and finally, of healing.[50] He sought the group's help in building support for this potentially controversial project. One member of the Hope in the Cities network, the local president of the NAACP, offered to accompany Wise in meetings with black leaders.

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[47] Ibid, 85-86; and Greisdorf, Karen Elliott, "An Honest Conversation on Race, Reconciliation, and Responsibility," in David Schoem and Sylvia Hurtado (eds.) *Intergroup Dialogue: Deliberative Democracy in School, College, Community, and Workplace,* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001), 151-165

[48] The White House, *One America Dialogue Guide: Conducting a Discussion on Race*, March 1998

[49] Catherine Calos, "Civil War 150th: Divisions of the Past Give Way to Shared Commitment to the Future," *Richmond Times-Dispatch,* August 8, 2015

[50] Corcoran, *Trustbuilding*, 6

Thanks to a process of extensive consultations and community dialogue, the museum was launched in 2006 with the full support of African American city and state leaders. State Secretary of Administration Viola Baskerville, one of several prominent African American officials who backed the project, said the "beauty of the Tredegar project is that now African Americans can begin to understand that we weren't just acted upon, but that we contributed to our own freedom."[51] Alex Wise says that his vision was made possible by the Hope in the Cities' network of trust developed through dialogue and relationship building.[52]

Speaking at a public forum in Richmond in 2015, Edward Baptist, the author of *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism,* said, "I see in Richmond a city that is engaging with its history in a potentially transformative way."[53] The *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, a newspaper once known for its support of Massive Resistance, hosted the event and ran editorials endorsing Baptist's book.

An effective process of community healing must engage all relevant stakeholders. Racial justice efforts tend to be led by dedicated activists who are often not willing or able to engage more conservative individuals and institutions. The evolution of reporting on racial issues by the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* is a particularly striking example of Richmond's effort to build a multi-sector network which sometimes includes unlikely partners. The newspaper along with its sister publication, the *Richmond News Leader*, was regarded by many in the city as public enemy number one because of its racist views.

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, several reporters and editors were arguing for greater balance in news coverage. Hope in the Cities and its allies set out to build relationships with those who were working for constructive change within the institution. Prior to the 1993 Healing the Heart of America conference, they approached senior editors to share a new vision for Richmond as a leader in a national process of racial healing and to enlist their support in communicating the importance of that vision. After the 1993 conference and the first walk through the city's racial history which the paper covered extensively, five editors met with a group of thirty citizens to discuss the newspaper's responsibility to the community. Editors and reporters took part in dialogues, community forums, and history walks.[54] On the fiftieth anniversary of *Brown v Board of Education*, the newspaper featured a history of Massive Resistance. It acknowledged its past "seething advocacy" for segregated education, and an editorial lamented the "massive wrong" of the resistance.[55]

In a July 2015 column for the New York Times, Isabel Wilkerson, author of *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration*, wrote: "The day after the flag went down in South Carolina, an editorial in the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* made the stunning declaration that it was finally time for a truth and reconciliation commission and that Virginia should take the lead. 'Accounting has not occurred,' the paper wrote, 'the half remains untold.' This is precisely what history demands and what this moment requires. Perhaps a new reconstruction could truly take hold and inspire the rest of the country if it sprang from the region

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[51] Cindy Brown Austin, "The Missing Piece," *Hartford Courant*, August 4, 2002

[52] Corcoran, *Trustbuilding,* 241

[53] Corcoran, "Connecting History and Social Change," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, April 5, 2015

[54] Corcoran, *Trustbuilding*, 210

[55] Ibid, 209-212

that resisted it in the first place."[56] An August editorial in the same year stated: "Reparations seldom appear on the agenda. The case for them appears stronger than dismissive critics think. Reconciliation depends on truth; truth requires intellectual courage. A dynamic dominion need not fear examining the status of self-evident truths."[57]

In another important development, Christian faith communities have begun to explore their own histories and their responsibility for acts of repair. The Christian church was deeply engaged in justifying the system of slavery and in maintaining the mythology of a racial hierarchy. St Pauls' Episcopal Church, once known as the church of the Confederacy, is completing a five-year initiative in which historians conducted extensive research on the complicity of the congregation in the slave economy and the promotion of the Lost Cause mythology. This project is expanding into city-wide conversations with other faith communities. A public forum in 2018 drew hundreds of people to St Paul's to hear panels of historians, faith leaders from different denominations, and representatives of prominent nonprofit institutions.

Addressing the Legacy: Connecting History and Dialogue on Race, Class and Jurisdiction

Crucially, Richmond is now able to link acknowledgment of history with an understanding of its continuing impact on today's social and economic structures. Policies of segregation and red lining continued well into the middle of the twentieth century. Richmond ranks ninth nationally in income inequality. Its wealthiest neighborhoods lie within walking distance of some of the poorest census tracts. Public housing is concentrated within a few square miles. Schools are overwhelmingly populated by African American children from low-income families. Public transportation scarcely reaches the suburban counties where most of the new jobs are located.

"While Richmond's resurgence brings great potential to deliver economic opportunities and neighborhood improvements to the city's low-income communities, the pervasive sense is that many will remain cut off from opportunity by poverty and structural racism," writes Ebony Walden, an urban planner and facilitator. Numerous reports document the city's racial inequities in health, income, education, housing and food access. The Urban Institute ranked Richmond 261 out of 274 cities on overall inclusion, 253 on economic inclusion, and 236 on racial inclusion — likely because 25% of city residents still live in poverty and 35% of households make less than $25,000 a year. Forty-three percent of Richmonders spend more than 30% of their income on housing (cost burdened), a possible contributor to Richmond's eviction rate being second in the nation. Home prices have increased faster than anywhere in the region, at 56% higher than they were in 2009. Meanwhile, the homeownership gap continues to grow along racial lines. Richmond is one of the most gentrified cities in the state. Since 2000, Richmond lost 3,600 black homeowners and the black population decreased by 7% while the white population increased by 35%.[58]

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[56] Isabel Wilkerson, "Our Racial Moment of Truth," *New York Times*, July 18, 2015

[57] Richmond Times-Dispatch Editorial Board, "Segregation's Consequences Persist," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, August 8, 2105

[58] Ebony Walden, "We need a commitment to a more equitable Richmond," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, February 16, 2020

Federal, state and local policies and private industry practices like urban renewal, redlining, deed restrictions, exclusionary zoning, highway construction and subprime lending are all factors in creating and perpetuating de facto segregation by race and class. Ben Campbell writes that the inequalities in areas such as education and lack of public transportation are the direct consequences of decades of racially inspired public policies. They are the real artifacts of the Confederacy. It is far easier to remove the massive statues on Monument Avenue than to honestly address the underlying structures that continue to discriminate and exclude.[59] In the face of the trend towards two cities based on race and class, Walden calls for "urgent action to develop a racial equity strategy rooted in equitable development, ensuring that all can thrive."

John V. Moeser, a professor of urban studies, says that the Hope in the Cities movement has changed the lives of many people. "They are doing things they would never have done before. But structurally, we are still where we were in the 1970s. We need one or two leaders, especially in the corporate community, who will have the courage to start the process of reform."[60]

Moeser uses census data to show how race, economics and political jurisdiction combine to perpetuate concentrated poverty. In a project called, "Unpacking the Census: The New Realities of Race, Economics, and Jurisdiction" Hope in the Cities and the Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities, created a DVD version of Moeser's data and presentation, accompanied by a facilitated dialogue, that reached more than 700 people in the central region of Virginia through more than 80 presentation to faith-based organizations, advocacy groups, educators, business leaders, and government employees. The three-part video shows the link between racist public policies and the concentration of poverty. By linking data with historical narrative, it both informs participants and builds energy for action.

The project was first announced at a Virginia Commonwealth University forum in 2011 during which Richmond Mayor Dwight Jones launched an Anti-Poverty Commission to develop racial equity strategies in the sectors of employment, education, transportation, and health. The city subsequently created a permanent Office of Community Wealth Building – possibly the first in the country – with the bold goal of reducing overall poverty by 40 percent by 2030.[61]

Thad Williamson, the first director of the Office of Community Wealth Building, told a public forum, "Imagine Richmond being known as the capital of community wealth building with a racial equity lens and unabashed commitment to inclusion of and respect for all people."[62]

Conclusions and Ongoing Challenges: It's About Trust

The Richmond case study highlights some important steps for addressing historical trauma and building trust which appear to be applicable to other localities. Methodologies developed in Richmond are now being adapted for local contexts in several countries. For example, the Fetzer Institute is currently collaborating with Initiatives of Change in pilot projects based largely on Richmond's experience to address racial, tribal or religious divisions often rooted in historical wrongs in Quebec (Canada), Kenya, and France.

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[59] Benjamin P. Campbell, "Remove the real artifacts of the Confederacy," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 26 April 2017
[60] Corcoran, *Trustbuilding*, 252
[61] Initiatives of Change, "Unpacking the Census", accessed March 11, 2021, https://us.iofc.org/unpacking-the-census
[62] Rob Corcoran, "Building trust in the heart of community," *National Civic Review*, Fall 2017

The connection between personal and societal transformation is at the heart of the Richmond healing process. Readiness by individuals to courageously examine their own attitudes, beliefs and behavior rather than point the finger of blame can generate new insights and energy and may encourage partnerships for public action and social change.

To be effective, healing work must be specific. Place is important. Developing an honest, accurate and inclusive historical record, drawing on both written and oral histories, gives authenticity to the process. Both academics and community historians have a role to play. It is notable that, in the Richmond case, grassroots activists took the lead in bringing to the surface "hidden history" and inspiring universities, libraries and museums and the city government to give formal recognition to this history and to allocate funding and staffing to develop it as an educational resource.

Universities and other institutions can play a key role in providing accurate data to illustrate the impact of racialized policies. But statistics alone seldom move people. Connecting data with narrative informs and mobilizes individuals by connecting the head and the heart.

All relevant stakeholders must be engaged: the nonprofit sector, government, academia, faith communities, business and media. This may require risk-taking and honest dialogue among parties who normally do not work together and may even hold conflicting views.

Serious structural obstacles stand in the way of efforts to address the ongoing legacy of Richmond's history of systemic racism. As John Moeser notes, those who are not directly affected by injustice can go about their lives without seeing the threat. Those who are suffering are too busy just trying to survive to do much about it. Chief among the obstacles is what has been described as the region's balkanized system of government. The city comprises less than five percent of the total land mass of the metropolitan area. State law currently prohibits further annexation by the city. The surrounding counties operate separate school systems and local tax bases. Public transportation has only recently been permitted to reach beyond the city line. Changing demographics (the counties now have more people living in poverty than the city) may finally prompt political leaders to move toward much closer collaboration. But significant structural change will demand courage and far-sighted leadership by both local and state government and by corporate leaders.

Healing takes time and sustained efforts are needed. The Richmond project is now completing its third decade. This sustained effort requires relationships of trust based on honesty, shared vision and willingness to build long-term relationships. To support the deepening and broadening of the network of trustbuilders dedicated to healing and repair, Initiatives of Change through its Hope in the Cities program, conducts the Community Trustbuilding Fellowship (CTF), a residential program of leadership formation spread over five weekends for community leaders from public and private sectors. While mostly drawn from Richmond, participants have come from a dozen US states as well as from Europe and Africa. Key learning areas include: the role of individuals in becoming authentic trustbuilders and agents of change, and nurturing spiritual resources to sustain the work; understanding the power of history and memory in shaping community narratives and identity, and creating spaces for healing and forgiveness; practicing dialogue design and facilitation to build trust and discern core issues; and developing

strategies to build diverse multi-sector teams and networks across boundaries of race, culture, religion, and politics to build healthy, inclusive communities.[63]

In the words of one participant, the program situates Fellows of different backgrounds in uncomfortable yet necessary learning experiences while simultaneously equipping them with tools and knowledge to recognize both the pain of racism and societal injustice and the beauty of the possibility of hope and transformation. Through readings and intense, interactive workshops, they deepen their understanding of the role they play and the responsibility that they have within the process.

Mark Gordon, a senior health care executive, is one among many African American leaders who have taken part. He says, "The artificial construction of race is the most divisive structure ever created. Shockingly there are few trusted mechanisms to deconstruct what the world has taught us. CTF is likely the premier resource to productively reform your thinking while simultaneously deconstructing your personal bias."[64]

Another Fellow, Melody Porter, the director of community engagement at a Virginia university, writes, "I was face to face with my privilege and responsibility, the stories I know about my family, and what it means for me as a white person to work for racial healing and justice today." She adds that this process of learning is a process over time requiring persistence and commitment to self-examination and relationships. "It is the kind of work that forces me to look critically at my thoughts, actions, and words. It is the kind of work that calls me to speak my perspective clearly, and to accept and integrate feedback about how I affect others." [65]

Demetrius Summerville, a mental health counselor in Florida, highlights the emphasis on the importance of listening to "the sacred stories of others." Through listening, "empathy can grow within each individual to help build the bridge across whatever barriers divide... I believe lasting social change can occur when we all get beneath our anger, and talk with others from a place of hurt, disappointment, sadness and confusion rather than anger or assumption." Summerville, who is black, writes that as a mental health counselor he was trained to listen with empathy not judgement. "However, as it relates to divisive social issues, I have neglected this principal and sought to listen to prove I am right, resulting in a loss of relationship with the others."[66]

Osita Iroegbu, a first-generation Nigerian-American, is a community advocate and educator, and a communications professional who serves as a senior policy advisor at the office of Richmond's mayor. She joined CTF "to connect with other truth and justice seekers as we aim to strengthen our ability and capacity to resist and persist in the face of injustice and effect positive transformation within our communities." She also hoped to strengthen her leadership and community facilitation skills to "help ensure engaging, constructive and transformative discourse around race, justice and healing." She says the creative dialogue and engagement embedded in each CTF learning objective module "takes Fellows on a new experience

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[63] Initiatives of Change, "Community Trustbuilding Fellowship", accessed March 11, 2021, https://us.iofc.org/community-trustbuilding-fellowship

[64] Personal email to author, 12 March, 2020

[65] Initiatives of Change, "#MySacredStory: Melody Porter, Virginia", accessed March 11, 2021, https://us.iofc.org/news/2018/11/mysacredstory-melody-porter-virginia

[66] Initiatives of Change, "#MySacredStory: Demetrius Summerville, Florida", accessed March 11, 2021, https://us.iofc.org/news/2018/11/mysacredstory-demetrius-summerville-florida

emotionally, academically and physically." The fellowship explores critical race and justice issues but also attempts to enable participants to physically step into the experiences of those who have suffered (such as by walking the city's Trail of Enslaved Africans) to "more fully understand the deep level of acknowledgment, ancestral homage and healing that still needs to take place.[67]

These are just a few of the hundreds of individuals from all walks of life who are "embedded" in their communities in Richmond and in other cities doing the work of building trust across deep historical divides. They recognize that we are all on a journey, on a voyage of discovery. This requires humility and willingness to learn on the part of all stakeholders. Those who enjoy positions of unconscious privilege as a result of a history of human bondage must have the courage to face this reality honestly. Those striving for truth telling and systemic change must beware of the trap of self-righteousness. John Coleman highlighted the need to "build a bridge of trust strong enough to bear the weight of the truth you are trying to deliver."[68]

The ongoing Richmond story demonstrates that by fearlessly turning the searchlight of truth inward rather than engaging in accusations, we can create a welcoming environment for others. Through inclusive and honest dialogue, we can hear each other's stories and invite others to share our journey. In acknowledging painful history, we can move toward understanding shared responsibility for acts of repair, and ultimately forgiveness and reconciliation.

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[67] Initiatives of Change, "#MySacredStory: Osita Iroegbu, Virginia", accessed March 11, 2021, https://us.iofc.org/news/2018/11/mysacredstory-osita-iroegbu-virginia
[68] Corcoran, *Trustbuilding*, 49

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