



THE MANDATE

“There comes a time in the life of every community when it must look humbly and seriously into its past in order to provide the best possible foundation for moving into a future based on healing and hope.” – The Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2006

In light of the shooting death of Michael Brown on August 9, 2014 and the subsequent findings of the Grand Jury not to indict the officer who shot Mr. Brown, despite witness testimony that his hands were in the raised, “surrender” position, and

In light of the overwhelming number of incidents where unarmed black men, women and children have been assaulted, injured, or killed at the hands of police officers or while in police custody in Ferguson, and

In light of the proliferation of deaths of black men, women and children in the 21st century at the hands of police or while in police custody in the U.S. and

In light of the racist and oppressive nature of Slave Patrols, Fugitive Slave Laws, Jim Crow Laws, Racial Profiling and Stop and Frisk Practices having all served as historical and/or contemporary directives comprising four centuries of police practices violating the lives of black men, women and children in the U.S.:

The Truth Telling Project, on behalf of the citizens of Ferguson, MO calls for the conduct of the Truth Telling Initiative for Ferguson and Beyond (FTI) to allow national and international audiences to listen to first-hand accounts of persons impacted directly and indirectly by police violence in the city of Ferguson and beyond.

The Truth Telling Project affirms that:

- 1) Testimonies in FTI hearings will be presented to a Panel that will be composed primarily of citizens of Ferguson.
- 2) Testimonies will be recorded and broadcast throughout the world for the purposes of: a) presenting first-hand accounts of direct and indirect experiences with police violence and the consequences of those experiences, and garnering national and international support for African Americans to live in a nation where they are treated with fairness and respect.
- 3) Participants in the FTI will be invited from all segments of the Ferguson community.

We also affirm that the intention of these hearings will be:

- a) Truth telling from the perspective of persons involved directly or indirectly in an encounter with police violence.
- b) Acknowledging and recognizing individual experiences with feelings of shame, anger, fear and loss as a consequence of police violence.
- c) Heightening national and international awareness and consciousness of police violence and its consequences (including harm or death) where African Americans are concerned.
- d) Helping facilitate community-based truth telling, understanding, and healing based on the dissemination of truth and consequences related to police violence.
- e) Supporting the facilitation of positive and widespread change with regard to racism in the U.S. and the eradication of racism in all of its structural, institutional, and social forms.

The FTI is not for the purpose of exacting revenge or recrimination; additionally, the Truth Telling Project does not endorse violence in any form. The Truth Telling Project supports truth sharing for the purposes of helping all members of society acknowledge the realities and consequences of violence, and work towards the collective healing needed to produce reconciliation.

The Panel charged with listening to testimonial stories will have no powers, but they will be tasked with inquiring and helping others learn how persons came to be directly or indirectly involved in instances of police violence, including harm and death while in police custody. As a necessary part of the truth seeking process, the Panel will also consider questions of individual and institutional responsibility surrounding the stories presented.

Following the FTI presentation of testimonies, the Panel will work with members of the Ferguson community to explore all possibilities for healing and social transformation.

Therefore, the Truth Telling Initiative for Ferguson and Beyond (FTI) will:

- 1) Be facilitated by The Truth Telling Project and conducted in Ferguson, MO on Friday, November 13 and Saturday, November 14, 2015.
- 2) Invite the presentation of testimonial stories from persons directly and indirectly impacted by police violence in the U.S. since the killing of Trayvon Martin in 2012.
- 3) Give special attention to witness testimonies presented by citizens in the Ferguson community and subsequent to the killing of Michael Brown in 2014.
- 4) Consist of a Panel composed primarily of residents of Ferguson who will listen to and inquire into the testimonies presented, and then work collectively to suggest possibilities for healing and social transformation.
- 5) Broadcast the testimonies presented to national and international audiences to allow those telling their stories to share their accounts, first-hand.
- 6) Invite nationwide, community-based participation in the truth seeking, truth telling, and conflict resolution processes with regard to racism and its consequences, including but not limited to police violence, through the encouragement of "Watch, Exchange, Formulate and Implement" (WeFi) gatherings where citizen groups host FTI Watch parties, Exchange ideas, Formulate a plan of action, and ultimately Implement that plan.

- 7) Produce visual and written documentation and analysis of: a) the FTI process and its findings, and b) the outcomes of WeFi gatherings for replication in other communities in the U.S.

It is the firm belief of the Truth Telling Project that giving voice to the voiceless through the power of storytelling will humanize persons in a manner that no Commission report, visual representation or media interview can. Given the historical and perennial nature of violent assaults and deadly encounters between police and African Americans in the U.S., it is urgent that the national and international community be given an opportunity to hear personal accounts directly from those impacted; the FTI will provide this opportunity.

It is the position of the Truth Telling Project that addressing the legacy of structural and systemic racism and its consequences in the U.S. must begin with citizen actions to expose truths. We believe that promoting truth will increase mutual understanding and respect, and lay the foundation needed for healing the long-standing wounds and by-products of oppression in our nation. Therefore, we are committing our energies to work diligently and honestly with the citizens of Ferguson, MO to implement the FTI on November 13-14, 2015 in the city of Ferguson.

There can be no genuine healing and moving forward without honestly, courageously and collectively involving the citizens of Ferguson, MO in confronting truths surrounding accounts of police violence and fully acknowledging the direct and indirect suffering associated with those experiences. Giving recognition to individual experiences and truths is the beginning of healing and the related processes of resolution; each is a necessary step if we are to move our society through, and then past the pain associated with the legacies of racism in the U.S.