

The harvests
from...

Forging A Shared Agenda:

A Learning Conversation Across
Differences

June 12th & 13th, 2015
Durham, North Carolina

and...

Public Community Meeting on
Conversations Across Differences

June 16, 2015
Durham, North Carolina

**Forging A Shared Agenda:
*Creative Conversations Across Differences***

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**A Public Community Meeting
on *Conversations Across Differences***

designed, facilitated, and hosted by:

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It all began with an invitation...



Forging a Shared Agenda

You are invited to join us Tuesday, June 16th at 6PM to hear from a courageous group of women from politically diverse backgrounds. They will be sharing their thoughts about how to create a positive future for all of our children. These women have been engaging in an extended Creative Learning Conversation Across Differences, and will be sharing with us their insights and learnings from those explorations. After their initial presentation, we will be welcoming all of the audience members to engage in small-group conversations where you will be invited to contribute your own insights and responses.

Humans have historically been the stewards of the next generation. The Iroquois suggested that in every deliberation, we must consider the impact of our decisions on the next seven generations. Let's come together and collectively re-imagine the secure future we want for many generations and also look at ways to bring us all together behind that vision.



...extended by Ruth Backstrom
and Ruthy Jones...

When: Friday, June 12, 6:30 PM – 9 PM and Saturday, June 13, 9 AM – 5 PM
On Tuesday, June 16, 6 PM – 9 PM, we will share our learnings with the community.

...for a diverse group of people to come together for a day and half, to engage in a facilitated "deep dive" conversation.

Meanwhile, Ruth Backstrom was also organizing a four-day capacity-building workshop, so that interested local people in Durham could be learning this approach to working with groups.

As part of their learning, workshop participants were able to observe the day-and-a-half Creative Conversation Across Differences.

Workshop participants also helped facilitate the open Community Meeting where the Creative Conversations participants shared their journey with the larger community.



The Creative Conversation participants began by sharing a few highlights from what they had explored together their first evening: from the need for organic agriculture, to questions about climate change, to the concern about the local life-or-death environment that many young people face in Durham.



Then, they described how their focus had shifted on the second day, to a greater focus on the local Durham environment. This included the need for greater connections across class and race, as well as the impact and legacy of local history on present-day projects.

They shared the summary statements they had come up with....

Reconciliation in Durham, across class and race
Reconciling our past, present, and future

Building relationships will solve a slew of problems:

- Within neighborhoods
- Across neighborhoods
- Across initiatives

We explored various mechanisms to communicate and build groundwork for change:

- Community Conversations & Connection
- Historical Movie idea
- Reclaiming Festivals

And... we need to talk more about the role of government in all this.

(The full notes from the initial "Creative Conversation Across Differences" can be found in Appendix B.)

Then it was time for everyone, including those who had come to attend the evening's presentation, to work in small groups to continue the conversation.



The notes from that evening's conversation are in Appendix A.

Appendix A: Notes from the Community Meeting

Public Community Meeting, Tuesday June 16 Notes from one of the small-group conversations

These notes begin with a brief summary from the conversation, distilled afterward. This is followed by all the various statements contributed by participants .

1. It is important to focus on listening to what is going on in people's lives, their needs, and strengths, with awareness of the need for healing.
2. Everyone - young and old, rich and poor- has needs that can only be met if we build community and social capital.
3. Through coming together as a community we can address policy issues: creating light rail system, making our communities places where people can age in place, etc.

A. How do we learn about what people need, and what their assets are?

Data and perspectives

1. We can't just jump to solutions.
2. It's easy to assume that we know what other people are needing.
3. Some people may still be feeling the pain of Hayti. We need healing to build trust, and for people to participate.



4. Hayti destruction was happening at the same time as integration.
5. Many people are in emergencies right now.
6. Many folks are going to Urban Ministries of Durham to eat, talk. It's easy to get there. Could be good place to reach out to affected people to talk about their needs.
7. When we go into a space, people make assumptions. Takes some openness.
8. Some of us have previous experience in community organizing, with the Seeds organization.
9. 'Detached workers' model": a mobile community social worker who builds trust by "hanging out" in a community, supports members in finding their voice, identifying their needs.
10. Cross-race conversations already happening; some designed to talk about Durham trends.

Solutions

1. Listen to what the affected people need.
2. Ask people about healing – what do they need?
3. Create restorative circles to get people talking, especially people who are affected.
4. Talk about assets, not just needs.
5. Be aware not just people of color or poor people have needs.
6. Place 'detached' workers in Durham, to do active listening. Call meetings. Have this paid for by grants (Duke Endowment). Also through the NC council of Churches.
7. Organize Chautauquas in neighborhoods, local pubs. Listen to what's going on.

B. How can we build community connectedness, connect across differences in race, and overcome isolation – for both rich and poor, young and old?

Data and perspectives

1. Some of us have had the opportunity to participate in a mixed race gospel choir. Some of us feel envious of how tight knit that church community is. Rich people are often isolated.
2. Some of us have had the experience of moving into East Durham. It's a different culture there. Some of us love being there, feel a sense of belonging in this neighborhood. We are not afraid.
3. Dogs can help facilitate relationships.



4. Every child/individual needs to feel safe to walk to a park.
5. There are no kids playing outside in some neighborhoods.

6. In Person County, the perception is that people choose to be there in order to be isolated (i.e., they want to keep to themselves and be away from others).
7. For some old people, being isolated from one another is a big problem.
8. Lots of transitory housing in E. Durham makes it hard to develop relationships.
9. Transitory people can have a difficult time developing relationships.
10. Social capital is important & often overlooked, when looking at people in material poverty.

Solutions

1. Become part of the community.
2. Move into integrated neighborhoods.
3. Be a good neighbor – get to know each other.
4. Have Play Rangers in parks to facilitate play, to create something like Play Zones in parks.
5. Help groups form in each neighborhood to help neighbors get ready for emergencies.

C. How can we work together for policies for the common good, for people of all ages?

Data and perspectives

1. Examining policy and making policy can make a difference.
2. East End Connector is being created by fiat by those in power.
3. Some of us realize importance of policy. When policy changes, things happen on the frontlines.
4. Collaboration can result from policy: boots (action) can follow policy. Little organizations are sometimes involved in changing policy, and small actions can result in big changes.
5. Sometimes policies are controversial.
6. Some of us wonder what conditions catalyze change.
7. We've been too quick to think we know what to do. We need 'hard conversations.'
8. We are making assumptions that no one else is doing this work.

Proposed solutions

1. Pull together as a whole community, to raise public awareness about the East End Connector.
2. Volunteer to be part of Citizens of E. Durham for Light Rail.
3. Create a shared resource Guide in Durham. Create a Network of Care with information about services for all ages -- e.g., seniors, people with disabilities, children, people with mental illness or other health problems. (This is already in progress.)
4. Become a community where people can age in place.

as you'll see in the next few pages, similar conversations were happening in the other small groups...





After two rounds of small-group conversation in a modified World Cafe format, we came back together in a larger group. The invitation was for people to share good ideas that had come up in their smaller groups. Here are the notes from that conversation....

Relationships between community and police...

1. Pre-emptive engagement with Durham police. How are they doing, with regard to respectful service of all people? Build a positive network with them...
2. There have already been incidents with the Durham police. The FADE coalition has made five demands. Three have been met, two are in negotiations.
3. There is currently a program having officers tutor in elementary schools such as Yesmith. Any Durham resident can do this. They are looking for more volunteers.
4. There is also the East Durham children's initiative. They are hosting block parties, where police are invited to come and are attempting to be a friendly presence there.
5. We also need to address the needs of teens. We need something to help police develop a positive relationship with them.

Support for community workers...

1. An idea for funding for a detached worker who can develop trust in a community, help facilitate gatherings, gather useful info to help support the community. An investment of \$24,000 a year for 5 years has been shown to create significant results.
2. Something similar is already underway. The Mayor's poverty reduction program includes a plan for community health workers to be connectors in the neighborhoods.
3. This is part of Partnership for a Healthy Durham, that has a focus on both health AND jobs. This program is currently creating curriculum for training. Should be up in September. It is starting in a two-block area of Durham.
4. Part of the idea is to have community health workers get together, not just work in isolation.

Schools as supportive communities...

1. We need to change the punishment paradigm in schools to one of support. This needs to be funded. We also need to bring TA's back into the classroom.

Growing relationships across differences...

1. We need ways for people across Durham to get to know one another. One idea is block parties. Another is having opportunities for people to meet one another over the phone or internet, so they can get to know one another without seeing each other, so they are not bringing any preconceptions with them.
2. In some wealthy communities people are very isolated.
3. We need to look at people's ASSETS and STRENGTHS, as well as their needs.
4. We could have pairing of wealthier and less wealthy communities, to learn from one another.
5. The Unitarian Church has a project where they are doing outreach to their surrounding community.

Children in need of food...

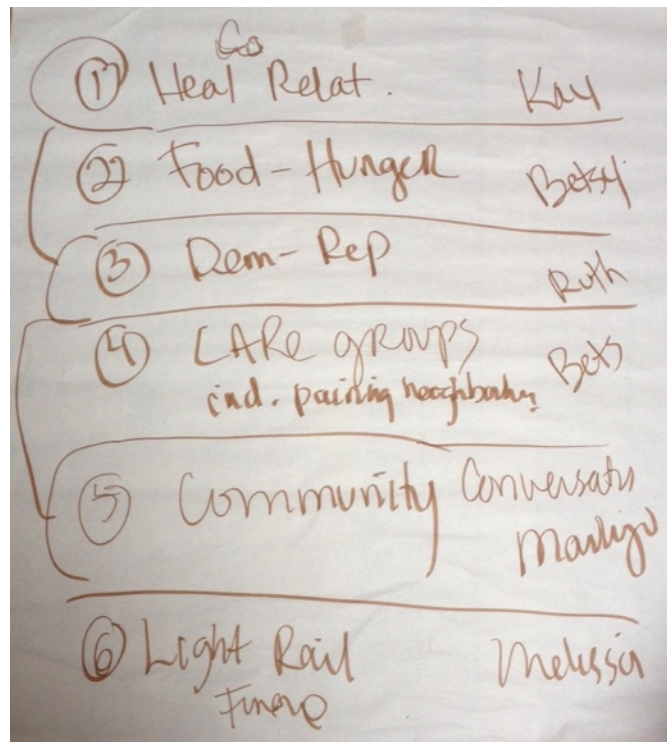
1. Thousands of kids are going to bed hungry. We need to make a commitment that this is no longer acceptable.
2. This needs to change. One out of four kids are living with hunger.
3. Some of us are working on this right now.
4. We need to get structural. We need to balance talk and action. We need to get everyone to the table.

Government is us, helping one another...

1. Some of us are working on local transit issues. Hard to sort out the City, County, and Triangle Transit budgets.
2. We need to have a campaign like in Minneapolis, to show the good that government does and can do.
3. Have our city and county taxes go to meet human needs: health, food, schools, community organizing.

When we closed the larger circle, we invited people to re-form into smaller groups, to follow up on any conversations or projects that they wanted to pursue.

We used a modified Open Space format for this, and that's how we ended the evening of our Community Meeting.



Appendix B: Notes from the 1.5 day Creative Conversation Across Differences

Notes from June 12th, the first evening

How do we protect our land, our water, and our health?

Data offered

1. Poisons in chemical agriculture negatively impact water quality. We need to be good stewards. We want to feed people, have farmers make money, improve economy. It's possible to do all this.
2. Whole Foods rating system not based on reality. Rates some conventional produce higher than organic produce, based on profit motive. Some of us are indignant about this misinformation.

Initial Solutions

1. Promote organic farming. Influence policy for USDA. Let conventional farmers know that you can make \$ from organic farming. Greater premium on yields, though yields are smaller.
2. Stop giving breaks to Monsanto. Counter their propaganda.
3. Hit Whole Foods in pocketbook. Counter misinformation. Picket WF to educate their consumers.

How do we make change effectively?

Data offered

1. Changing people's perceptions and behavior is harder yet more lasting than changing legislation.
2. Change is not a quick fix. Institutions have tap roots, and changing them is an uphill climb.
3. Learning from history, we see that the March on Washington was a climax: people had been engaging in organized action for a YEAR beforehand, not riding on the buses as a protest.

Initial solutions

1. Stop thinking we are enemies, and realize we are on the same boat.
2. Lift up transparency and integrity.
3. Talk and DO at the same time. We need to get started on these ideas, get blogs going to share the info on things we care about, since a lot of people don't read the news any more.
4. Change people's hearts through education: in homes w/parents, in schools, in communities. Create learning environments.

How can we make a difference with regard to climate change?

Data offered

1. For some of us, climate change is a major issue. The result of companies externalizing costs, creating problems re air, water, & land yet not taking responsibility to clear up these messes.
2. Some of us see the question as, whether people believe "we are all in this together", or not.
3. In this country, we don't agree on what the problem is. It seems that some of us are focused on good of the community, while others are focused on short-term profit.
4. As Americans, we are 5% of population, but consume 20-25% of world's resources. Rest of world wants to emulate us, but there is scarcity of resources. Even if we "do the right thing", won't impact what Chinese do.

Initial Solutions

1. Create the expectation that companies need to clean up after themselves (internalizing costs.)
2. Promote idea of air, water, land as public commons; we have rights to have them protected. If you poison them, you are stealing from others. Promote this through education, also in legal system.
3. Start addressing environmental issues here in the U.S., and lead by example.

How can we come together around climate change?

Data offered

1. Political leadership is out of step with the people on the issue of climate change. According to poll data, more than half of the people in the U.S. believe climate change is a problem.
2. At the same time, some of us wonder about this. If that many people feel strongly about it, it seems there would be more action about it.
3. Some people are talking about climate change, while others are dismissing it.
4. Many people are not thinking about the various crises we are facing. Instead, they are thinking "what could possibly go wrong"?
5. Many people are too overwhelmed by other pressures to think about climate change.

6. Some powerful people have ability & influence to make climate change seem like minor issue.
7. Strategy of oil and gas companies has been to employ same PR firms that delayed science on tobacco from getting out. Have been using these PR firms to create confusion re climate change.
8. The Koch brothers have also been funding research designed to create confusion.
9. The chief scientist at NASA got fired for reporting information about climate change.

How do we get unbiased information on the farming practices, or on the climate change issue? How do we know what the truth is?

Data offered

1. 6 corporations, around 300 executives, control all of the media. If this were Russia, we would call it oligarchy. Since it's the U.S., we call it capitalism.
2. If people hear soundbites often enough, they will start to think that it's true.

Solutions offered

1. Stop having all the textbooks published in Texas. ☺

How do we regain control of our government?

Data offered

1. Some of us feel that our government has been captured by the 1%.
2. This 1% is bipartisan. There are wealthy people in both parties.
3. We are kept separated by issues including climate change, fracking, gun control, women's health.
4. Regulatory agencies have also been captured, by the revolving door of government officials going in and out of the revolving door of private business.
5. Some of us feel we are all prisoners of US, whether we are well-fed or not so well-fed.

Solutions offered

1. Create election reform, and campaign finance reform.
2. Create term limits, in addition to campaign finance reform. This would help get people from the community in office, would not need to campaign against incumbents.
3. Follow England's example and outlaw political ads on TV or radio. Limit political contributions to \$40 or \$50 per person.

4. Share info on Lawrence Lessing's piece on campaign reform. Rename it "saving democracy" as that name is less boring than "campaign reform."

How to move this conversation forward?

Data offered

1. Some of us are concerned about life-and-death issues that human beings are facing in our local environment, and that is where we've been focusing our energies.

On Day Two, the participants of "Forging A Shared Agenda: A Creative Conversation Across Differences" decided to expand the notion of "environment".

And so their conversation continued to unfold....

Notes from Day Two, June 13th

How do we build an inclusive community, respectful of differences, that meets the needs of the people? How do we inform and educate each other in ways that are inclusive? How can we support people in "in"powering themselves?

Data & Perspectives

1. The environment is more than the air, the water and the land.
2. The neighborhoods our children grow up in are also part of the environment.
3. We tend to think in silos. How can we come together to solve all of these issues?
4. Many different issues are all important. We can work on things simultaneously.
5. Sharing knowledge is important. People perish for lack of knowledge.
6. We are here, we can do something, we ARE doing something.
7. Some of us want to come up with some actions that will make a difference.

Initial Solution Ideas

1. Host town hall meetings / Community Conversations for Durham; places to come together and share information and education.
2. Start on this by talking with city council, getting them scheduled.
3. Create environments where we can share information.
4. Talk about the many issues related to "How to improve Durham's quality of life."
5. Have Town Hall Meetings in communities so *they* can tell *us* what they need. So we can see each other as people.
6. Have people who are being "helped", be part of the process that is created to "help" them.

Responses & concerns about initial solutions, data & perspectives

1. Had a town hall meeting in Pastor Gumbo's basement yet only 4 people showed up.
2. There was previously a Town hall meeting in this space we are in now, but it had low turn out.
3. People who live in Track 1001 zone are overwhelmed with critical issues.
4. Good ideas take time. We need to lead by example.
5. Keep trying and working at it (Town Hall meetings)
6. There is a town meeting to look at CAN on Tuesday night.
7. This is a schedule conflict with our Tuesday evening presentation.
8. Idea re Town Halls - something like that already happening: Town Forums on Hunger.

9. Had data collection events regarding traffic stops, to numerically demonstrate discrimination. Showed documentary, collected testimonials and feedback. It was a standing-room only event.

How do we connect existing community initiatives?

How do we best utilize available resources?

Data & Perspectives

1. We tend to work in silos.
2. Some of us would like to hear about what is already happening, so we can plug into that.
3. Some things already on the ground.
4. Many established orgs in Durham. Ex: Good Works. Iteration of Mayor's campaign that set up a Town Hall, yet people organized a walk-out. Was opportunity for public input, & also had private resources there.
5. Another ex: Durham Congregations in Action. Many orgs spun off it, including DERC, Durham Economic & Resource Center -- does workforce development; also Durham CAN. End Poverty Durham also came out of Durham Congregations in Action.
6. Religious Coalition for Non-Violent Durham. Marcia Owens doing really good work.
7. In northeast central Durham, United Servants of Christ on Holloway street. Goal is networking, building relationships, fill in gaps by doing things that are not yet being done.
8. Pastor Gumbo at Shephard House always has doors open.
9. Real Durham -- Antioch Baptist Church
10. Board of Durham Community Land Trustees help provide permanently affordable housing on west end, thru land trust model.
11. Super Fund Research Center at Duke is interdisciplinary center that studies health effects of toxic chemicals, makes information available to community.

Initial Solution Ideas

1. Have a clearinghouse. Recognize what is already there. "Get in where you fit in."
2. Learn what each of us is doing so we don't duplicate our efforts, and so we can refer people to one another.
3. Spread the word about Hunger Forums that are already planned.
4. Encourage retired people and independently wealthy people to volunteer at underprivileged schools.

Responses, Concerns about Initial Solutions, Data & Perspectives

1. A whole demographic is unaware of many of the above orgs except as charity cases or social services, because these organizations are mostly middle class.
2. We tend to not identify with the people we serve.
3. We need the people who we are "helping", to be at the table.
4. Durham is notorious for being territorial. Many orgs not talking with each other.
5. Nothing really happens unless we become friends.

How do we educate ourselves, about ourselves? How do we educate ourselves about our own biases, blind spots, and perspectives?

Data & Perspectives

1. Summit RDU has college students living in Hyde.
2. Many policemen don't live in Durham.

Solution Ideas

1. Live where you serve.
2. Be aware and conscious of our privileges and filters, and how they impact us.
3. Make an effort to make ourselves aware.
4. Have police live in the city that they serve.

How do we build community resilience? How do we prepare for disaster?

How do we build relationships amongst people who are isolated from one other?

Initial Solution Ideas

1. Create an emergency preparedness plan for Durham.
2. Create geographically-located Care Teams, of no more than 150 people. Have block captains. Have this not just be about crime, but also focused on what do people need on a daily basis. Who needs child care, medications, who has stuff to share... Have "den mothers" who can offer care to members who are in need, know who in their area needs to be checked on. Since some neighborhoods have more resources than others, create "sister neighborhoods" who can partner with each other (like "Sister Cities", but within the same town) for exchange of resources.
3. Expand community watch program.
4. Expand community gardens.

5. Have community festivals like we used to.
6. Establish free bus service.

Responses, Concerns about Initial Solutions, Data & Perspectives

1. Community watch program is already in place.
2. Neighborhood Watch Council. INC, InterNeighborhood Council, works w/Durham CAN.
3. Some disasters are acute, others are ongoing, slow-rolling disasters. Need to address both.
4. One objection to overcome, is that people are driven by fear. They will participate in crime prevention programs out of fear, yet may not want to participate in a program that is based on people helping one another.
5. Story about how Latino people's homes got broken into, by ppl wanting to steal their money (Latinos not using banks at the time.) Example of historical reasons that people have, for not opening their doors in certain neighborhoods.
6. Story re warfare between Crips & Bloods. Then MS 13 came in out of Central America. Crime went down, b/c MS13 enforced peace so cops would not be in their business.

How can we build on Durham's past to make a better future?

How do we get the "other" Durham to feel that Durham belongs to us?

How do we get Durhamites to buy into the Durham vision?

Data and Perspectives

1. Complexion of community is changing.
2. Light rail construction and East End Connector brings back ghost of 147, which cut thru Black Wall Street. There used to be 2 Black-owned banks there, at a time when there were only 7 black-owned banks in whole U.S. There were also movie theatres, hotels.
3. Worry with the East End Connector, is that it will create the same kind of disenfranchisement, of folks who are invested in community.
4. If you don't know background of why people are resistant, end up with divided camps.
5. "Marry Durham" campaign perpetuated the split between "wealthy Durham" and non-wealthy Durham.
6. We have documentaries about Durham; also information in the local history museum.
7. Pauli Murray project.

8. Downtown Durham Rotary will be celebrating its First Centennial with a "100 acts of service" project. Many additional ideas being offered for how to celebrate this.
9. In March 2007, there was the 1st community dinner between haves and have nots. Some people paid for tickets, others were given tickets. Yet everyone came in with a ticket, so there were no distinctions made. Opportunity for people to connect.
10. There are places in Durham where African-American people don't feel welcome. There was a time when Durham was more inclusive.
11. Bimbe has shrunk. Black people feel whites have taken it over and commercialized it.
12. Hillside Homecoming Parade is the only community event that still draws a large part of the black community.
13. Many black people feel like they are priced out of events in Durham.
14. There are spaces where whites can enter into black spaces, but not many spaces where blacks can come into a white space and feel welcome.
15. These are invisible walls. Many of us feel we are in a prison that doesn't have visible walls.
16. To some degree this is dependent on class. Our social-economic environment is not just about race but also about class.
17. Story about the value of an invitation, in order to feel welcome in a space where you might not feel welcome otherwise.
18. Mount Zion Christian Church: you are all invited to attend! Service starts at 10:30 am.
19. Some of us are wondering how we can reclaim Bimbe.

Initial Solution Ideas

1. Host forums to educate people on historical dividers / legacies in Durham. We have resources about Durham's history since 1787.
2. Encourage citizens, esp. activists and transplants, to take historical tours of Durham.
3. Encourage both locals and transplants to learn history.
4. Fill in gaps in historical sites. Hayti is not consistent.
5. Create a campaign: "Take pride in Durham: Learn about it!" Have it not just be about tourism, but for locals.
6. Host events in Carolina Theatre, Arts Council, Bay 7 about Durham's history. Offer free admission and non-stop showing of historical films.
7. Have it be part of a "Renew the Vows" campaign.
8. Get buses to get people there. Forums, free food, gracious invitation, community dinners.
9. Make it a moveable feast and get buy-in of anchor churches: Antioch, Zion, St.Jo's.
10. Create "Durham Works For Everyone": a vision/project with the intention of having everyone in Durham feel welcome and safe everywhere in Durham.

11. Accompany people into places that are outside of their comfort zone. Create opportunities for structuring this.
12. Create something like Match (dot) com for people who want to invite one another to experience places outside their comfort zone.

Responses, Concerns about Initial Solutions, Data & Perspectives

1. Inclusion in social events could lead to greater participation in community forums.
2. City Computer is a resource: they help create apps to make cities work better.
3. YES! Magazine last month published an issue focused on race. They had articles exploring the issue of reparations for slavery.
4. "The best of Enemies" – book recommendation.
5. Concern about hosting film event in anchor churches. Those are spaces we already have access to. Want to focus on expanding access to spaces where we often don't feel welcome.

How can we become better citizens in our own community?

Data & Perspectives

1. We can't learn about how to interact with one another by watching Congress. They are not setting a good example.

Initial Solution Ideas

1. Bring back civics class.

How do we create government policies that help people meet their basic needs?

How can we work with government to move forward on the issues we want to promote?

Data and Perspectives

1. Judgments are made about people receiving food assistance. Some feel that people on those programs are taking advantage. A different perspective is that food is a human right.
2. There is a current pushback against affirmative action. This is predominantly a white male movement.
3. Something about a return to reconstruction.
4. There is also a movement to expand the minimum income, to create a guaranteed income that would be sufficient for food, housing, and healthcare.

Initial Solution Ideas

1. Promote food, water, and clean air as basic human rights.
2. Declare Durham as a social experiment in meeting basic human needs.
3. Invite conversations on reparations and affirmative action, putting economically disenfranchised people in front of the line, to balance out past injustices.

This last conversation just got started when it was time to close. We did not have an opportunity to do it justice, so we noted this in the summary, as a conversation that needed to be continued...

Many thanks again to everyone who participated in and/or helped to organize these two events.

The recent massacre in Charleston, North Carolina, is a tragic reminder of how far we still need to go, to create Martin Luther King's dream of a Beloved Community.

And yet here we are,
walking that road together,
step by step....