Come with us for a walk down memory lane

**Justice & Action Highlights**

1991 thru 2015

**Formative Experiences**

**BEFORE we were WNCCEIB:**

**1988: Getting “Dixie” Off the Radio**

In 1988, WWNC, the oldest radio station in western NC, played “Dixie” every hour on the hour as its theme song. That December, the station manager delivered a station editorial saying how the station wanted to be friend and family for everyone in the region. We wrote a letter pointing out that whenever WWNC plays “Dixie,” the station creates a division among its listeners and keeps us looking backward. The station responded by reading the letter on the air and then changed their theme song within two weeks, ceasing to play “Dixie” completely.

**1990: Montreat Dr. MLK Holiday**

In 1990, we worked with citizens in Montreat to urge the town to make Dr. Martin Luther King Jr’s national holiday an official holiday for the town. Public hearings ensued, there was resistance from some quarters, and we brought in Oralene Simmons, who was on the State Commission for the holiday, to explain the need for change. To their credit, the Town Council did listen to the community and declare it a paid holiday for town employees.

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Since 1991 WNCCEIB has been there:

- Standing with victims of hate activity & discrimination
- Monitoring hate activity and groups in the western NC region
- Nudging institutions toward more intentional diversity

WNCCEIB has been there for you and YOU have been there for WNCCEIB

**Thank You!**

**Forming WNCCEIB’s organizing modus operandi, our MO:**

These experiences helped form one aspect of what was to become WNCCEIB’s method of organizing, our MO:

- bringing together people around an issue
- doing thorough research
- appealing to the best in officials
- keeping the high road
- being polite but tenacious

Working this way for 25 years, WNCCEIB has seen the positive impact of making better the so-called “little” things that cumulatively define us as a community.
Here are a few examples of the issues and incidents WNCCEIB has addressed over these 25 years:

### 1991

**Biltmore Forest Country Club and the History of WNCCEIB’s name**

In 1989, a Black child, having come as the guest of a member, was removed from the swimming pool at the Biltmore Forest Country Club. Drs. Dwight and Dolly Mullen wrote a letter to the *Citizen-Times* about the incident. We got involved and began researching, developing allies in the club, and shining a public spotlight on the club’s practice of not allowing Blacks or Jews as guests, much less members. In 1991, just weeks before the club’s annual meeting, Julian Price contributed enough money for us to put a ¼ page ad in the *Citizen-Times* asking the question: Do You Belong to a Discriminatory Country Club? There followed a series of “Why’s” – for example, “Why 130 years after this nation was split apart by slavery...do you allow your club to persist in its discriminatory membership practices?” We wanted a way for people to share their experiences of discrimination at the club and included a coupon to send in. We needed a return address and picked Western North Carolina Citizens Ending Institutional Bigotry (WNCCEIB), not thinking it would become the name of an organization.

At that year’s annual meeting, the club voted to include a non-discriminatory clause in its by-laws – to an ovation from the membership. WNCCEIB realized our long, somewhat confrontational name took some people aback. But we learned over the years how much the name is loved by the targets & victims of hate activity and discrimination with whom we work. They feel confidence in WNCCEIB seeing that the organization’s name addresses exactly what they are experiencing. Without losing the directness, we’d still like to make it shorter if you have a suggestion!

**Racist Logo on Feed Bag Eliminated**

In mid-1991, a chicken farmer in Yancy County was amazed at the logo she found on a 50 lb. bag of chicken feed. In the middle of a string of animals was the silhouette of an “old Black Joe” slave image, as if he were just another farm yard animal. She asked WNCCEIB to help, and we wrote to Alabama Feed Mills in Tuscaloosa, one of the largest feed suppliers in the South. Instead of being defensive, the company immediately called, and, quite chagrined at themselves, said, “We’ve had that logo for 75 years, and we just didn’t think about it. We’re changing it immediately."

The company sent us a sample of the new bag, which as you can see makes a lot more sense anyway: farming catfish is big business in the South. Chipping away, chipping away.

### 1992

**Attempts to Harm Madison County High School Student**

Sam Thomas, one of two Black students at Madison County High School, was harassed on the bus and then seriously attacked while doing a summer job at the school. He was weed-eating when three boys in a truck roared right at him. Sam had to jump on the hood to avoid being killed. WNCCEIB worked with his family throughout the ordeal. We counseled ministers in the county to get together and put out a joint statement against such racial hatred. That public act created a new atmosphere in the county as the court case got more and more attention. The three boys were convicted, and Sam Thomas went on to college and a career.

This incident also taught WNCCEIB the second aspect of our “MO.” We learned the importance of making sure targeted individuals and their families do not feel alone. Our experience is that targeted individuals have within them the resilience to stand up and act – and knowing they are not alone makes that action more doable. One victim told us WNCCEIB is the “gasoline in my engine.”
1992 to Present

Monitoring a Leader in the National White Supremacy Movement

In 1992, the Southern Poverty Law Center named lawyer Kirk Lyons one of ten leaders in the national white supremacy movement. That same year, Lyons moved to Black Mountain, fifteen miles from Asheville. Since that time, WNCCEIB has monitored his activities and that of his organization, the Southern Legal Resource Center, which defends “Southern heritage” issues. WNCCEIB’s website has been a resource for officials and communities around the nation where Lyons turns up to sue over Confederate flag issues. We have worked closely with the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) throughout these years. Lyons has written that WNCCEIB is “an anti-Christian, anti-Confederate, pro-homosexual, leftist, extremist organization.”

1992 to Present

Stopping Unconstitutional Religious Activity in Public Schools

WNCCEIB has worked with parents, teachers, and administrators to stop inappropriate and unconstitutional religious activities in public schools. Among the practices stopped: handing out New Testaments to 5th graders, advertising for religious camps, selling religious materials, and promoting religious classroom activities. One mother was told she was evil when she complained about the principal urging students over the intercom during Friday afternoon announcements to go to church on Sunday.

In another situation, parents were told an international shoebox project was a ‘geography’ project with no mention that it was sponsored by Franklin Graham and that the $5 bill requested for the shoebox would be taken out and a sectarian religious track inserted. The school system stopped it and the project is now centered in churches where it belongs. Key for WNCCEIB is to educate school officials that community concerns are not anti-religious but are ensuring the school (i.e. the government) is not acting to promote or denigrate a particular faith, as the Constitution prescribes.

1992 to Present

Organizing and Supporting Workers

WNCCEIB organized Asheville street and water maintenance workers into an American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) union in the 1990s when it became clear they were not being treated fairly. We have also worked with individual workers when, for example, a noose was hung in a work space (the worker got monetary compensation), when a worker was transferred for example, a noose was hung in a work space (the worker got reinstated and money), when a job offer was rescinded because the worker was gay, and many more instances. It can be tough out there for workers just trying to do their jobs. WNCCEIB wants to be there for them.

1992 to Present

Working for LGBT Equality and Same-Sex Marriage

Working for LGBT-equality and same-sex marriage, WNCCEIB has been part of many efforts to bring equality and justice to LGBT citizens in the region. From helping organize two responses, in 2008 and 2010, to Exodus International’s conferences in Ridgecrest, to being part of People of Faith for Just Relationships, to standing with the Campaign for Southern Equality at Registers of Deeds offices, WNCCEIB remains active in bringing full LGBT-equality in every sphere of community and national life. Note: Exodus International later disbanded and apologized for the hurt they caused in advocating “reparative therapy” that falsely claimed to make LGBT people straight.

1995 to Present

Working with Communities when KKK Comes to Town

WNCCEIB has worked with numerous communities on how to respond when hate groups, especially the KKK, come to town, including Landrum (SC), Asheville, Brevard, Franklin, and Black Mountain. WNCCEIB encourages towns not to confront the KKK physically but to take an alternative action that demonstrates what the town DOES stand for. In Landrum, for example, we worked with downtown businesses who all put up posters in their downtown windows acknowledging the KKK’s right to peaceful protest but stating that Landrum does not support the KKK’s philosophy or racism. Media coverage focused on the Town’s response rather than the KKK.

1996 to Present

Nudging Mission Hospital on Diversity

Prompted by Red Cross nurse, LaVerne Glover, who is now WNCCEIB’s Board Chair, WNCCEIB pulled together an interracial group of community leaders to challenge Mission Hospital’s lack of diversity in hiring and its cultural insensitivity. WNCCEIB successfully recommended creation of the Diversity Committee at the hospital and has had representation on the Committee since. While there are still problems as might be expected in an institution with over 7000 employees, the culture is much improved from those days nearly twenty years ago. The $50,000 per year devoted to the Kesha Young Health Career Scholarships by the hospital’s foundation has been a solid success. Note: WNCCEIB’s Chair, LaVerne Glover was Kesha Young’s guardian until she died at age 21.
Eliminating “Indian” Mascot in 40 NC Public Schools

Working with Buncombe County Native American Association, WNCCEIB has worked nearly 20 years to eliminate “Indian” mascots in the NC non-native public schools. When we started there were 73 schools with such mascots across the state. Today, 40 have now been eliminated. We are still working to bring about change. Our subgroup for this effort is the NC Mascot Education and Action Group (NCMEAG). Learn many more details and read how the nation’s attention was on Erwin High School in Buncombe County in 1999 at our web site under the “Issues” tab: www.wncceib.org

1997

Exposing All-White Rod & Gun Club on city property

WNCCEIB exposed the fact that 31 white men had been secretly partying monthly for years on Asheville City Watershed Property where the public is not allowed. Community leaders were involved, including the County School Board Chair, the City Manager, prominent business men, and others, including a candidate in the upcoming Mayoral election. The Rod & Gun Club was the “oldest social club in western NC, founded in 1894,” as one member described it. The club’s misuse of public property was widely condemned, and City Council prohibited club activities on the property. WNCCEIB’s exposure of the club was credited by political analysts as contributing significantly to the election of Asheville’s first woman mayor, Leni Sitnick.

1997

Exposing KKK leader in Yancy County

A Yancy County resident came to WNCCEIB concerned about a new man on his road with a huge Confederate flag in the yard and gatherings of trucks with what appeared semi-automatic rifles in the gun-racks. WNCCEIB researched him locally and then contacted the Southern Poverty Law Center which tracks hate groups and individuals nation-wide. The man was identified as a fired law enforcement deputy from New Hampshire who had been Grand Secretary of the New Hampshire-Maine KKK. The SPLC had lost track of him and was pleased to have WNCCEIB’s eyes on the ground here in WNC to find him. And we were pleased they could tell us just who he was. They had eighty five newspaper clippings about his activities in New England.

WNCCEIB exposed him in the local newspaper and made sure people and organizations he was intimidating knew who he was. He has since moved to Washington state. WNCCEIB has worked collaboratively with the SPLC on many issues during our twenty five years.
Standing with Men Harassed for Beliefs & Origin

WNCCIEB came to the defense of a man in a small town in western NC who, at a town council meeting, had stood respectfully but did not say The Pledge of Allegiance. He was publicly berated by the town’s mayor during the meeting despite the man’s religious objections to the pledge. WNCCIEB wrote a guest commentary on the issue quoting from the Supreme Court’s powerful 1943 majority opinion that belittled the idea of compulsory patriotism in relation to The Pledge of Allegiance. The mayor backed down.

Later, in days after 9/11, the man was visited by the FBI and interrogated for two hours, being asked “How did you feel when the planes hit the towers?” Originally from Lebanon, the man, who worked as an aide in a state medical facility, has been a US citizen since 1983 but feared even with his citizenship papers, he would be deported. WNCCIEB worked closely with him with assurances that his citizenship could not be so easily nullified. Ironically, when he has visited Lebanon, local militias accused him of being CIA.

In another post 9/11 case, WNCCIEB organized a community response for a Pakistani small business owner who was arrested and held for three months. We organized a hundred letters of support for him and stayed close to his family. When he was released with no charge, his Charlotte lawyer said he wished all of his clients had such community support as WNCCIEB organized.

Life can be scary in the midst of hysteria – as it is now with immigration.

Coordinated Volunteer Escorts at Femcare

WNCCIEB trained, scheduled, and coordinated Volunteer Escorts at the only women’s clinic in western NC that, among other GYN services, performed abortions three days per week. Volunteers welcomed patients and de-escalated tension in front of the clinic where demonstrators yelled at the patients through a loudspeaker. When Femcare closed in the summer of 2014, WNCCIEB assisted Planned Parenthood in the establishment of their similar “Greeter” program, and many of our Volunteers shifted over to that program.

Discriminatory Debutante Club

WNCCIEB, following up on what we had learned during the Biltmore Forest County Club issue, shined a public spotlight on the all-white Rhododendron Royal Brigade of Guards Debutante Club (yes, that’s the real name). After intense community debate, in which one club supporter wrote that “their whiteness is a refreshing form of diversity,” the club agreed not to have the annual three-page spread of their parties in the newspaper and to put a non-discrimination clause in its bylaws. While we and most people have no desire to be part of a debutante club anyway, this change represents one more chip off institutional bigotry in our community to which too many leaders had clung.

2001 to 2014

2002 to 2015

Convener for the Blue Moon Group, a Community Abortion Dialogue

After serious harassment of Femcare clinic and WNCCIEB staff by representatives of the so-called “pro life” group in Asheville, a dialogue began with leaders on both sides of the issue. We met every month for almost thirteen years with the purpose of “lessening the chance of violence in the community and getting to know each other as citizens of the community.” To read more about it, see our Common Ground Agreement and the 2007 TIME magazine feature on the group at: http://www.main.nc.us/wncceib/CHICEact31305.htm

2002

A s to the Rhododendron Royal Brigade of Guards, I, for one, find their whiteness a refreshing form of diversity...

Fay Parks, Guest Commentary, Asheville Citizen-Times, October 23, 2002
Autumn of Hate

Throughout the late summer and autumn of 2010, WNCCEIB worked with three families targeted by hate. One in Fletcher had a cross burned in their yard, one in Leicester had racist epithets yelled as cars created “donuts” in the front yard, and one in Black Mountain had their house vandalized and a death threat made in the front yard. Police investigations, about which we had concerns, did not lead to charges in two of the cases but the youths who burned the cross were convicted and suffered consequences. WNCCEIB made sure each family never felt alone throughout their ordeals and beyond.

Standing With Bullied 9-Year Old

WNCCEIB worked with the family of a 4th grade boy who was bullied for bringing a “My Little Pony” book bag to school. The issue went viral and got national attention on Good Morning America and other shows. WNCCEIB coordinated a meeting between the mother and the school system to get the boy back into a school with a supportive Principal & staff. He has since thrived.

Tribute to a great printing team:

For all of WNCCEIB’s 25 years, Peter Boggs’ American Speedy Printing in West Asheville has been a highly skilled and dedicated supporter. The business has just been sold, but the staff (sans Peter, who is retiring) will still be there – drop by and give them thanks if you are in the area.

Cyber Death Threat to 15-Year Old Biracial Student

WNCCEIB, on the request of the family’s minister, worked with a frightened family in a case in which the 15-year old biracial daughter was receiving vulgar instant-messaging death, kidnapping, and arson threats. Bringing in the Asheville police, we assisted in the prosecution of the 17-year old perpetrator convicted of ethnic intimidation and communicating threats.

7th Grader gets Death Threat in Bryson City

WNCCEIB worked closely with the family of Cassie Miles, a seventh grader who received a death threat in her book bag, via a vulgar “N**** Hunting License.” One of only five Black students in the Swain County schools, she bravely spoke to the school board, six white men who would not even look at her as she spoke. Eventually, the US Department of Education required diversity training for school officials and staff. That training was carried out by long-time WNCCEIB friend, Jacquelyn Hallum of MAHEC. Cassie received the Dr. MLK Jr. Award that year from another town in western NC. When she was in high school, Cassie organized a regional program to bring young people together with older community members to learn from each other. She then went on to graduate from UNC-Chapel Hill in 2015 and is now living in, fittingly, Selma, AL.

Couple Refused Entry to Moose Lodge

WNCCEIB worked with a biracial couple whose Black wife was refused entry to a Moose lodge in Black Mountain. We got the national Moose Lodge to do an investigation and the local lodge was told to change or lose its charter. The husband later became Governor of the lodge for a full turn around.
Community Organizing Training

Throughout these 25 years, WNCCEIB has carried out community organizing trainings for many groups, classes, and organizations. We have created a series of laminated posters through which to share information and lessons. The main lessons are:

• each of us can make a difference
• no one should be alone when targeted
• the key to success is people working together

There are many other examples of WNCCEIB’s work beyond this newsletter. Read about them in our past newsletters at our web site under the “Issues” tab.

www.wncceib.org

Again, our thanks to YOU for your solidarity with WNCCEIB these 25 years!
“Saying YES to Human Rights is the best way to say NO to racism and bigotry”

Black Lives DO Matter: Let’s Organize To Make It Real

You can celebrate
25 years and
PARTNER IN WNCCEIB’S 2016 WORK:
Contribute Today!

This past year, WNCCEIB operated on less than $16,000 so your help makes a BIG difference in making us go!

Please make your check out to “WNCCEIB” and send it to
PO Box 18640
Asheville, NC 28814

Or contribute on-line via PayPal at our website:
http://wnccceib.org
(Make sure to print out your receipt!)

WNCCEIB is a 501 (c) 3 tax-exempt non-profit. Thus, every penny is tax-deductible and every penny goes toward our work.

WNCCEIB’s Board
thanks you and wishes you a peaceful Holiday Season and Happy 2016

LaVerne Glover, Chair
Noel Nickle, Vice Chair • Susan Walton, Secretary/Treasurer
Staff: Monroe Gilmour, Coordinator
Board Members Emeritus: Bob Warren and Don Merzlak

Printing on Recycled Paper partially donated by American Speedy Printing Center, Asheville, NC