



## MOVEMENT IN OMAHA FOR RACIAL EQUITY

*Engagement. Education. Advocacy.*

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@MOREMovementInOmaha  
ForRacialEquity

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May 23, 2022

Dear Friends of MORE,

I am writing today to highlight some of the accomplishments of Movement in Omaha for Racial Equity (MORE) over the last several months.

**White supremacy and associated racial hatred isn't just a problem in Buffalo, NY. It's the water we're swimming in here in Omaha.** The repercussions are profound. The policies and practices of Omaha's local public institutions, educational systems, and too many of its nonprofit organizations are racist. They are planned, developed, and implemented in a manner that excludes people of color and therefore perpetuates racial and ethnic inequities. Many like to say our workforce or places should reflect our population. This is not the case looking at many public and private organizations.

Vulnerable communities of color are increasingly plagued by inequities (e.g., jobs, health, education, transportation, housing, safety). When individuals and communities of color stop caring about the city or communities, that alienation translates into enormous public harm in the form of deteriorating institutions and organizations and a failing Omaha.

We searched the many agencies in the nonprofit sector. Despite Omaha's record as a racially divided city, we discovered that **NO OTHER local organization explicitly has the word "antiracism" in its mission statement.** And, despite all lip service paid by all who express their love for diversity, equity, and inclusion, there are startlingly few organizations doing the necessary work with credible outcomes. The MORE board members and all of you – our allies and supporters – have stepped up to fill this void.

MORE's mission is to fight for racial equity through engagement, education, and advocacy. One way we do that is to create opportunities to bring you and others together to have safe conversations on racial issues. **In our joint work, we are a critical player in pushing forward discussions where racial healing can occur in Omaha.** These conversations help us overcome the race-based estrangement between communities of color and our local institutions and nonprofits.

Here is some of what we've accomplished in the last few months as we hosted an intensive series of community forums where public and elected officials presented their missions and their strategies and then took questions and reactions from participants and other community members:

- We brought together the Ombudsman of Nebraska, the Inspector General of Child Welfare, and the Inspector General of Corrections for their first joint appearance. Despite these offices being around for years, this was the first time they came together in public to discuss how their findings affect the people of this state, with a focus on racialized and low-income communities.

The demographic information in the reports coming from these three offices indicates the disproportionately negative impact of state institutions such as child welfare and the prison system on communities of color and low-income communities.

**Through this public forum, those of you with some of the greatest challenges to holding state government accountable had a platform to voice your concerns – and hopefully, the chance to improve how state government works for the people.**

- Sen. Justin Wayne and Sen. Terrell McKinney (a MORE board member) united for a MORE community dialog focusing on the American Rescue Plan (ARPA) in North Omaha. ARPA provides federal funding to support communities and businesses to restore resources lost and help repair other damages resulting from the COVID-19 Pandemic. With you, the Senators discussed the debatable questions of how that money will be distributed and who it will go to - will it go to the usual suspects? And if so, will North Omaha be left holding an empty bag *again*?
- Our virtual forum on Critical Race Theory drew an audience of more than 150 of you – our supporters and allies – in a collaborative effort with our co-sponsors, Inclusive Communities, College of St. Mary, Nebraskans for Peace, Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, and Survivors Rising. Through our dialog, we drilled down to make sense of this framework for understanding history and society. **As a result of this conversation with all of you, we could discuss this issue civilly without devolving into a polarizing debate; we learned from each other, built bridges, and grew as a community.**
- We have headlined local community advocates and activists in our forums – folks we don't usually hear about publicly. Nonetheless, these are the people who drive antiracist change in Omaha. Since February, we have featured a series of Black women and Latino leaders, bringing their amazing work to your attention if you didn't know about them and allowing much-needed public recognition of their efforts if you did know of them: Ms. Cheryl Weston; Dr. Donna Polk; and Dr. Patrick Velasquez. **These leaders speak truth to power. They galvanize the community in support of racial equity. And they construct strong platforms for the social change needed to make Omaha antiracist to the core.**
- Despite the challenges of the COVID-19 Pandemic, we sent critical correspondences to government entities, banks, and nonprofits about their failures to include racial diversity within their management staff and boards.

Many local nonprofits, such as the Omaha Land Bank, often operate within the community without input despite most of their holdings being in North Omaha. We are bringing accountability to institutions where it has historically been absent.

- We received grants from Humanities Nebraska and Weitz Family Foundation **to help the community work on racial healing**. We plan to establish templates and measurements to get community folks asking pertinent questions about the enormous racial divide in Omaha.

We have new and exciting events planned for the remainder of 2022 and into 2023. Walter Vincent Brooks, the author of "**Trust No Shadows After Dark**", will help continue the racial conversation on current challenges. We will continue this racial healing by facilitating and convening organizations and Grasstops in various communities, who are not within the electronic community of Facebook, Zoom, and social media apparatus.

When you join us, it makes these events enormously more rewarding. Being active in antiracist community forums helps create measurable racial equity outcomes for Omaha and helps us reach a better tomorrow.

Sincerely,



A'Jamal Byndon  
Chairman, MORE Board of Directors

PS - Please visit our web page ([MOREomaha.org](https://moreomaha.org)), and consider donating. ***Your gift to MORE right now helps end racism in Omaha!***