

Remarks by Jackie Newberry
June 15, 2002
Juneteenth Ally Award Banquet

The gathering in this room today is an annual event that recognizes those who have given voice to and have lived out the mission of the Center for the Healing of Racism. The allies honored every year on this occasion represent what, in 1989, a number of ethnically diverse individuals, in some small personal way, wanted to grasp and begin a journey toward understanding for themselves. They understood that the outside world, their inner circles, and their own personal conditioning fell short of their common belief in the oneness of the human family.

They began to speak, listen, and learn how racism-with its walls, its estrangement, its separation, its hostility, its anger, its subtle smirks, its demeaning exclusion, its exalting superiority, its exhaustion, its depression, its grief, its corruption, its injustice, its shallowness, its sadness, its emptiness, its mortal wounds-had damaged them and others in their lives, as well as society at large. These friends felt the imperative to face the issue of racism candidly and openly, but in an atmosphere of safety, support and healing. They formally created the Institute for the Healing of Racism as a source of experiential study where those who gathered could develop the skills to face the challenges of racism, heal themselves, and spread that healing effect to the outer community.

Dialogue: Racism, one of the first activities the group embarked on, has been the cornerstone of the work of what evolved into the Center of the Healing of Racism. Its basic premise has not changed in that it continues to provide opportunities for people to explore together racism in its various forms. The goal was then, as now, to learn how to recognize racism, how it is transmitted, how it impacts the recipient and the giver, and how to understand and eliminate it-but to do so within a safe and supportive environment. This has been an integral part of the Center's work since its inception.

In 1992 the Center was incorporated as a non-profit organization. It is governed by a board of directors, its activities are conducted by experienced co-directors, who have been supported by the expertise, energy, and dedication of thousands of volunteers over the years.

As the organization has grown, it has taken the time to carefully develop guidelines and a core curriculum for its facilitators. The program has been refined and expanded over the years and has served as a model for other organizations interested in doing similar work. The Center has shared its

curriculum materials, thereby expanding the awareness and appreciation of its founding principles far beyond the vision of the original members.

The Center's unique approach to its mission has been one of healing. It has always been more than a course in multicultural diversity or a one-stop dose of feel-good, hand-holding, brother-and-sister "kumbayaing." Those who have been through the Center's programs have remarked that it was an adventure in community-building by individuals whose lives have been transformed and who have initiated change in themselves and their communities. Little did the small group of individuals know, when they took up this issue thirteen years ago, that so many people would recognize the need for and the value of their work.

Since its incorporation the Center has received numerous requests and referrals, locally and nationally, to speak to and/or conduct workshops for faculties, student organizations in universities, high schools, and grade schools, service organizations, faith communities, professionals in the public and private sector, and the media. Center speakers are often asked to revisit these groups to build upon their work. In addition to its own activities, the Center collaborates and participates actively with other community groups who share a commitment to racial justice.

Because there is much work to be done, the Center's vision and mission continue: to open and educate hearts and minds to the truth of the oneness of the human family, to be able to spread knowledge and understanding from heart to heart and encourage them to internalize oneness.

In a recent discussion about his new collection, "The Long Road to Freedom," Harry Belafonte was asked what the music says about life. Belafonte, who has always been a tireless advocate for justice and human rights, stated that "the human spirit is resilient and that truth -- no matter how long you abuse it and how long you try to crush it -- will, as Dr. King would say, rise up again, and in the final analysis will prevail. From the point of view of the poor, the hungry, the disenfranchised, the wretched of the Earth ... there will never be peace until their condition has been alleviated and until their humanity is in full bloom. Now we're more vulnerable than we've ever been. The only thing that can put that to rest forever is to abolish poverty. To eradicate preventable diseases. First and foremost, to get rid of ignorance."

That has always been and will continue to be the mission of the Center for the Healing of Racism.