the closer to the TRUTH PROJECT

Facilitation and Dialogue Guide

For organizations using ***Greensboro: Closer to the Truth*** to foster community dialogue and reconciliation

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Introduction

ABOUT *GREENSBORO: CLOSER TO THE TRUTH*

On November 3, 1979, in the absence of a dissuasive police presence, a caravan of white supremacists confronted demonstrators preparing for a "Death to the Klan" rally planned in a black community in Greensboro, North Carolina by the Communist Workers' Party. As marchers shouted insults at them, Klansmen and Nazi Party members emerged from their cars, unloaded an arsenal of guns, and began firing on mostly unarmed protesters. Five people – all protesters – were killed that day in what became known as the Greensboro Massacre[1].

1 This paragraph draws from the Background section of the GTRC Executive Summary. Please refer to it for more information.

Twenty-five years later, *Greensboro: Closer to the Truth* revisits players in this tragedy – widowed and wounded survivors, along with their attackers – and chronicles how their lives have evolved in the long aftermath of the killings. They each share their individual stories publicly when the first truth and reconciliation commission of its kind in the United States is convened to investigate the massacre. As the commission struggles to uncover what actually happened and why, the participants confront the truth of their past, and struggle with the possibility of hope and redemption.

For more information about the film and project, visit www.greensborothemovie.com

ABOUT THE PROJECT

The *Closer to the Truth* Project brings Adam Zucker's film, *Greensboro: Closer to the Truth*, to communities across the United States to help strengthen and support local efforts for community building. By capturing one community's process of revisiting an unresolved history, the film has proven to be a promising catalyst for dialogue and reflection about how the past is linked to the present, and offers a good model for promoting critical action around what can be done *now* to heal old wounds.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Even though the film tells the story of one specific community's history and reconciliation process, *Greensboro: Closer to the Truth* can encourage deep and sustainable examinations of a variety of social concerns in communities everywhere. Specifically, the film and this guide can be used in communities with unresolved injustices to:

- Deepen the work of social justice organizations by creating opportunities for dialogue
- Encourage the examination of histories that impact the present
- Foster civic participation among marginalized residents
- Support community healing around deeply ingrained, unresolved issues

Depending on the unique circumstances and history of your community, the film and this guide can be used to address a range of themes, such as:

- Unresolved legacies of discrimination
- Identity-based conflicts
- Economic disenfranchisement
- Law enforcement and local community tensions
- Conflict resolution

Reconciliation is a slow process that requires the mutual agreement and buy-in of community members and institutions – and much of that begins with dialogue. For this reason, this guide is deliberately tailored to avoid language and framing that might alienate or target potential allies in the community. It also takes care to pull apart dehumanizing stereotypes that continue to circulate about those groups involved in the attacks in 1979 with the goal of increasing understanding of how such stereotypes obstruct opportunities for healing and growth.

This guide offers exercises and discussion questions that allow facilitators to use *Greensboro: Closer to the Truth* to spark the type of critical dialogue that can lay the foundation for long-term, sustainable alliances. If appropriate, feel free to print out the Background and Context section (p. 5) and the Discussion Questions section (p. 11) to distribute to audience members as they begin their discussions.

Although we recommend a full screening of the film at least once so that viewers have as much context as possible, we realize that you may only have time to watch and discuss certain chapters. Therefore, we've divided the questions into categories to allow you to tailor your discussion specifically to your needs:

- **Getting the Conversation Started:** This is a good starting point to help viewers process their feelings and thoughts after first viewing the film in its entirety. It offers easy starting points to get the initial dialogue going.
- **Making Connections to Your Own Community:** This section is particularly relevant if your goal is to help viewers consider how this film about a very specific incident in history is relevant to your own community.
- **Discussion Questions by Chapter:** Some groups, especially those that plan to meet multiple times over a certain period, might prefer to have focused discussions by chapter. This section breaks out each chapter and offers specific questions to allow for such a conversation.
- **Discussion Questions by Theme:** Other groups might prefer to hone in on a few themes that are interweaved throughout the film, especially if they are themes that are particularly relevant to their community. This section allows viewers to delve deeper into themes of transitional justice, truth and perceptions of communism.
- **Walk in Their Shoes:** It is always a good exercise for viewers to put themselves in the place of characters that they don't necessarily agree with. This section allows for just that, and can be conducive to deeper awareness and reflection.

We encourage you to review this guide and pick and choose the sections that are most relevant to your needs when designing your event. We highly recommend initiating your dialogue with the Getting the Conversation Started section (p. 11).

Background and Context

This section provides context for a historical event that has raised many sensitivities and has been hotly debated. *Greensboro: Closer to the Truth* is a carefully researched work told by an independent filmmaker; this guide attempts to present additional information that can help viewers address some questions raised by the film, and even pose new ones that the film may not focus on directly.

THE GREENSBORO MASSACRE

On November 3, 1979, five protesters at a rally organized by the Communist Workers' Party (CWP) in Greensboro, North Carolina were murdered in broad daylight by Ku Klux Klan and Nazi Party members. The Greensboro CWP members were organizing to address racial, social and economic injustice, specifically through unionization and other types of multiracial organizing. Conflicts between white supremacists and CWP members were particularly pronounced in 1979, with the CWP's anti-racist efforts culminating in the November 3rd rally to protest Ku Klux Klan activities. In the late 1970s, there were a variety of groups across the country adopting titles incorporating the word "communist" to align with an anti-imperial and anti-capitalist stance; however, how each related to it varied. Some groups advocated for a militant revolutionary approach, taking up violent tactics to meet their goals. Paul Bermanzohn, a survivor of the massacre, admits in *Greensboro: Closer to the Truth* that the CWP "did have the view that it would be necessary to employ violent means to transform from a capitalist to a socialist society, but the fact is…making change in the United States there has been lots of violence; lots of people have been killed." However, the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Executive Summary noted that the CWP's "most violent documented acts… were to engage in target shooting and karate training."[2] On the day of the rally, organizers had obtained a parade permit from the city and had been assigned police escorts, but all the police were called to an early lunch just before the Ku Klux Klan and Nazi Party members arrived in a caravan and opened fire on them.

2 See GTRC Executive Summary or p. 11 of *Learning From Greensboro: Truth and Reconciliation in the United States* (2008) by Lisa Magarrell and Joya Wesley.

Five protesters were murdered that day:

- Cesar Cauce, a Cuban immigrant and Duke University graduate, active in the anti-war movement;
- Dr. Mike Nathan, an anti-war and civil rights student activist at Duke University and organizer for improved health care for poor people;
- Bill Sampson, a student anti-war activist who was a lead trainer in the unionization of the textile industry in Greensboro;
- Sandi Smith, president of the student body and a founding member of the Student Organization for Black Unity (SOBU) at Bennett College for Women, community organizer for the Greensboro Association of Poor People (GAPP), and a key organizer battling sexual harassment, low wages, and unhealthy working conditions at textile plants;
- Dr. Jim Waller, who coordinated Brown Lung screenings in North Carolina textile mills and left medicine to organize at a rural Cone Mills textile plant, where he led a successful strike before his death.

WHAT HAPPENED?

Though four TV crews captured the Greensboro killings on film, the perpetrators were twice acquitted. A federal civil trial eventually found two police officers, four Klansmen, and two Nazi Party members liable for damages for the wrongful death of the only victim who was not a formal member of the CWP. Other smaller judgments for assault were entered against the Klan and Nazis on behalf of two injured demonstrators. The city of Greensboro paid a wrongful death judgment of $351,000 on behalf of all defendants to settle the case and avoid appeals from all parties.

THE GREENSBORO TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION

The purpose of the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission (GTRC) was to shed light on the truth of what happened in 1979 so that the community could heal and move forward; it was not an attempt at a retrial.

What is a truth and reconciliation commission?

Truth and reconciliation commissions are typically officially mandated, ad-hoc, investigatory bodies used to examine the abuse of human rights. The first truth and reconciliation commission (TRC) was established in Uganda in 1974. Since then, at least 32 commissions have been employed worldwide. Perhaps the best known TRC is the one that was chaired by Archbishop Desmond Tutu following a violent legacy of apartheid in South Africa.

What is reconciliation?

Reconciliation refers to a process of restoring harmony and just relations. It is often incorporated into nonviolent strategies for achieving conflict resolution and healing.

How did the GTRC come about?

Between 2004 and 2006 the Greensboro Truth and Community Reconciliation Project (GTCRP) decided to revisit this largely unresolved history and played a leading role in kicking off the truth and reconciliation process in Greensboro. It brought together a Local Task Force and National Advisory Committee[3] to invite a diverse range of community stakeholders to participate in a process that was fair and accountable (see p. 7 for a list of community stakeholders involved in the process). Once the commissioners were selected, they undertook a rigorous investigation into the events of November 3, 1979.

What were some of the major findings?

In the end, the GTRC found that the events of November 3, 1979 were woven through with issues of race and class. The report discussed underlying issues including racial and economic justice, white supremacy and the failure of the police and justice system to provide equal protection for all residents. To address these issues, it recommended a series of steps the community could take to heal.

3 For a summary of the GTRC process, see p. 21.

Groups Invited to Choose a Selection Panel Representative for the GTRC

- Chairs of the student bodies of the six major colleges and universities in Greensboro (Bennett College, Greensboro College, Greensboro Technical Community College, Guilford College, North Carolina Agricultural & Technical State University, and the University of North Carolina at Greensboro)
- Chamber of Commerce
- Chancellors and presidents of the six major colleges and universities in Greensboro
- Council of Community Organizations
- Greensboro Police Officers Association
- Greensboro Truth and Community Reconciliation Project (GTCRP)
- Guilford County Democratic Party
- Guilford County Republican Party
- Mayor of Greensboro
- NAACP
- National Conference for Community and Justice (NCCJ)
- The Jewish community
- The Muslim community
- The Pulpit Forum / African-American Churches
- The Sons of Confederate Veterans and the Daughters of the Confederacy
- Traditional Protestant, Catholic, and Independent churches
- Triad Central Labor Council

* Source: Greensboro Truth and Community Reconciliation Project (GTCRP), www.gtcrp.org/selection.php

What came out of the GTRC?

- **New understandings of the massacre** were produced and documented through a community-led process that was legitimated by a rigorous truth-seeking mechanism.
- **Subsequent dialogues and town-hall meetings** occurred among many groups in Greensboro about race, class, corruption and other findings in the report.
- Following the release of the GTRC final report in 2006, the Greensboro **City Council held an informal discussion** of the findings and subsequently referred specific questions to the city's Human Relations Commission, which was charged with the report's review.
- On the evening of June 16, 2009, the Greensboro Human Relations Commission recommended that council members **acknowledge the importance of the shootings** and pledge "to ensure that nothing like the events of November 3, 1979 ever occur again in our community."
- That same evening, **the City Council voted 5-4 to approve a statement of regret** and pledged to help the city heal. This is a small step but significant because the council had originally voted along racial lines to oppose the truth and reconciliation process altogether. Council member Robbie Perkins, who in 2005 had led the motion to oppose the GTRC process, in 2009 was a key player in ensuring the statement of regret would be approved.
- A significant grassroots effort is underway in Greensboro working towards **raising the city's minimum wage** (see www.greensborominimum.com).
- Greensboro **became a model** for other communities, inspiring them to learn from the reconciliation process and take similar actions to heal old wounds.
- Dozens of local and international colleges and university **courses have incorporated the GTRC process and report in their studies**; in 2007, a group of college students from all over Greensboro convened an academic conference at which students presented papers related to the GTRC report.
- The Greensboro Truth and Community Reconciliation Project, which played a leading role in initiating the GTRC process, continues to play a role in shepherding the Greensboro community as it tries to **implement the GTRC's recommendations.** It is housed at the Beloved Community Center, led by Reverend Nelson and Ms. Joyce Johnson. In 2005 the Beloved Community Center became **a grantee of the Leadership for a Changing World program of the Ford Foundation for outstanding leadership.**

Facilitation Tips

Greensboro: Closer to the Truth can be a catalyst for productive dialogue that is geared toward helping communities begin – or maintain – a process of reconciliation. Given that the film raises a range of themes that may trigger strong emotional reactions, it is important to have experienced facilitators – ideally familiar with race-based dialogue – to ensure that all viewers have an opportunity to process their feelings and be heard. It is also highly recommended that the team of facilitators represent the groups that are a party to the potential reconciliation or dialogue process; this will help to promote fairness and will bring necessary cultural competency to the dialogue.

INITIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE FACILITATOR

- As the facilitator, your job is to maintain a neutral position, encourage people to explore sensitive issues, keep the space safe, and keep the discussion on track and moving forward.
- Watch the film at least once before you facilitate the dialogue. Be aware of your own "hot spots," i.e., issues that evoke particularly strong emotions, and try to be sensitive to others' perspectives as well. If you have the time, watch the film with a group of people to see how they react; this will give you a sense of what you might anticipate from the discussion.
- Know your group. Power relations play out differently in different parts of the country, in rural and urban settings, and for different generations. Think about how those differences are reflected in language, comfort level in public discussions, and prior experience with issues of diversity. Be conscious of the various dynamics at play in any group: race, class, political affiliation, gender, nationality, and religion, among others. Consider the various ways to make your dialogue space safe and structure your event accordingly.
- Be prepared for potential criticism. You must be ready for emotional responses to the film or speakers; there is nothing wrong with this if the conversation stays on track. It is helpful to remind audience members of the objectives of the dialogue and your overarching goals for community healing. See the section about the Bridges Transition Model (p. 10).
- Consider your time limitations and desired focus to determine whether you will screen the entire film or select chapters.

AT THE DIALOGUE

- Establish dialogue guidelines at the onset. Encourage participants to use "I" language: "I think that," "I feel that," "I believe that," and to speak from their own experiences as much as possible. Generalizations, such as "We believe this…" or "Don't we all agree..." imply a consensus that may not be real. Also, remember not to "piggy-back" on another person's statement, as you want to avoid making assumptions or putting words in their mouth.
- Explain that you would like for this to be a safe space where perspectives can be offered without fear of attack or shaming.

- It may be useful to regularly summarize the points that participants are making and especially to acknowledge and honor the deep emotions that might emerge.
- Consider coming to an agreement with audience members for what the objectives of the dialogue should be. This could be as simple as asking them and noting their answers on a board for everyone to see. Try not to take too much time doing this, but remember that prioritizing what audience members want from the dialogue will help return you to those objectives if you get off track.
- Ideally, the participants would be seated in a circle or some other formation so that they can see one another and feel included in the conversation. The facilitator should be a part of this arrangement as well.
- Establish the difference between dialogue and debate. Dialogue is an opportunity for people to share their experiences and opinions without trying to convince others that they are right. In a dialogue, participants try to understand each other and expand their thinking by sharing viewpoints and actively listening to each other. While finding common ground can be one objective of dialogue, acknowledging anger, passion and different viewpoints is also an important part of this process.
- After viewing the film, give audience members a few moments to silently process their thoughts before jumping into the dialogue. If your group is larger than 20 people, consider breaking into small groups for more focused discussion. Ideally, it is best to have a ratio of 1 facilitator to 10 people for facilitation circles.
- It is useful and often powerful to have participants report back to the larger group about what they did and said in the small groups. Having someone take notes can be useful in helping the group decide what to report back in the larger setting.
- During the dialogue, make references to scenes and characters from the film, and prompt participants to consider how they relate to their own experiences. Use the discussion questions on pages 11-20 to move the conversation along and ensure that you hit upon critical discussion points.
- It is good practice and a useful exercise for listeners to pay attention to what is most important to the speaker. Is the most important thing for the speaker different from what is most important for the listener? Does this difference shed light on how the various perspectives are shaped?
- Encourage critical and emotional audience members to consider how the film might help guide them through the tensions they are feeling. Ask them to think about how they will offer criticism; are there ways to say what they have to say respectfully and with care?

Extra Tip

Before screening the film, ask your audience to jot down their perspectives, definitions and/or a few thoughts they have about concepts like justice, community reconciliation, and truth. During the dialogue you can ask them to reflect on these ideas and see how their perspectives may have changed.

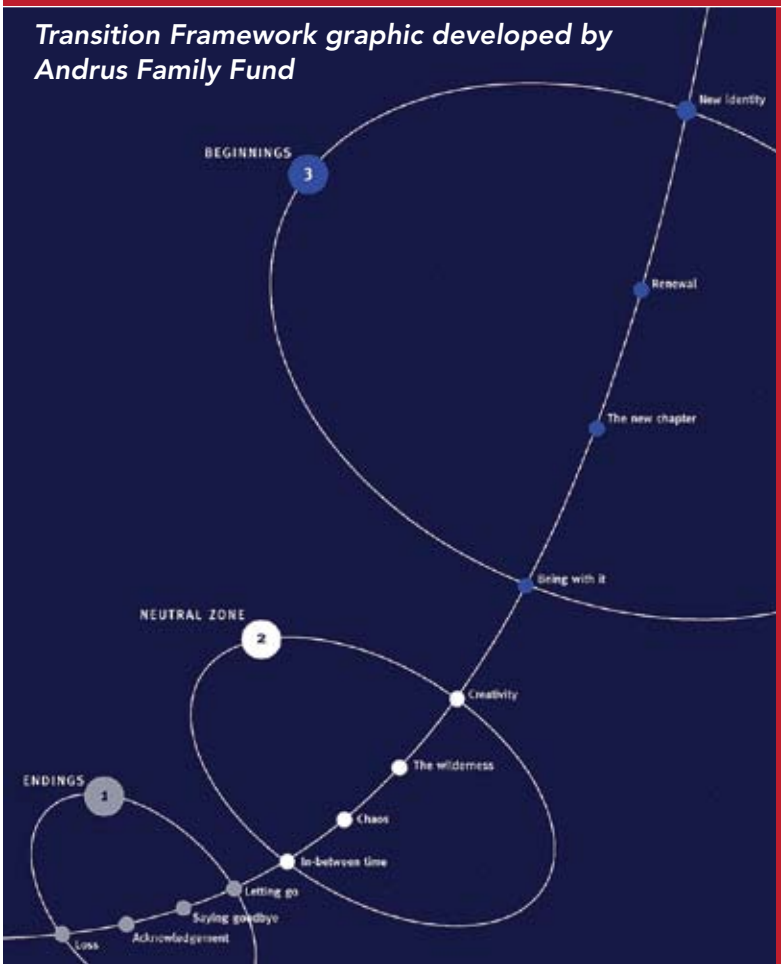
THE BRIDGES TRANSITION FRAMEWORK[4]: TIPS FOR ENCOUNTERING RESISTANCE

The concept of transition is simple enough: an external change causes an internal emotional reaction that if recognized will allow the individual to successfully navigate the change process. Often, when the change is profound or new, the emotional reaction can be that of resistance and loss. For example, public schools in Greensboro were desegregated in the early 1970s, and this represented a major external change for everyone involved in the school system. Although the policies changed quickly, many residents resisted the internal emotional transition necessary for coming to terms with any significant change. That lingering resistance manifested as heightened racial and political tensions that, in part, led to the Greensboro Massacre in 1979.

It is useful for community activists and social workers to understand the range of emotions people may experience as they confront change in their lives. By identifying where individuals are in the transition process, the Bridges Transition Framework can prompt facilitators to identify potential losses that prevent parties from cooperating; develop a more nuanced understanding of how each individual group may respond to change; and both forecast and address resistance and backsliding. Because these emotional transitions can be difficult to make, it is no wonder that many social changes are often met with resistance. Understanding that people may be resisting the potentially painful process of self-transformation – rather than opposing the social change – can allow facilitators to devise more effective strategies for holding dialogues.

4 The Bridges Transition Framework, developed by William Bridges, can be useful to facilitators as a way to understand the emotional process individuals may undergo as they experience profound changes in their lives (see graphic). Given that some dialogues cover difficult and emotional subject matter, this framework can help the facilitator establish a safer space for productive dialogue. The Framework is used extensively by the Andrus Family Fund, who provided support for the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the *Closer to the Truth* Project. For more resources available on the **Bridges Transition Framework** or to find a Transitions Coach to present at your dialogue process, visit **www.transitionandsocialchange.org**. For more information on the Andrus Family Fund, visit **www.affund.org**.

Transition Framework graphic developed by Andrus Family Fund



Change management consultant William Bridges developed the three-point Transition Framework to explain the different phases a person experiences in transition:

Endings: The first step in any transition is letting go. People begin to acknowledge and give up their old behaviors, attitudes and beliefs.

Neutral Zone: The awkward in-between time, when old understandings have been challenged to a point of uncertainty and confusion, is called the Neutral Zone. It is usually a chaotic time and there is often a desire to return to what is old and familiar. If harnessed properly, this can also be a very creative time.

New Beginnings: Individuals have reached this final phase when, for the most part, they feel comfortable with new behaviors, attitudes and beliefs.

Given that change is a natural part of our human experience, it is useful for facilitators to stay attuned to the emotional reorientation participants may experience while viewing *Greensboro: Closer to the Truth*. The film may challenge individuals' worldviews, especially regarding issues such as racism, economic injustice, communism, the KKK and community violence. As a facilitator, being prepared for emotional responses will be important. Please visit www.greensborothemovie.com for a series of worksheets and activities you may consider using as a component of your post-screening activities. You may also consider inviting the participation of a Transitions Coach to help with your film events; visit the film's website for more information.

Discussion Questions

GETTING THE CONVERSATION STARTED

- What are your initial reactions to the film? What scenes moved you?
- Which of the characters in the film did you relate to the most? Why?
- What was the most memorable moment in the film? Why?
- What did you learn from this story? What messages or lessons do you hope others will take away?
- Did this community get "closer to the truth"?
- Does this story have a happy ending? Why or why not?

MAKING CONNECTIONS TO YOUR OWN COMMUNITY

- Do you see any connections between Greensboro's community and history and your own? What are they?
- In your opinion, are there unresolved histories or stories in your community that would be ripe for reconciliation? How are they connected to challenges you face today?
- What changes would you like to see in your community related to this unresolved history?
- What are the obstacles to change? How do you think changes can happen?
- What are the assets that you have in your community, institutions and/or leaders that could help move towards resolving history?
- In considering your community's unresolved issues or history, who are the various people in your community that are affected by them and/or have a role in addressing them? What does each have to gain or lose in the changes you would like to see? *Consider using the Transition Model worksheets available at www.greensborothemovie.com to sketch these out if useful.*
- How do the interests of these individuals conflict or align with one another? Do they have any shared objectives? What are they?
- What are the risks in opening up old wounds? What are the risks of not opening up old wounds?
- What is currently being done in your community to address your concerns? How are these efforts useful? What are the limitations?
- Do you think there is value in "seeking truth" in your community? How would you feel and what would you do if your efforts were faced with opposition, like the TRC in Greensboro was?
- Who are the leaders in your community that inspire you?

Individual Exercise: Considering Power

This is a reflective exercise for participants to consider their roles in society and the privileges and disadvantages that come with those roles. (This works best for small groups but can be adapted for larger groups as well.) The exercise is intended to allow participants to consider how various social constructions define who we are and how we function in society.

Begin by having all participants write down their race, class, religion, sexual identity, gender, nationality, and age (for their eyes only). Next to each category, participants should consider the opportunities and challenges presented by each social construction. Afterward, invite participants to share their reflections with the group.

Example 1: Being female
- Opportunity: *getting the chance to be a mother*
- Challenge: *juggling motherhood and a career*

Example 2: Being a U.S. citizen
- Opportunity: *ability to cross international borders with relative ease; guaranteed constitutional rights*
- Challenge: *none that I can think of*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS BY CHAPTER

You may find it useful to show *Greensboro: Closer to the Truth* in small segments, for example in classroom or workshop settings, when working with time constraints or when hoping to prompt reflection. The section below breaks down questions by chapter for easy reference.

Chapter 1: Conflict Brewing

In this chapter we see the raw footage of the shootings in 1979. Nelson Johnson explains that the rally organizers were "about 50/50" black and white; this, combined with comments by KKK Imperial Wizard Virgil Griffin that he does not believe in the integration of races, makes evident the fact that the Greensboro Massacre was an episode of violence intimately connected to issues of race.

Questions:

1. Gorrell Pierce, the Grand Dragon of the KKK, reflects that if he had been born in New York City, he may have been a communist or "raised with a different influence." How are individuals' worldviews shaped by their environments? How has your upbringing influenced your views? What factors have had the biggest impact on you?
2. Why do you think labor organizers in Greensboro were advocating against racist policies? What are some of the common ties that might exist between the two causes?
3. Marty Nathan explains that one of the things that makes the KKK the angriest is the mixing of black people and white people; Virgil Griffin's comments seem to corroborate this. Why do you think the mixing of races might provoke anger for some?

For reflection:

Racism is prejudice or discrimination that is based on a perception of the inferiority or superiority of different groups of people.[5] While in the United States racial bias has been technically eliminated from federal, state, and local laws, social patterns resulting from a history of segregation and racial prejudice persist, creating major limitations and divisions in our political, economic and social systems and structures. Some argue that this more covert form of prejudice, often termed institutional racism, enables the maintenance of race-based marginalization, even in the absence of more overt forms of racism.

5 The definition of racism provided here draws from Facing History and Ourselves resources. Please consult their website for a more detailed understanding: www.facinghistory.org/resources.

Chapter 2: Fighting for Change

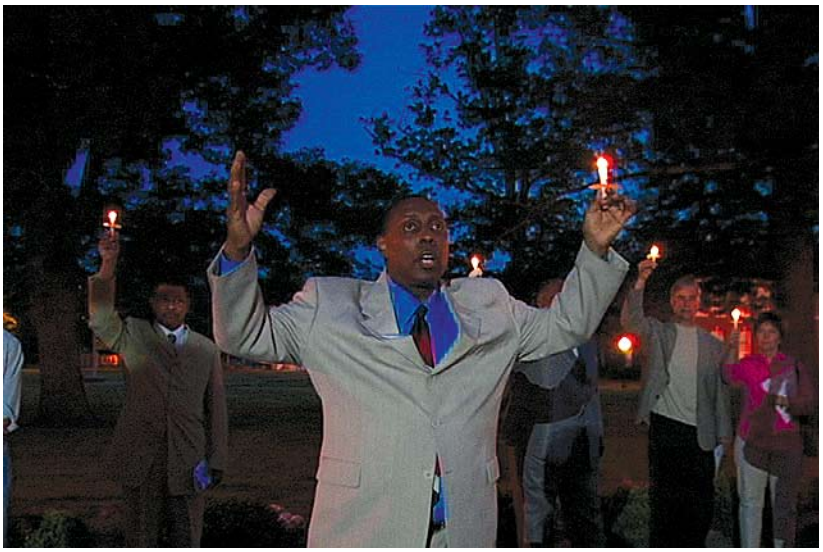
In this chapter we hear from a variety of individuals discussing their experiences of race relations in Greensboro, both past and present, and the challenges they face in dealing with them.

Questions:

1. Mayor Melvin expresses pride in the success of the local struggle for civil rights. In contrast, Willena Cannon, referring to those who did not fight alongside them, says that "they fought the sit-in," and the only reason they can claim it now is that it has become "a historical situation." She also explains that racial equality in Greensboro is an ideal for which African-Americans have always had to fight "tooth and nail." Based on what you saw in the film, how do these assessments differ? What factors do you think influence each person's perceptions?
2. Referring to the truth and reconciliation plans, Florence Gatten states: "It is a cheap shot to focus on something that went wrong on a Saturday morning and use that to universalize how life is in Greensboro. It reinforces everyone's worst stereotypes about a small, provincial, Southern city." In your opinion, what was the basis of Gatten's fears? Why might she feel this way? Is it important to maintain an image of harmony to prevent the proliferation of stereotypes? Does a detailed account of a conflict provide new or different opportunities for resolution?
3. Gorrell Pierce disagrees with Florence Gatten. He claims that, given the history of the two groups, a violent uprising was inevitable. What do you think informs the differences in his perception of the situation? What deep fissures in your community are you aware of? How have you tried to address them? If you chose not to address them, what led to that choice? If these issues remain unaddressed, what might happen?

For reflection:

Several comments in the film reflect pride about the outcomes of struggles for civil rights in Greensboro. The Civil Rights Movement in the U.S. was aimed at abolishing public and private acts of racial discrimination against African-Americans; it was particularly active between 1954 and 1968. This era is known for violent uprisings and civil unrest as well as nonviolent activism. Many southern states, including the city of Greensboro, played a central role in these efforts. For example, on February 1, 1960, four African-American students protested segregation at the local Woolworth store in Greensboro by demanding service at a lunch counter reserved exclusively for white patrons. After being refused, the students remained in their seats. They returned each day for five months until in July of 1960 Woolworth agreed to integrate its lunch counter. The actions of the "A&T Four" are often credited as the inspiration for the sit-in movement that subsequently spread throughout the United States. Many other movements for justice employed mass civil disobedience and/or peaceful protest, including the women's liberation movement, resistance to the Vietnam War, and the American Indian Movement.



Chapter 3: Law Enforcement

There is debate in the film over the role of police. In this chapter we hear demonstrators say that they did not want to be harassed by police, as they had been on numerous occasions before. Ultimately, the police never showed up.

Questions:

1. Later in the film, GTRC commissioners deliberated on the police's statement that they did not feel they had a right to stop the caravan. In your opinion, in what types of situations is it appropriate for the police to intervene? In what types of situations is it inappropriate?
2. Ed Boyd, a local journalist, explains that any time you announce "'death to the Klan' *and* you're a communist, there is potential for something bad to happen." However, the police officers interviewed in this chapter say they had no idea what was going to happen that day. Nelson Johnson says that it became very clear to him that there is no way the massacre could have happened without the active involvement and complicity of the Greensboro Police Department. This chapter clearly offers two different narratives about the police involvement. What are your thoughts based on what you saw in the film? In your opinion, what role should the police play to mediate conflicts between opposing groups?
3. Consider the perspectives of the two police officers interviewed in the film. What would you have done if you were in their shoes?

For reflection:

Police officers are public agents empowered to enforce the law. Their job is to ensure public and social order through a legitimized use of force within a specific territorial area. As the U.S. Supreme Court has consistently ruled, their responsibility is to protect the *integrity of the law* – which may not always coincide with protecting the safety of individual citizens.

Chapter 4: Beyond Stereotypes

In this chapter we see various individuals reflecting on media representation and the impact of stereotypes. It's easy to understand why the Greensboro Massacre is reduced to a conflict between extremists: "Communists" and "Ku Klux Klan" members. In doing so, conversations shift from the rule of law and justice to what these groups may or may not have deserved, despite the law.

Questions:

1. CWP member Marty Nathan said, "We were made the enemies. … We were *the communists,* and for young people who don't know what that means, it's like being called a 'terrorist' today. All objectivity towards the humanity of the person you are labeling is lost." What do you think she means by this? What does it mean to strip a person of his or her humanity? What factors enable this to occur?
2. What or who surprised you and/or challenged your assumptions about the people or groups in the film? How did you expect them to be? How did they differ from your expectations?
3. In explaining why the shootings did not receive more attention at the time they took place, Ed Cone, a local journalist, states, "The next day the American embassy in Tehran was seized. … Greensboro was forgotten very quickly by the national media." By design, the media is required to be selective in its reporting of events. What factors should the media consider when prioritizing coverage? What impact do you think this selectivity may have on local and national communities?
4. Referring to Nelson Johnson, Florence Gatten says, "I always hope people will reform. … I haven't seen it." Why do you think she feels he needs to "reform"? What do you think "reform" means to her? Consider how she may have developed her opinions of Nelson given that they have rarely had person-to-person contact. What factors influence our perceptions and opinions of people we don't know personally?

For reflection:

From the perspective of members of the Communist Workers' Party, the consequences of the Greensboro Massacre extended beyond the deaths of their fellow protesters. After the shootings, tensions escalated to such a degree that many individuals felt compelled to move elsewhere.

Chapter 5: Erasing the Past

In this chapter we hear about how much resistance there is in the city to the TRC process. While the survivors want an apology, many in the city, like Mayor Melvin, think the process is irrelevant and a waste of time. Florence Gatten says: "Greensboro is like a 1950s town; it's in a Ziploc bag with the zip lock closed." Power plays a part in how history is commonly understood and recounted – what one person remembers, another might easily forget.

Questions:

1. Consider Florence Gatten's "Ziploc" quote. Why do you think she said that? What does she mean?
2. In this chapter we hear Gorrell Pierce discussing how much has changed over time. In your opinion, what about these changes is significant to him?
3. Was Greensboro a special case, or do you think the events in 1979 could have occurred anywhere? How has your own town changed, and in what ways has it stayed the same?
4. Chuck Cotton, owner of Bob's Hat Shop, tells a story about a Klan march that passed by the shop one day. Why do you think he tells this story?
5. Reflecting on her childhood, Willena Cannon explains that back then, you knew who the Klan was and where they lived. What does she imply about the Klan and/or race relations today?

Chapter 6: Public Hearings

In this chapter we witness the development of the GTRC process and see individuals testifying at the public hearings. These testimonies represent a variety of viewpoints on the events that took place on November 3, 1979.

Questions:

1. At the hearing, Signe Waller quotes a respected Rabbi and says: "One is guilty but many are responsible." What do you think she means by this?
2. Paul Bermanzohn explains that the protesters expected the police to attack them before the Klan would. What do you think may have prompted this concern?
3. The process of forming the rules and standards for the GTRC involved rigorous community deliberation; the resulting process was thus the community's own. If you were designing the process, what would you have done? How would your community's TRC be different and how would it be the same?
4. Earlier in the film, Nelson Johnson states: "The challenge in designing a TRC is to design something that fits the contours of this city." The GTRC mandate ultimately provided that at least two of the seven commissioners should be from outside Greensboro. In confronting conflict, what is the importance of local knowledge? In what ways might the inclusion of external perspectives help or harm reconciliation?

Chapter 7: Reconciliation

In this chapter we see different key players reflecting on the changes they have gone through. We see them apologize and we see them forgive. Reconciliation refers to a process of restoring harmony and just relations. It is sometimes criticized for prioritizing harmony over justice.

Questions:

1. In your opinion, how are harmony and justice similar and how are they different?
2. Commissioner Pat Clark explains that reconciliation "is a process." What does she mean? Do you agree?
3. Was reconciliation achieved in Greensboro? Why or why not?
4. Nelson Johnson admits that "Death to the Klan" was a bad slogan because it could be interpreted as "death to Klan members," which he claims was not his intent. How did Nelson Johnson's apology make you feel? In your opinion, how does his apology support or hinder the reconciliation process?
5. Signe Waller says she forgives the man who likely murdered her husband – Roland Wayne Wood. What do you think your own reaction may have been in the same situation? Is there something to be gained by a person when they forgive?
6. What role did religion play in these efforts toward reconciliation and healing? Was religion an obstacle or did it serve to facilitate the healing process?

For reflection:

Signe Waller says she forgives the man who likely murdered her husband – Roland Wayne Wood. Marty Nathan's husband was also murdered, and she has said (*not seen in the film)* that while people can and do change, she didn't believe Wood had changed and thought his testimony and apology were self-serving. Why do you think two good friends in the same situation have a different read on Wood's apology?

Chapter 8: Healing

This chapter marks the culmination of the truth and reconciliation process when the commissioners present their final report to the public. (See p. 21 for a summary of the findings.)

Questions:

1. What did you think of the GTRC's findings? Based on what you know about the incident and what you've seen in the film, would you add or remove anything from the list of findings?
2. Survivors have been meeting at the grave site and beach every year since 1981. Why do you think the survivors hold these yearly rituals? How do these actions play into the healing and reconciliation processes?
3. Do you think the TRC process in Greensboro facilitated healing in the community? For whom?

For reflection:

TRCs are based on the philosophy that greater understanding of human rights abuses and their impacts is necessary to achieve sustainable resolution. The process is designed to provide a platform for the full disclosure of events that transpired so that public acknowledgement, forgiveness, and healing can begin. Evidence suggests that involving civil society in peace negotiations makes agreements more sustainable.[6]

6 See the International Center for Transitional Justice report, *Negotiating Justice: Guidance for Mediators*, by Priscilla Hayner (February 2009).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS BY THEME

Transitional Justice

"Transitional justice seeks recognition for victims and to promote possibilities for peace, reconciliation and democracy"; [7] a truth and reconciliation commission is one method for achieving this. Reconciliation, however, is a challenge to define; while it clearly refers to a process of restoring harmony and just relations, it has also been explained as a "condition under which citizens can once again trust one another as citizens. That means that they are sufficiently committed to the norms and values that motivate their ruling institutions; sufficiently confident that those who operate those institutions do so also on this basis; and sufficiently secure about their fellow citizens' commitment to abide by these basic norms and values."[7] Although in most cases TRCs are sponsored by governments, sometimes they are not, as in the case of the Greensboro TRC (GTRC). The focus is usually to give victims, witnesses, and perpetrators a chance to publicly share their stories.

Questions:

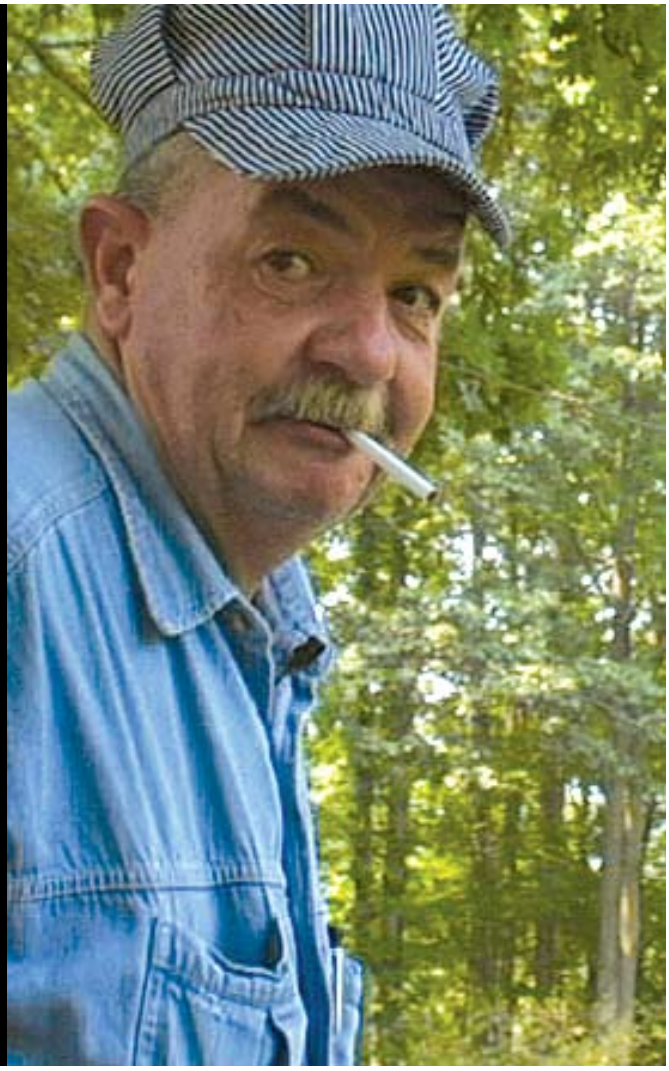
1. In your opinion, what is the value of transitional justice? Are there circumstances you can think of where it may not be useful?
2. Many associated with reparations movements across the United States are not seeking financial remuneration; instead they are actively seeking an acknowledgement of the pain and suffering their ancestors experienced. They understand official apologies as a first step towards justice. How does apology and forgiveness play a role in the reconciliation process?
3. Based on what you know about the purpose of a truth and reconciliation commission, how should local government be involved in the process?
4. In Greensboro, the city council voted to oppose the TRC process that was already underway. While some members of the GTRC saw this as an endorsement of its independence and objectivity, others were disappointed, and felt it could undermine its effectiveness. In your opinion, in what ways would working outside of official government be helpful to a commission, and in what ways could it be a hindrance?
5. The GTRC found there was some intentionality on the part of commanding officers to prevent police presence at the rally on the day of the Greensboro Massacre. Do you think this finding would have been different had local officials been more involved in the commission? Why or why not?

7 This explanation draws from ICTJ resources. For a more nuanced understanding of transitional justice, please refer to: www.ictj.org/en/tj/780.html.

EXERCISE

Find any picture from a magazine or elsewhere. What story does it tell? Consider the following questions to try to "unpack" the story:

- Every picture tells a story. What story does the picture tell?
- What is the *subject*? How is the subject captured? Could there have been other subjects or other ways to capture the subject?
- What choices and considerations went into the *framing* of the picture?
- Was there choice in *when* the picture was taken? Why do you think that choice was made? How does it contribute to the story the picture tells?
- Could certain elements have been *left out* of the picture that would change its story?
- *Where* and how is the picture presented? Does this change how you *read* it?
- What do all of these choices say about the *feeling* the image is meant to evoke?
- What can you gather about the photographer's *perspective*? Can you guess at his or her identity?
- Who might *benefit* from and who might be *disadvantaged* by the message(s) conveyed in the picture?
- Does the picture communicate *truth without bias*?



Truth

The GTRC grouped their findings into two categories: (1) Findings of Fact – what can be determined beyond a reasonable doubt (who had what information when, who signed off on what decisions, who fired weapons and when, etc.); and (2) Findings of Interpretation – what meaning various key players drew from the findings of fact. While bias is inevitable in both types of findings, this was an important distinction and a useful way for the GTRC to approach the investigation.

Questions:

1. A theme that emerges in the film is how important it was for the survivors to tell *their* stories and have their voices heard. Why do you think this is? How might their "truth" be different from that of the others in the film? Do the survivors share a common truth?
2. How might factors such as ethnicity, race, gender, nationality, religion and sexual orientation influence our perception of truth?
3. When addressing community conflicts such as the one in Greensboro, how important is it to acknowledge the substance, source, and significance of the biases that everyone holds? Do you see this kind of an examination as important or counterproductive to the reconciliation process?

Perceptions of 20th-Century Communism in the U.S.

In the early part of the 20th century, the Communist Party U.S.A. (CPUSA) was the largest political party in the U.S. drawing on Marxist-Leninist ideologies, and it played an influential role in the labor movement during this time. By the 1950s, following a government crackdown on communism and particularly on groups that were employing violent tactics to meet their goals and/or aligning themselves with communist nations, the CPUSA was split up into various groups with differing perspectives on how to obtain economic and social justice. While communism generally advocated for revolutionary struggle against the exploitative nature of capitalism, groups across the U.S. had varying perspectives on what this meant and how one should go about working for it; some advocated a militant approach and others argued for aggressive engagement within the existing political structure of the country.

In 1979, the Communist Workers' Party (CWP) branch in Greensboro, NC was focusing specifically on unionization and African-American self-determination. While CWP members in the film admit they supported violent means to transition to a more just society, it seems they were organizing within the bounds of the law. As noted earlier, the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Executive Summary found that the CWP's "most violent documented acts…were to engage in target shooting and karate training."[8]

The November 3rd rally organizers had become state leaders of the national Workers Viewpoint Organization (in October of 1979 the organizers changed the group's name to the Communist Workers' Party), reflecting their shared belief in the equality of races and the need for black and white workers to unite. Students at the historically black North Carolina A&T State University and Bennett College for Women were at the center of this movement. Many like Nelson Johnson, Willena Cannon and Sandi Smith focused their efforts on the growing textile manufacturing industry in Greensboro and were organizing on behalf of black workers and others who were not sharing equally in the city's growing prosperity. These Greensboro leaders were expanding their work by crossing the color line to unite with activists working toward similar goals for poor workers in Durham, as well as to support concerns of textile workers across the state and liberation movements in Africa. As these movements grew, the Ku Klux Klan, originally formed to thwart a budding movement toward cross-racial unity among the poor after the Civil War, began a resurgence.[9]

Questions:

1. What do you think the word "communist" means and what did you think about people associated with that name before you viewed the film?
2. Did your opinions about the CWP or members of it change over the course of the film? Why or why not?
3. What did you think about people associated with the name Ku Klux Klan before you viewed the film? Have your opinions changed? Why or why not?
4. If the protestors did not call themselves the "Communist Workers' Party" and instead stated their objectives were for economic and racial justice, do you think your opinions would have been the same?
5. In what ways do you think attitudes toward race, interracial relations, and communism may have influenced the judgments of the federal civil trials?

8 See GTRC Executive Summary or p. 11 of *Learning From Greensboro: Truth and Reconciliation in the United States* (2008) by Lisa Magarrell and Joya Wesley.

9 See Greensboro Truth and Community Reconciliation Project for further details. Also see the GTRC's final report about this: www.greensborotrc.org.

WALK IN THEIR SHOES

For each character below, consider the following questions:

1. Can you relate to this person? Why or why not?
2. What does this person care about? What are his or her priorities?
3. Is this person resistant to change? Why or why not?
4. What, if any, transformations does this person go through in the course of the film? What does he or she struggle with?
5. Can you tell what he or she stands to lose or gain from a process of transformation?
6. What did you learn from this person's struggle and/or transformation?
7. Did this person contribute to reconciliation and/or justice in Greensboro? If so, how?

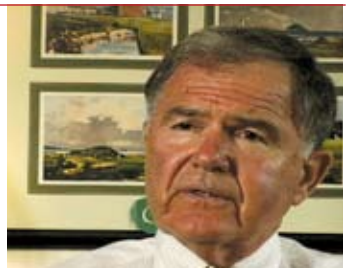
Paul Bermanzohn, Survivor
Reflecting on his family's roots in the Holocaust, he explains that "by age three I was a certified anti-Nazi."

Willena Cannon, Survivor
Visiting the town where she grew up, she explains: "You knew who the Klan was, where they lived."

Florence Gatten, City Council
"I'm sorry; I don't think leopards change their spots."

Virgil Griffin, Imperial Wizard of the KKK
Reflecting on the days of racial segregation, he muses: "Some day, it might be like it was."

Nelson Johnson, Survivor
"The weight of [the Greensboro Massacre] helped to reconnect me to my roots and faith."



Jim Melvin, Mayor
"People in our town, we just don't like those radical kinds of groups. And Greensboro's just not a hotbed of the kind of unrest that a Klan or a Communist Workers' Party would fester in."

Marty Nathan, Survivor
"We were made the enemies."

Gorrell Pierce, Grand Dragon of the KKK
"The character of the South is changing."

Signe Waller, Survivor
"I'm not beyond it – I'll never be beyond it; this is part of my history. But I'll be able to walk proudly alongside it."

Roland Wayne Wood, repentant former Nazi Party member
"Yes, I was a very stupid man. Yes, I was full of hatred and bigotry. But most of all I want to ask, please understand: I did not know that anyone was going to get hurt and I'm sorry with all my heart."

Further Details About the GTRC Process

HOW WERE THE GTRC COMMISSIONERS SELECTED?

There was a multi-tiered, democratic, and community-driven process for nominating the individuals who would sit on the GTRC panel and be given the task of examining and analyzing the events of November 3, 1979. The process for selection was written and approved by the Local Task Force[10] and the National Advisory Committee,[11] and was publicized in the *Greensboro News & Record* on May 6, 2003. The Task Force then invited seventeen groups that reflected a broad range of interests in the community to appoint one person each to the Selection Panel, which would select commissioners (see p. 7 for details). Fourteen of these groups chose to participate, and the panel began its work in early 2004 and made its final selections for commissioners in May 2004. The GTRC was sworn in on June 12, 2004, with over 500 supporters in attendance.

WHAT DID THE GTRC DO?

- The commission spent two years conducting research on the context, causes, sequence and consequences of the events in 1979, including taking statements from more than 150 people and reviewing police records, newspaper accounts, and court transcripts.
- The commission engaged the Greensboro community through three two-day public hearings, television shows, a blog, community dialogues, and other events throughout the course of its work.
- The work of the commission culminated in the release of its more than 500-page report on May 25, 2006.
- The public hearings included 54 speakers representing survivors, Morningside Homes' residents, white supremacist counter-demonstrators, police officers, a judge, attorneys, and current city officials.

WHAT WERE THE KEY FINDINGS OF THE GTRC?

- The heaviest responsibility was on Ku Klux Klan and Nazi Party members, who planned to provoke violence.
- The majority of commissioners found that law enforcement officials had knowledge that violence was likely and intentionally failed to prevent it by not showing up at the rally.
- The report criticized the city's response to the event, which included heavy-handed security tactics and "clamping down on citizen protest."
- The selection of all-white juries unrepresentative of the community contributed to acquittals in federal and state trials.
- The events of November 3, 1979 were the result of underlying issues including racial and economic injustice, white supremacy, and the failure of the police and justice system to provide equal protection to all residents.

10 A group charged with garnering and broadening citizen, organizational and institutional support of the project, establishing the process for selecting the Truth and Justice Commission, and providing leadership for implementation of the recommendations agreed to by the GTRC.

11 Composed of persons from both Greensboro and other parts of the country charged with developing the mandate of and the process for selecting and establishing the TRC, bringing knowledge and experience to the project, and helping to provide standing and legitimacy for the entire process.

WHAT WERE THE KEY RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE GTRC?

The GTRC recommended:

- That the city of Greensboro, the police department, and responsible individuals acknowledge their roles, apologize, and take steps toward reconciliation.
- The implementation of a living wage for all city and county workers, the establishment of citizen review committees on police accountability, and the creation of a community justice center.
- Public release of investigative reports and appropriate legal action as related to contemporary inquiries about police corruption.
- That all citizens take an active role in understanding racism, poverty, oppression, and privilege around them, and the ways in which their own actions play a role in perpetuating disparities.

Log on to www.greensborothemovie.com for additional resources.

Additional Resources

Information in this guide was compiled from multiple resources. We suggest you consult the sources below for a fuller and more contextualized understanding of the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation process and matters connected to it.

MORE BACKGROUND ON THE GTRC

Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Executive Summary
www.greensborotrc.org

Mandate for the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission
www.gtcrp.org/mandate.php

SUGGESTED READING

Bermanzohn, Sally Avery. *Through Survivors' Eyes: From the Sixties to the Greensboro Massacre.* Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 2003.

Bickford, Louis and Patricia Karam, Hassan Mneimneh and Patrick Pierce. *Documenting Truth.* International Center for Transitional Justice, 2009.

Hayner, Priscilla. *Negotiating Justice: Guidance for Mediators.* International Center for Transitional Justice, 2009.

Jovanovic, Spoma, Carol Steger, Sarah Symonds and Donata Nelson. "Promoting Deliberative Democracy through Dialogue: Communication Contributions to a Grassroots Movement for Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation." *Communication Activism: Communication for Social Change.* Eds. Lawrence R. Frey and Keith M. Carragee. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, 2007. 53-94.

Magarrell, Lisa and Blaz Gutierrez. *Lessons in Truth-seeking: International Experiences Informing United States Initiatives.* International Center for Transitional Justice, 2006.

Magarrell, Lisa and Joya Wesley. *Learning from Greensboro: Truth and Reconciliation in the United States.* Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008.

ORGANIZATIONS WORKING ON SOCIAL JUSTICE & RECONCILIATION

The Beloved Community Center, a grassroots, community organizing, community empowerment organization, which houses the Greensboro Truth and Community Reconciliation Project (GTCRP). For more information on ongoing justice activities in Greensboro, please visit: www.belovedcommunitycenter.org.

The Greensboro Truth and Community Reconciliation Project. For a list of possible speakers, please visit: www.gtcrp.org/speakers.php, or contact Jill Williams (704.995.4547; jill.e.williams@gmail.com). For more background and information on the GTRC, please visit: www.gtcrp.org.

Facing History and Ourselves. For educational resources and information about high school trainings about civic responsibility, tolerance, and social action, please visit: www.facinghistory.org.

The Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR) works to identify reconciliation opportunities at regional, national, and international levels. For more information on nonviolent resolution of conflict and interfaith mobilization around human and civil rights concerns, please visit: www.forusa.org.

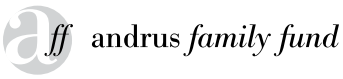
The International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ) assists countries pursuing accountability for past mass atrocity or human rights abuse. ICTJ works in societies emerging from repressive rule or armed conflict, as well as in established democracies where historical injustices or systemic abuse remain unresolved. To learn more about ICTJ, please visit: www.ictj.org.

Not In Our Town, a project of The Working Group, has stories and resources for community and school-based action and response to intolerance. For more information, please visit: www.niot.org.

The Pluralism Project is a research organization at Harvard University dedicated to helping Americans engage with the realities of religious diversity through research, outreach, and the active dissemination of resources. Please visit: www.pluralism.org.

The William Winter Institute for Racial Reconciliation at the University of Mississippi equips citizens to heal their own communities. Please visit: www.winterinstitute.org.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



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Active Voice Staff

Ellen Schneider
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Shaady Salehi
PROGRAM DIRECTOR

Sahar Driver
CLOSER TO THE TRUTH
PROJECT COORDINATOR

Daniel Moretti
OPERATIONS MANAGER

Guide Contributors

Bruni Burres
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER,
ICTJ PRODUCTIONS

Meghan Clarke
CERTIFIED TRANSITIONS COACH,
ANDRUS FAMILY FUND

Megan Downey
CONSULTANT, ACTIVE VOICE

Lisa Magarrell
DIRECTOR OF U.S. PROGRAMS,
ICTJ

Faith Rogow
INSIGHTERS EDUCATIONAL
CONSULTING

Zaldy Serrano
GUIDE DESIGN

Najeeba Syeed, J.D.
CEO, CENTER FOR
INTERETHNIC/INTERRELIGIOUS
CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Lizzy Tomei
COPY EDITOR

Miao Wang
LOGO DESIGN

Jill Williams
PROGRAM OFFICER,
ANDRUS FAMILY FUND

The Film

Adam Zucker
PRODUCER/DIRECTOR/EDITOR

Scott Anger
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Richard Hankin
STORY EDITOR

Sheldon Mirowitz
COMPOSER

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About Active Voice

Active Voice uses film, television and digital media to spark social change. Our team of strategic communications specialists works with filmmakers, funders, advocates and thought leaders to put a human face on the issues of our times. We frame and beta-test key messages, develop national and local partnerships, plan and execute outcome-oriented screenings and high profile events, repurpose digital content for web and viral distribution, produce ancillary and educational resources, and consult with industry and sector leaders. Since our inception in 2001, Active Voice has built a diverse portfolio of film-based campaigns focusing on issues including immigration, criminal justice, healthcare and sustainability. www.activevoice.net

LONGNOOK pictures

About Longnook Pictures

Adam Zucker is the director/producer of *Greensboro: Closer to the Truth*, through his company Longnook Pictures. Adam is an award-winning editor and has cut over 20 feature length documentaries. He has worked with numerous acclaimed directors, including Rory Kennedy, Ken Burns, Steve Ives, Barbara Kopple, Sydney Pollack, Michael Kantor and many others. His edited films include *American Hollow* (HBO, Sundance Film Festival), *Show Business* (Tribeca Film Festival and Showtime), *The West* (PBS), *Broadway: The American Musical* (PBS), *Gotta Dance* (Tribeca Film Festival), *Richard Wright: Black Boy* (PBS) and the soon to be released *Last Days of Carnegie Studios*. Adam also produced and directed the concluding episode of *Free to Dance*, an Emmy-winning series about African-American modern dance for PBS. He also co-wrote the series.