

THE CHARLOTTE-MECKLENBURG
REMEMBRANCE
PROJECT



Community Conversation Guide

Purpose

The primary goals of this dialogue are: 1) to engage with our community's history in a constructive and meaningful way and 2) to reach a shared understanding of different perspectives and experiences around the issues of racial terrorism, injustice and trauma.

This Conversation Guide is designed to provide a safe space and an inclusive process for participants to share feelings, experiences and thoughts in response to the narratives of the two documented lynchings in Mecklenburg County.

Like many other communities across the United States, Charlotte-Mecklenburg is working in partnership with the Equal Justice Initiative to place historical markers recognizing the men who died in the two documented lynchings. Your thoughts on this process and what it might mean for our community to have these markers is valued and important.

Suggested Ground Rules for Discussion

- **Assume best intentions:** These types of conversations are difficult. Enter the discussion with the assumption that everyone present wants to learn about and respect this history.
- **Be present:** Recognize this discussion for what it is: a special opportunity to engage deeply with other members of your community. Set aside outside worries or distractions during this time.
- **Listen to understand:** Try not to think about what you will say next, but instead focus on truly *hearing and understanding* what others are saying.
- **Share air time:** If you have gotten to speak but others haven't, let your silence give them the space to speak.
- **"Lean in" to discomfort:** There will likely be at least one moment during the conversation when you are tempted to disengage because of discomfort. You are encouraged to recognize that impulse, and then ask yourself why you are uncomfortable and how it might be impacting what you're hearing. Then, make an effort to lean in to that discomfort so that you can further your learning and the learning of those around you.

Process

1. Identify someone to assist in facilitating/guiding the conversation. The person filling this role can simply start and end the conversation, ensuring everyone has an opportunity to speak and that everyone is following the ground rules.
2. Facilitators will share the purpose of the dialogue (above) in a sentence or two, then ask participants to reflect on the questions below in silence for a few minutes. They may write some responses, but that's not essential.
3. Take the questions one at a time and let each person respond before you go on. These questions are offered as a way to promote dialogue—there is no right or wrong answer.
4. Facilitators should summarize and paraphrase when it's helpful to the group – ask follow-up questions as appropriate.
5. Facilitators should conclude by thanking participants and encouraging them to stay engaged.

Before the Discussion

- Participants should have time to read the one-page narratives about each event.

Questions for Conversation

1. Please introduce yourself and share with the group: What brings you to this conversation today?

What were you feeling as you read the narratives of Mr. McNeely and Mr. McDaniel? (NOTE: This could be handled like a “one word or phrase” check-in, depending on the time allotted for the conversation.)
2. What stands out for you about each of the narratives? (NOTE: Time permitting, we could also ask about connections between the two narratives and potential differences.)
3. What have you learned about Charlotte Mecklenburg's history of lynching that you didn't already know?
4. What could be the significance of having Charlotte-Mecklenburg erect markers to memorialize the documented lynchings that happened here?

What could be challenging? What could be valuable?
5. Do you think it's important to acknowledge and discuss our history of racial terror and injustice? Why or why not? If so, what would that look and/or sound like for you? For those in your networks?
6. How are you feeling as you leave today's conversation? What might you consider doing as a result of this exposure and experience?