

September 2016 Newsletter

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Get involved, get informed, act together!



May 2016 Celebration. Over two hundred and fifty clergy, Team Leaders and Network Members came together to celebrate the year we had together and the years we will continue to work side by side by fellowshipping, sharing a meal, playing games, telling our own story and investing in the Justice Ministry. Over \$50,000 dollars was turned in as of that night - great job guys!!

CAJM is a network of 29 faith-based congregations who come together with one goal: to make Charleston a more just city. We are diverse religiously, socio-economically, geographically, and racially and we speak with one powerful voice for justice in our community.

Issues updates for last year (2015-16)

PBIS and Restorative Justice in Charleston County Schools

At our April Nehemiah Action, four Charleston County School Board members committed to vote “yes” on a plan to roll out PBIS and Restorative Justice district wide over the next 3-

5 years.

The Monday following the Nehemiah Action, that vote was passed 7-1 at the School Board's regularly scheduled meeting.

CAJM Leaders followed up with CCSD's Jennifer Coker the first week of September and learned that four PBIS coaches were hired and trained, and an additional \$65,000 went toward training personnel to implement PBIS with fidelity in ALL elementary and middle schools this year.

Ms. Coker plans to use training funds next summer to begin Restorative Justice implementation. She also agreed to send one of her staff members to Jacksonville, FL to observe Restorative Practices being used in Duvall County Public Schools. CAJM is working with the Jacksonville School District to set up some potential dates for several of our members to travel with School Board Members to Florida to observe their very successful Restorative Justice Program in action.

Racial Discrimination in Policing Practices

At our 2016 Nehemiah Action, we asked the cities of Charleston and North Charleston to make specific, measurable commitments toward building community trust and ending racial discrimination in police practices. Benefits include increased safety for our citizens and our police and increased effectiveness of our police departments.

We continue to move forward with a focus on the City of Charleston contracting a professional police auditor to conduct an external, independent police audit of bias-based policing (including stops, frisks, questioning and searches).

We have followed up with Mayor Tecklenburg, who has insisted that he will conduct an internal performance audit instead of an independent, external audit of bias-based policing. We continue to ask the question "why won't the Mayor and Police Chief agree to an external, independent audit?" An external, independent audit provides true transparency and denying that transparency runs the risk of damaging community trust even more.

We met with City Council members James Lewis and Keith Waring as well as Kathleen Wilson, Chair of the Public Safety Committee. We have requested time in front of the Public Safety Committee to present on the importance of this external, independent audit and to push for a Request for Proposal (RFP), to be produced by City Council. So far Council Member Wilson has not scheduled a Public Safety Meeting for that presentation.

The Mayor, Police Chief, some City Council members and other representatives of the city have been communicating for months that if CAJM wants our concerns heard, it must be through the Illumination Project's Listening Sessions. Many of our members followed that advice by attending the listening sessions. CAJM leaders recently attended the Illumination Project's "Community Review Session" to learn the project's focus, which includes 86 community and police suggestions. The independent, external audit is not listed among those items. When the project coordinator was asked why an external, independent police audit of bias-based policing was not included in the strategies, she answered that, "it is not within the parameters set out by the Mayor's office." Another steering committee member shared that the Mayor informed them that the external, independent audit was "outside the scope of the Illumination Project" and thus was removed from the list. This leaves us

disappointed and frustrated that the Illumination Project, with all the potential positive it can bring, has been used as a deflection and a delay tactic to building community trust and confidence in our police department.

We will continue to pursue an audience with the Charleston City Council Public Safety Committee. CAJM's Racial Discrimination Steering Committee is considering additional next steps, which may include a press conference to be held in the coming weeks.

Regarding the City of North Charleston, the US Department of Justice's Office of Community Orienting Policing Services (COPS) announced in May that it will conduct a review of the North Charleston Police Department. However, the review process can take years to complete and —unlike the DOJ's Civil Rights Division— the COPS Office has no authority to file civil lawsuits if its recommendations are not implemented.

Therefore, the Steering Committee recommends that we join our voices to the community's call for the Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division to conduct a "pattern-or-practice" investigation into the North Charleston Police Department. A draft letter to this effect will be presented to the board and then Team Leaders in the coming days.

Preparation for a new year - We'll soon begin the listening process

It's time to continue dreaming about what justice looks like in our neighborhoods. To continue building our power to deepen our impact in the Charleston area. How do we build that power? By building relationships through the telling of our stories. It all begins with our house meetings this fall. Plan to attend a house meeting to build relationships, build power, and raise awareness of community problems.

“Power without love is reckless and abusive, and love without power is sentimental and anemic. Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice, and justice at its best is love correcting everything that stands against love.” - MLK

Newest staff, to help us build power:





Celebrating Est's 1 year anniversary as CAJM's newest associate organizer. June 2016.



Amy, administrative assistant since August 2016.

Important Dates

November 14, 2016 - 7:00 PM

St. Matthew Baptist Church - 2005
Reynolds Ave. N Chas

Community Problems Assembly

All Network Members, Team
Leaders, and Clergy

Come vote on key organizational
decisions

December 5, 2016 - 7:00 PM

Location TBA

Research Kickoff

All Network Members, Team
Leaders, and Clergy

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If you pledged to make an
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like to invest, please

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CAJM

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CAJM's work is supported by the following corporate investors:

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Over 2000 attendees stand up for justice at the April 2016 Nehemiah Action



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