The Impact of Anti-Racism Efforts in Organizations and Communities

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Introduction

In the wake of George Floyd's murder, the summer of 2020 became a seminal moment of reckoning for many social justice and anti-racism community-based groups. When several subsequent videos of the harassment and murders of Black individuals in the United States went viral and ignited global protests decrying racism, several local groups began to ask what was required in addition to the protests to sustain and create capacity for the next imminent attack on local citizens. Not all citizens: Black and Brown citizens seemed to account for the majority of deaths. And Black/African American bodies were overwhelmingly the victims of police enforcement interactions.

The work of the three groups, both separately and jointly, by design are grounded in the intersections of anti-racism (e.g., efforts toward addressing sexism, classism, misogyny, misogynoir), social justice work, and their impact on other groups. Each group was founded separately, under the leadership of the article's three authors. The scholarly team of Dr. Patricia Coleman-Burns of First African Methodist Episcopal Church of Farmington Hills (FAME-FH) and the Beloved Community Initiative (BCI) and its Truth and Reconciliations Policing Project; Dr. Irene Lietz

from Conversations on Race (ConR); and Lynne Muth from the Anti-Racist Collaborators (ARC) describe how their coalescing personally impacted the activism of members. Dr. Coleman-Burns is a Black woman descendent of American enslaved Africans. Ms. Muth and Dr. Lietz are white-identified women. This article focuses solely on anti-racism work, the centering of Black voices and leadership, the transformation of members, and the impact on activism in the communities. It addresses the damaging effect of racism—not only on Black bodies but on the souls of whites as well.

On June 23, 1963, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. spoke about the souls of the "segregated" and "segregator" in his Detroit March to Freedom version of his "I Have a Dream" speech: "Probably the most damaging effect of segregation has been what it has done to the soul of the segregated as well as the segregator. It has given the segregator a false sense of superiority and it has left the segregated with a false sense of inferiority" (King, 2005). Sixty years later, activists are still dealing with the "damaging effect" of racism on the marginalized and "othered" communities and the segregated communities that emerged. What had we learned in the period between the social movements for civil rights and Black Power of the 1960s to the struggles for social justice and anti-racism in the post–George Floyd era?

There were unique challenges the three organizations found in engaging in an agenda that centers listening to Black voices and prioritizes building a "beloved community" that is interracial and mutually beneficial while healing the "souls" of whites. The "Beloved Community" is most often associated with Dr. King and philosopher Josiah Royce. The diversity in the cultural, religious, and racial identities of the members of the three organizations and the predominance of FAME-FH, whose mission and legacy are grounded in the fact that the denomination was formed because of racism and not theological beliefs, facilitated this leap. The article moves beyond religious and theological imperatives to examine the transformation of anti-racism in grassroots community organizations while centering Blackness and Black voices in the praxis of building a beloved community in suburban communities experiencing the impact of historically unprecedented

demographic changes. We came together asking: Who be "We" in "We the People"? How do we redefine "we" to be in the tradition and theory of Ubuntu rather than a Cartesian idea of community and human existence based on Rene Descartes's concept of "I think, therefore I am"? (Bhaskart, 2020). FAME's "Beloved Community" was based on the principles of the inclusivity and diversity of "we" and a vision of the role of those who see themselves existing as a member of the community versus the community existing for the individual's benefit. The African philosophy of Ubuntu—"I am because we are"—is a concept in which a person's sense of self is shaped by relationships with other people. Fundamental to the three organizations' impact (hereafter referred to as "the Agenda") in advancing anti-racism, combating anti-Blackness agendas, and embracing and centering Black identities and leadership are these Ubuntu relationships in establishing activism in our communities. The article shares the impact of the Agenda.

Theoretical and Methodological Frameworks

We examine the impact of anti-racism work in the community from three perspectives: the personal transformations of the group members' beliefs, the organizational changes in structure and capacity, and the community actions that indicate growth in embracing an anti-racist perspective. A centering framework asks: "How do we bring Black voices to groups primarily under the leadership of persons who identify as 'white'?," "How do we center Black leadership and Black voices?" (Wooten, forthcoming), and, finally, "How in the midst of intersecting bodies does anti-racism/racist work evolve and blossom?"

   Each time "we" is used in this article, it represents a departure from a binary concept of "us and them." For example, "we" often by default means the majority population and therefore "white people." "We" herein intentionally center Black voices and Black leadership in assessing the impact of anti-racism efforts in our organizations and communities. "We" therefore represents a single, nonbinary inclusive voice. We engaged in several successful campaigns and projects

countering attacks against the school board and "CRT," DEI-diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives and school leadership. We brought our collective Agenda around topics of voter suppression and policing; and educating the community in interracial communications and activist collaboration. Most notable are three events on which we found common ground:

Description of Events:

- January 11, 2022, Farmington School Board Meeting defending posting of a 21 Day DEI Equity Challenge.
- FAME & The Beloved Community Initiative's (BCI) Truth and Reconciliation community policing project, funded by the Hudson-Webber Foundation and the Community Foundation of Southeast Michigan, hosted The John H. Burns Beloved Community Conference (2022, November 12): *Is community policing just a buzz word?* The Hawk Center, Farmington Hills, MI.
- Farmington Area Annual Juneteenth Celebrations (2019–2023). In person events on June 29, 2019; June 17–19, 2022 and June 15–19, 2023. Virtual events on June 19–21, 2020 and June 18–20, 2021. (See Figure 1.)
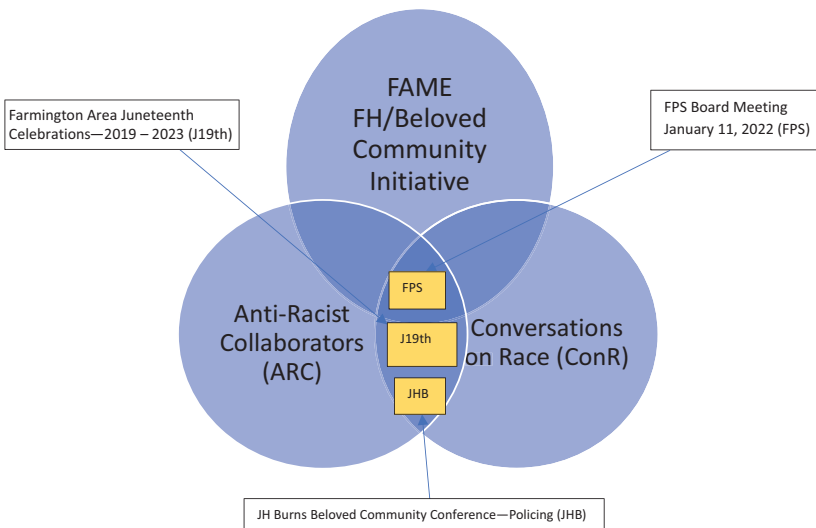
Review of the Literature[1]

After George Floyd's murder on May 25, 2020, the number of sources across all media types addressing topics of racism and anti-racism and organizations increased by 50%. The Justice Department Investigation of the City of Minneapolis and the Minneapolis Police June 16, 2023, report offers an explanation for the explosion of work on anti-racism. The "patterns and practices of conduct . . . erode the community's trust in law enforcement . . . (were) deeply disturbing . . . (and) made what happened to George Floyd possible (Garland, 2023). In a review of the literature compiled by the authors in 2019, there were 84 citations, of which 20 were scholarly articles. These were primarily topics describing, defining, measuring, and developing methodologies addressing racism and anti-racism. (e.g., Thomas, 2007). These citations increased to 121 by 2020, of which 26 were scholarly articles primarily focused on institutional leadership transformation and grassroots activist organizations. (e.g., Van es & van den Brandt, 2020). From 2020 through June 2023, publications focused on patterns and practices of anti-racist behaviors of people in workplace cultures within existing businesses and educational institutions, and grassroots protest activism has increased. (e.g., Prengler et. al., 2023; Srivasata, 2006; Perolini, 2022; Elias & Hiruy, 2023).

Two scholarly articles—both religious—focus on engaging membership to address behaviors of racism within their organizations. (Burlingham, 2019; Thomas, 2007). All three of the Agenda organizations, and the authors who are also within leadership, have origins in houses of faith (i.e., African Methodist Episcopalian, Catholicism, and Episcopalian). The concept of FAME's Beloved Community Initiative was an organizing lynchpin that attracted not only these faith organizations but the nonreligious and nondenominational members and followers of an anti-racism agenda. Although the current essay moves beyond

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1. Review of literature and statistics compiled by the authors. Samples of representative articles are cited.

religious and theological imperatives, it begins and is rooted in two frameworks: the Beloved Community and the philosophy of Ubuntu. A review of the literature on theoretical frameworks examines the transformation of anti-racism and/or centering Blackness grassroots community organizations, their coalescence, and the impact of their activism through and beyond these two lenses.

A further search of the literature found some scholarly publications on the impact of relationship building (Ubuntu) on anti-racism organization in communities in nontheological engagement. Search terms included *anti-racism*, *organizations*, *community*, *beloved community*, *Ubuntu*, *social movements*, and others. One article helps explain that the leaders of this initiative were all female and constantly managed power relationships that emerged around gender, race, and perceived status. Srivasata's (2006) "let's talk" approach inspired by feminist modes of discussion in anti-racists efforts underscores the importance of understanding how historical relations of power can prompt emotional resistance to discussions of race in social movement organizations. Furthermore, a 2011 article discusses radical Black and white alliances in the 1960s (Duran, 2011). A brief search of literature on guidelines for discussions on topics of racism and in interracial and female-led groups find several frameworks that document and support productive dialogues that focus on anti-racism work, centering Black voices and Black leadership in spaces that, while often uncomfortable, created a nurturing openness where participants could practice the behaviors for successful impact (Fleming et al., 2022).

The Agenda and their membership generally engaged in structured discussions and dialogues around anti-racism work. Examples of topics included policing and anti-Blackness, the Courageous Conversations Compass, building trust in conversations on race, centering Black leadership, undoing white-centering, voter suppression, and the Holocaust and anti-Semitism.

Each of the organizations used guidelines that facilitated dialogic discussions that centered Black voices, showcased Black leadership, and prioritized Black agendas. Principle 6 highlights the importance

of establishing structures and guidelines for individual and group accountability.

Setting the Scene

The history of interracial organizations has been replete with gradual creeping of agendas and voices to a default space of "white"-centered fragility (DiAngelo, 2018). Inside of white anti-racism social change groups, we combat this tendency to default to a white agenda, often at the expense of progress toward change and for an inclusive body of community workers.

The Agenda asked whether the anti-racism work and efforts to counter anti-Blackness would have an impact in moving the local area communities forward. We recognized the need to embrace change and mobilize against not only local assaults but a national agenda (e.g., efforts to overturn fair and legitimate local, regional, and federal elections). Subsequently, we began to intentionally coalesce in the wake of the murder of George Floyd (2020) and the movements for Black Lives Matter, forming a sustainable and powerful coalition of organizations doing anti-racist work and combating anti-Blackness agendas in community organizations.

Principle 1: Centering Black Leadership, Black Voices, and Black Perspectives

Southeast Michigan is a highly segregated region, and efforts to work on racism together as an interracial group can be challenging. The concerns and needs of Black voices are most pressing for this work, supported by the region's history and population and the legacy of such interracial alliances. Duran's article *Black/White Radical Alliances in the 1960s* (2011) looks at examples of coalitions that either fell apart or emerged stronger. Some split because of intense polarizations between nationalism and white-leftist ideologies. For example, many Blacks who had been involved in multiracial radical activities

either became "stridently nationalist . . . or Black Power groups, whose orientation often prohibited white involvement." Duran, however, acknowledges the "strongest intersection of black and white radicals commenced in a number of urban areas in the mid- to late-1960s" (Duran, 2011).

FAME/BCI and other Black-led groups called for white-led groups to join them in learning and in actions, even as they knew they would have to slowly and repeatedly teach the white group members about the Black experience with traffic stops, elected leaders' disregard of Black community priorities and requests, and the general nature of the white community's resistance to demographic and political change. White-led groups increasingly demonstrated that they believed what the Black leaders offered was testimony to current discrimination that is often dismissed by the white community. The experiences in both ARC and ConR, with FAME/BCI coupled with the generosity of other individuals and groups, particularly Black-led organizations in teaching and guiding the white-led groups, all helped the three groups coalesce as a collaborative grassroots movement that ultimately increased voice and respect for people's experiences, truths, and needs. It thus effectively created personal and institutional change. The Agenda intentionally operated to succeed in working together— at least around those ideas and events where they found common ground.

Bringing Black Voices to a Historically "Sundown"-like Suburb!

In 2015, John H. Burns II, the founding pastor of the First African Methodist Episcopal Church of Farmington Hills (FAME-FH), envisioned that a rapidly changing community demographically with over 19% African Americans could benefit from the historic and impactful work against racism of the 200-year-old AME Church (1816). In 2018, the Beloved Community Initiative was formed with a mission to center the voices of Black communities and to counter the contradictions and

often anti-Blackness backlash experienced, including among communities of color, while engaging in anti-racist efforts.

Dozens of persons engaged in dialogues, across race and ethnicity, religious beliefs, gender identities, and worldviews. Whereas in academia and business organizations these dialogues are common, many community members have not been asked their opinions. The overwhelming responses were the need for those who identify as white to better understand the Black experience in the United States, including racial discrimination in housing, banking, schooling, and policing (Bankole, 2022). Blacks whose voices were centered and prioritized focused on telling their stories of "driving while Black," giving Black children "the talk" about surviving racial profiling, and discrimination by police, schoolteachers, merchants, new immigrants, and others.

In April 2019, 14 diverse Sojourners (Treger, 2019) visited the National Memorial for Peace and Justice and the Legacy Museum, in Montgomery, Alabama, which documents the terrorism and lynching of thousands of Black people in the United States. BCI's journey toward building an anti-racism agenda that included combating anti-Blackness was birthed.

Leading up to the three-day Alabama experience, bimonthly educational sessions were conducted that were opened to the entire community.[2] Upon return, and with the untimely death of Rev. John Burns in May 2019, the desire was to build on the legacy and foundation he had forged. The community dialogues continued, and in the midst of mourning they recommitted to holding conversations and partnering with like-minded community groups.

When COVID-19 struck in March 2020 and the dialogues went virtual, BCI members found themselves reaching an even wider audience from Illinois to Georgia to California to connect and integrate more Black voices into their work and center their concerns and suggestions for directions and solutions. Subsequently BCI/FAME-FH

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2. Examples of topics included racial gaslighting, anti-Black microaggressions, anti-Asian discrimination, white privilege, voter suppression, and roads to tyranny.

became pioneers in convening the first three-day J. H. Burns II Beloved Community Memorial conference. The conference boasted 100+ attendees/participants in over three plenaries and twenty concurrent workshops, with topics ranging from Black manhood and parenting; intimate partner violence; and racial inequality in physical and mental health care, judicial and legal systems, voting, schooling, water justice, arts, and more. The second J. H. Burns Conference in 2021 focused on community trauma. The dialogues and engagement of BCI had now become a "gathering space" for many interested in anti-racism work across the broader and surrounding communities to FAME. In the midst of these continued and intentional dialogues and conferences, a partnership among Coleman-Burns, Lietz, and Muth was forged.

ConR and ARC developed separately, and later than FAME and BCI, in 2020. Since January 2020, just before the COVID shutdowns, both organizations in predominantly suburban settings in metro Detroit, deliberately developed public interracial, unaffiliated spaces that convened individuals to step into dialogue about issues that most of the region's population sees as dangerous to discuss. These issues are taboo around most white people's dining room tables because they link fragile white people to uncomfortable evidence of beliefs of white supremacy in history and in our midst. The Agenda afforded the centering of Black people's voices, and particularly Black women, instead of the emotional draining of the energy, time, and political capital often exerted by Blacks in white-dominated spaces yet again to persuade white people to see the "damaging effect" not only on the souls of Blacks who have suffered and continue to suffer anti-Blackness, but "as well as" on the souls of white-identified community members (Oluo, 2018, pp. 1–22; Ricketts, 2021, pp. 20–32; Wilkerson, 2020, pp. 365–69; hooks, 1995, pp. 3–6; Singleton, 1990, p. 75).

Each organization consciously created a space that calls people to sit together in the discomfort of speaking truth from personal experience and witnessing the factual proof of discriminatory policy and racist impacts on Black people in the United States and, particularly, metro Detroit. Each group leaned into inviting speakers from other

anti-racist groups, and particularly from among the coalesced Agenda, to share videos, readings, and small group conversational formats to increase the common anti-racist knowledge base while sharing diverse personal stories that illustrated a perspective, new learning, or pain experienced related to the formerly tabooed topics. In sharing goals, activities, and programs, the Agenda formed cohesion and began to support each other in several ways by collaborating on activities, promoting events among contact lists, and showing up for one another. Through convening, learning, and sharing efforts, the leaders took on civic actions grounded in voices, experiences, truths, and needs— particularly of the voices of Black members, which informed and helped center and guide local actions.

The organizations gave its members the confidence, courage, and drive to step up, step out, and inform others of local issues of discrimination. For example, by fall 2021, ConR spent a portion of each meeting building skills for confronting anti-Black racism in white members and in the community and to support facilitator and group training. This confidence helped members find their voices to spread the word and impact racial justice issues. Anonymous personal conversations with the authors were held between June 21 through October 31, 2022, in organizational meetings, over Zoom, and/or by phone using survey questions. For example, a Black activist found her public voice: "ARC has been a cathartic experience for me. I have been able to talk about my experiences and articulate the racism I encounter. . . . I wasn't getting gaslighted. . . . This allowed me to center and better articulate the voices of Black Americans into other issues I get pulled into."[3]

Another Black activist in ARC was able to use her voice to guide and influence other groups in the region: "It's good to have awareness of other groups and see the different groups doing anti-racist work. . . . I like to help guide their work and make it tangible to the

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3. Anonymous participant #1, personal conversation on Zoom with the authors, October 3, 2022.

Black community. I hope that non-Black groups can see it from a Black perspective and understand what is needed."[4]

The sessions also empowered white members to confront their fears and gain courage by providing a network of support and a platform for practicing how to "show up." A white member shared: "I learn different things from the group I'm in. I now have a network for help and support."[5]

Our pivotal point and the opposition's Waterloo moment that tested the strength of our learnings and relationships was the January 11, 2022, Farmington School Board meeting (WXYZ-TV Detroit), with hundreds of community members showing up on a night where the temperatures dropped to 9 degrees, to counter attacks against the values of diversity, equity, and inclusion and in support for 21-day DEI Equity Challenge. The Agenda's impact, along with other anti-racism and Black-led groups, such as the Community Equity Organization's Legislative Action Campaign, was palatable.

Principle 2: Building Trust within and among the Groups

Building trust in an interracial group is challenging, as members bring different life experiences and perspectives that have been informed by discrimination, trauma, and privilege. The US education system and news leave serious gaps in knowledge. Black members can get frustrated and retraumatized by working on racism with white members. Taking time and establishing ground rules to build trust was essential to the work.

These principles for conversations and dialogues increased intergroup trust, strengthened its skills, and extended the organization's capacity and reach. These formats provided the communities with an infrastructure of entry-level anti-racist conversations embodying interracial collaboration to end anti-Blackness in the Detroit area.

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4. Anonymous participant #6, personal conversation on Zoom with the authors, October 20, 2022.
5. Anonymous participant #3, personal conversation on Zoom with the authors, September 28, 2022.

The ConR, for example, adopted a practice from Glenn Singleton's *Courageous Conversations about Race* (2022) that laid the groundwork for the trust, support, sharing, and openness needed in support of Black and Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) to create community anti-racism change: "Just believe me" (Singleton, 2022, pp. 8–9).

ARC Black members reported they felt safe in the environment where the groups reported and shared their work: "It has allowed me to say what I think." ConR members often explained that they had conversations in these settings that they couldn't have anywhere else. The partnership among the Agenda was directly responsible for nurturing a climate of friendship and collaboration on which all three groups could rely.

Principle 3: Showing Up to Support Each Other and Working Together to Build Capacity

Community organizing relies on bringing people together to stand-up and "show up" as important principles in fighting racism. The more people and resources that show up in meetings and actions the greater the impact. "Showing up" can be attending a meeting, sending a letter, making a call, sharing on social media, and more.

The Agenda describes showing up and supporting concrete action steps. Members wrote letters and made phone calls in support of the 21-day DEI program in the Farmington School District; collectively planned and implemented FAME/BCI's 2022 Farmington Area Juneteenth celebrations; and wrote anti-racist outcome measures and anti-Blackness goals for the Southeast Michigan United Way's anti-racism training contractor for vendors, which ultimately led to their contracting with a training organization led by a Black woman.

A leader from a local faith-based organization with ties to all three groups, called Strangers No Longer, stated, "Overall, bringing people together is important and getting more contacts in racial subgroups is helpful when you need to bring people together on issues."[6]

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6. Anonymous participant #5, personal conversation on phone with the authors, October 6, 2022.

Principle 4: Developing Social and Moral Capital

Beginning in January 2020, ConR and ARC could be described as "tiny and incipient" grassroots groups or "fledgling groups" (Blee, 2012, pp. 6–7). For example, ConR limited themselves to simply presenting films and expert panels with information sharing. Interaction with and for other groups and the community especially with FAME/BCI pushed the white dominated groups to grow and sharpen their focus.

Developing social and moral capital for each other was the direct outgrowth of each group's tactics to further racial equity. Participants gained new relationships through conversations within and external to the individual organizations about issues that impact the circumstances of each other's lives, displaying the consequences of living in white supremacy and anti-Blackness. Participants in the Agenda felt they learned new knowledge and gained moral and social capital as a result of their reflections and experiences with new people who were often different from themselves. Some members reported that as a result of the Agenda, they had built new personal and historical awareness, courage, honesty, and communication skills; new realizations of personal culpability and responsibility; and began understanding the injury suffered due to microaggressions and systemic racism. For many, the conversations have also built intention and skills to participate in community action to build racial equity in the community.

A local Black activist leader, for example, noted that she has "seen ConR transition from conceptual to understanding that racism affects them also and to actual action. . . . ConR was not originally open to centering anti-Black racism. It was more about getting together with all kinds of people" simply to talk, not take action. She continued: "This is where ConR made a shift. Black people come back because they know we are now serious about doing the hard work."[7]

Similarly, we were able to gather diverse groups working in their local areas and enabled leaders to learn from one another. The efforts and

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7. Anonymous participant #1, personal conversation on phone with the authors, October 3, 2022.

actions showed the depth and reach of racism in communities and connections. A leader of Royal Oak Minority Parent Association (ROMPA) felt that a broad anti-racism focus helped her to "understand the multiple dimensions to racism and all the work the others are doing." This knowledge and support also helped her move from a private space into the public space on anti-racism. She shared: "The change I have experienced [in ARC] has been over time. It's been a process of moving out from below the radar to start to stand up and no longer sit on the sidelines."[8]

The sharing of the members' activities and results also gave needed moral encouragement. A leader of a Catholic group focused on immigration said, "It's good to meet and know others doing this work and see the courage and imagination that some people have in this effort. This helps me keep doing what I am doing and sticking with it, especially as it relates to making institutional change."[9]

Principle 5: Sharing Resources Generously

In community organizing, there are few playbooks on fighting racism. Many groups were learning by doing and, as such, they shared what they learned generously from their mission of fighting racism. The resources could be volunteering, sharing examples from candidate forums, speaking at other's awareness events, and communications materials.

Although some members were already actively working with other community groups, increasingly, more participants, many for the first time, report supporting groups and actions in the community, responding to calls to show up, step up, speak out, and act against anti-Black racism. They reported in surveys and interviews how their anti-racist leadership was emerging as time shared and action taken in the community.

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8. Anonymous participant #4, personal conversation on Zoom with the authors, October 3, 2022.
9. Anonymous participant #5, personal conversation on phone with the authors, October 6, 2022.

The impact of anti-racism work in the community is best understood by the resulting community actions that focused on an anti-racism perspective. For example, the Agenda shared their resources and conversations skills with other groups, running sessions and facilitator training for suburban Rotary Clubs, a high school teacher's diversity conference, a church's anti-racism training, FAME/BCI's Juneteenth celebrations (2020–2023), and the John H. Burns memorial conferences (2020–2022). Impact was exemplified by a partnership with a multicounty library co-op, bringing a series of conversations on race to three community libraries. Additionally, two communities—Farmington Hills' Community Equity Organization and Royal Oaks' ROMPA—shared their school board advocacy and school culture efforts to focus on an anti-racism agenda (Karmo, 2020). As a result of community-based forums for school board candidates those who supportive of diversity, equity, and inclusion were elected in the communities.

Another good example from the Agenda's impact and sharing of resources was the work of the Royal Oak citizens who were instrumental in passing a human rights commission in Royal Oak (Royal Oak), a city that is 88% white, by advocating and forming a diverse task force to develop ordinance language and recommendations approved by the city commission.

Principle 6: Operationalizing Guidelines for Individual and Group Accountability for Equity

The Agenda used a variety of "guidelines" to establish structures for individual and group accountability, encourage equity, and counter the tendency for white dominated groups to fracture and dissolve in its anti-racism efforts. For example, ConR's ground rules, mission, vision, and core values (ConR) reflected the intent to actively and openly listen to each other in a deliberately interracial space, often providing a "first encounter" with effective race talk and building the basic race talk skills that enable people to engage in other advocacy groups that have moved directly into engagement with community problems without preparation.

The Agenda emphasized conversation guidelines for creating equity and inclusion of all voices, especially those of Black voices and marginalized statuses that countered a tendency toward white male domination. In centering Black voices and leadership, we challenged white participants to consider their positionality/status in society (School of Nursing).

As a result, members became more accountable to their actions. One Black activist leader shared: "The changes I am seeing is that people are making commitments to do the work." It was important to her that "people continue to grow and push and change the way they operate instead of just conceptualizing racism." She goes on to share that "anti-racism is a lens. You now have an anti-racism lens, and it shows up in all people living."[10]

Moving Forward

The impact of community anti-racist work (the Agenda) is profound, even as the organizations themselves and the individuals within them continue to grow and learn. We stand by and recommit to these core concepts:

1. Social justice change is indeed measurable, although we maintain that even though "the arc of the moral universe . . . bends toward justice;" it takes a sustained and protracted effort (Smithsonian).
2. Collaborative grassroots organizing can increase voice and respect for people's experiences, truths, and needs.
3. This organizing can effectively create personal and organizational change and impact communities.

By centering Black leadership, Black voices, and Black perspective rather than acting in traditional, white-led community organizing, we are learning how to work differently. We were able to build

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10. Anonymous participant #6, personal conversation on Zoom with the authors, October 20, 2022.

trust, enable people to "show up" and support each other, scale-up our contacts and influence, share resources, and honor standards of practice that achieved individual and group accountability for equity. Doing anti-racist work without centering Black voices leads us to old, outdated, white-centered strategies that don't work and are not sustainable. Centering Black voices is part of a way of life, a perspective on the world, as Wise argues. In centering anti-racist Black voices, we bring a different perspective to the questions at hand and are able to see how what we do are steps in the long moral arc of justice—over hundreds of years—in order to move toward being the kinds of human beings we hope and need to be.

This article raises many questions, including where we can go next. From our joint work, we know that building capacity in the white community to embrace anti-racism work can lead to greater trust in and by the Black community. White people need to support anti-racist, Black-led organizations without dominating with numbers and voices and suppressing Black participants. We saw that kind of interracial balance in our community actions across the three events described earlier as the Black community began to trust and "show up" in increasing numbers.

As next steps, we propose the development of partnerships and formal channels of collaboration directly between university and community institutional partners to establish a support system for funded, community-based action research on projects like ours that is fully accessible to community-based activists, authors, and researchers. Community activism can provide the kind of data needed to sharpen the picture of what works and what needs further definition and support for successfully engaging communities in Black-centered, Black-led, anti-racism change. Community groups as well can benefit from academia's knowledge base of community-based participatory research as well as basic financial and analytical support. Universities (including historically Black colleges and universities) have the research tradition, including Black scholars; the community has the Black leadership in a non-Cartesian framework.

Author Biographies

Rev. Dr. Patricia Coleman-Burns, lead author, is pastor of the First African Methodist Episcopal Church (FAME) of Farmington Hills, Michigan. The Beloved Community Initiative (BCI) and its Truth and Reconciliation policing grant (Bankole, 2022), funded by the Hudson-Webber Foundation and the Community Foundation of Southeast Michigan, are projects of FAME and products of Dr. Coleman-Burns's long-standing scholarly work at top-ranked public research universities in southeast Michigan in Black studies, women's studies, rhetorical criticism, and diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Ms. Lynne Muth, founder and convener of the Anti-Racist Collaborators (ARC), is a retired marketing professional, and "artivist" who interacts and calls together anti-racist activists from Detroit and its suburbs.

Dr. Irene Lietz, professor emerita in English from Carlow University, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, is another long-time rhetoric teacher and cofounder of Conversations on Race, a new nonprofit organization dedicated to developing the capacity of individual members and of the group to effectively and sustainably advocate for community racial justice, using community conversation and relationship as educators, chiefly in the Detroit suburbs.

BCI-Beloved Community Initiative/FAME Church founded Febru-ary 2018/ September 2015; ConR-Conversations on Race, Janu-ary 2020; ARC-The Anti-Racist Collaborators, Aug. 2020.

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