

At this difficult moment in our national life, it seems important for us to reintroduce ourselves, the Joint Committee for Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation. The Joint Committee was created by the mayors and councils of Scotch Plains and Fanwood, in partnership with the Board of Education, and Social Justice Matters - an organization of community members founded a decade ago to advance discussions on race in our communities.

We acknowledge that racism - structural, systemic, and individual - is not a new problem in our communities. The reprehensible actions of law enforcement that led to the death of George Floyd are shocking to some, but not to everyone. We cannot absolve ourselves by just condemning what has happened somewhere else.

The TRHT Joint Committee was organized to do the hard work in our communities to live up to the ideal of being the truly welcoming and inclusive towns that we imagine that we are, or would like to be.

We do not have the one magic solution to end racism, but we have been organizing to bring the tools that we know are effective - fostering conversations and actions that lead to us not only understanding each other, but reflecting on our own biases, unconscious or no, as well as the different experiences we may have, even in the same place and at the same time.

We will be scheduling open (virtual) meetings in the upcoming weeks - first a chance for people to air what they are feeling and seeing - a listening tour - which will be followed up with analysis and proposals to be shared for concrete action. These groups will be of limited size, so we can make sure to hear everyone's voice. We are also planning paneled conversations with members of our committee to share the work we have been doing, and what we have learned of our own racism.

The work is hard, but we need to do it together. We invite you to join us in this hard work. This moment is tragic, but it is sadly not unique. We need to work to make this time the last, by committing to being vulnerable and honest with each other. Please join us beginning next week.

TRHT Committee:

Mayor Colleen Mahr

Mayor Al Smith

Dr. Joan Mast

Rabbi Joel Abraham

Leland S. McGee

Sharon Stroye

Joan Peters

Erin McElroy Barker

Roshan White

Jill Jackson Jones

Rev. Susanna Cates

Amy Winkler

Stephanie Suriani