

“Sacramento Faces Race” is Preparing for Launch

Sacramento is leading our country in learning about and taking steps toward racial equality. June 12-14, the Greater Sacramento California Region will engage in its first ever, citywide Teach-In specifically considering racism from the Black-American perspective—the largest Teach-In of its kind in the country. Already, hundreds of worship groups, clubs, and college students have committed to participate including the Interfaith Council of Greater Sacramento, Sac ACT, Sacramento Board of Rabbis, and Folsom Lake College.

Sacramento Faces Races takes place days before the 150th anniversary of Juneteenth, the national commemoration of the announcement of the abolition of slavery in the U.S. State of Texas in June 1865. Sacramento Faces Race also coincides with several other relevant dates recognized by our diverse American family:

- Loving Day, the anniversary of the 1967 United States Supreme Court decision *Loving v. Virginia* that struck down the miscegenation laws remaining in 16 states barring interracial marriage.
- Race Unity Day, a Bahá'í Observance promoting racial harmony, understanding the essential unity of humanity.
- Anne Frank Day, memorializes the birthday of young Jewish girl whose diary describes her family's experiences hiding from the Nazis through assistance of gentile friends.
- Flag Day, honoring the adoption of our country's symbol of freedom by Congress in 1777.

This unfunded, all volunteer, grassroots effort comes at a time after Mayor Kevin Johnson rose to address the concerns of the Sacramento community in the wake of last summer's media coverage of what is now nationally known as “Ferguson.” Promptly responding to the outcries of our concerned community in August of 2014, Mayor Johnson established a community forum, “Just Justice,” in partnership with the NAACP and other prominent Sacramento community leaders. Civic and political leaders at the local and national levels, including many members of the U.S. Conference of Mayors, have endorsed forum outcomes. Since, many more deeply unsettling incidents have occurred in this country requiring us not to blame, but to learn so this does not continue.

In 2014, University of California, Berkeley and University of Chicago published a joint study in the American Psychological Association's *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* that shows a direct correlation to how public images of successful Black people create the misperception that racism no longer exists. As mass media presents the general American population with an idealized depiction of the success and triumphs of Black-Americans, the rest of society is led to believe that more progress has been made than in reality. This feeds the notion that we have become a “colorblind” nation in which everyone has equal access to opportunity. Actual statistics of institutional racism prove otherwise. It is overwhelmingly well documented that chronic Black underachievement is the result of systemic lack of equal access, and the historic perpetuation of stereotypes and systems of discrimination as compared to White citizens. This challenges the common White perception either that racism no longer exists, or that it can be fixed by Blacks pulling themselves up by their proverbial bootstraps to be, “more like us” (White).

With bold faith in our community, its organizers plan to build momentum, encouraging leadership and accountability within each citizen to participate in this community-building effort in houses of worship, college campuses, homes, and other meeting places throughout our community. Sacramento Faces Race is a self-implemented lesson that can take place just about anywhere folks want to gather. Teach-In curricula (available for download soon) are written by professors and subject matter experts, and focus on “bridging understanding from the Black-American experience and perspective.” The goal of the weekend is to further every individual's personal understanding of what racism really is, how it operates, and how it currently affects Black-Americans, as well as broader American society while providing a springboard for further action. As President Lyndon Johnson stated in his 1965 speech following the historic week of the bloody walk over Selma, Alabama's Edmund Pettus Bridge for Black voting rights, “There is no Negro problem. There is no Southern problem. There is no Northern problem. There is only an American problem.”

Visit www.SacramentoFacesRace.com in coming weeks for opportunities to learn more. We encourage your courageous leadership and participation as a responsible community resident, and as an American who loves the ideal of what America declares—“liberty and justice for all”.