



WNCCEIB

WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA CITIZENS ENDING INSTITUTIONAL BIGOTRY

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

**We'll be there with the same intensity in 2014 -- with your help
And with our work grateful and dedicated
to the memory, example, and inspiration of Nelson Mandela (1918-2013).**

Reconciliation in false shoplifting accusation

Cheryl Johnson of Asheville was shocked when she was accosted leaving a local department store and found someone in her face yelling, "You have stolen something! Open your pocket book." What followed was humiliating, soul-shaking treatment that ended after thirty minutes with a curt, "Ms. Johnson, you have been inconvenienced and you may go."

She wrote up her experience and submitted it to the Asheville-based PARC (People Advocating Real Conservancy) newsletter. They published it on-line, and it went viral



Falsely accused Cheryl Johnson with her husband Gene Zimbalkin, accompanied by UUCA Minister Mark Ward, PARC editor Charlie Thomas, and WNCCEIB coordinator Monroe Gilmour, gather to debrief the win/win resolution

creating much support for Ms. Johnson and much condemnation of the store and how Ms. Johnson had been treated.

After refusing several perfunctory offers, the last of which involved none of the policy changes she wanted and an expected gag-order not to speak about the incident, Ms. Johnson felt her voice was being taken away and she was being victimized again. She came to WNCCEIB, not trusting the corporation and wanting to explore how to proceed.

With her permission, WNCCEIB began a dialogue with the corporation's headquarters which

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WNCCEIB stands with Femcare during suspension and re-opening

As Rachel Maddow, the Huffington Post, and other national media outlets demonstrated, it was a big political deal when Asheville's Femcare women's clinic had its license suspended on July 31 and had to cease operation. Being the only clinic west of Charlotte performing abortions among its other GYN services, Femcare's suspension caused disruption and consternation in the region, especially as the NC Legislature passed, at that same time, some of the worst anti-choice

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Ray Smith at Femcare's November work day with friends.



Volunteer Escort Ray Smith honored

Long-time Femcare Escort, Ray Smith, was honored at an August 18 birthday party and thank-you at the NC Arboretum. Ray, who contracted lung cancer and has decided not to pursue chemo has been a solid supporter and volunteer at Femcare for years. Though unable to work with us, Ray and his wife, Joy, also showed up to support the Femcare clean-up day in November. Our thoughts and appreciation go to Ray and to Joy.



Ray Smith, sitting, celebrates with friends at the NC Arboretum, August 18.

Reconciliation in false shoplifting accusation

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resulted in a September 20 lunch in Black Mountain at the WNCCEIB coordinator's home. Attending were the department store corporation's Vice President for Loss Prevention, the Regional Director for Loss Prevention, and Risk Coordinator. Ms. Johnson, her husband, WNCCEIB's coordinator, and her minister hosted the luncheon.

The result was amazing and uplifting. With Ms. Johnson guiding the meeting, the corporate officials apologized and acknowledged that a frame-by-frame review of the security tape confirmed Ms. Johnson took nothing. They also explained in detail the store's protocols and how those rules had been abridged by the employee involved. The officials then carefully reviewed the list of policy changes and questions Ms. Johnson had prepared for the meeting. The department store reinstated an improved resolution with no gag-order. That beautiful autumn afternoon meeting went a long way toward making Ms. Johnson feel whole again.

As she later wrote to WNCCEIB, "Thanks for being there, a sounding board for good solid ideas about how to take affirmative action toward a win/win solution."

The rest of the story: Ms. Johnson wrote a thank-you letter to supporters which was published

by PARC, and she had a celebration party in mid-December. Ms. Johnson and WNCCEIB are working with UNCA's Center for Diversity Education which is sponsoring University of Pennsylvania professor Sean Gabbidon, PhD, a national expert on Consumer Racial Profiling (CRP) to speak in Asheville. Several activities including a public lecture and a proposed training program for Mall employees are being planned for the March 2014 event. Stay tuned!

And the Prequel: Ms. Johnson is featured in a powerful 2012 documentary produced by Barnard College professor Dr. Lee Anne Bell: *Forty Years Later, Now Can We Talk?* Directed by Markie Hancock of Hancock Productions, the documentary won the 2013 Media Award from the National Association of Multicultural Education. It tells the story of Ms. Johnson's high school class in Batesville, Mississippi. She and her Black classmates were the first to desegregate the town's White high school, and the film documents the first time, 40 years later, that those Black students were invited to the class reunion. The organized group discussions among the gathered students are moving and brought a degree of reconciliation among them. Check out this link: <http://store.tcpres.com/0807754544.shtml>

Volunteer Escort program trains new volunteers

During 2013, WNCCEIB conducted several Volunteer Escort training sessions that achieved the goal of two volunteers covering every shift at Femcare. Three days each week, anti-choice demonstrators are there with large signs, calling out through a loud-speaker to patients entering the clinic. Other demonstrators come to pray, blow a shofar, set up a full communion table, and hand out literature. It can be a frightening distraction for patients. Escorts are trained to lower tension in front of the clinic and help arriving patients feel safe, secure, and welcomed. Our protocols focus on the patients and on non-engagement with the demonstrators, as irritating as they may be. The Escorts' presence also makes a visible statement of community support for choice and for Femcare's courageous staff inside.

Blue Moon monthly community dialogue on abortion completes eleventh year

Begun in 2002 after harassment of Femcare clinic staff and volunteers, the Blue Moon Group dialogue on abortion has been meeting every month for eleven years. Bringing together key players on both sides of the abortion issue in Asheville, the Blue Moon Group aims to "lessen the chance of violence in the community and to get to know each other as citizens of the community."

In November, as the group shifted its meeting space to varied venues, it sent a big thank-you card to Trinity Presbyterian Church (PCA) which has hosted the group all these eleven years.

With lessening the need for abortion being one of BMG's Common Ground goals, the group is planning a public musical event for 2014 to support adoption and foster parenting. Check out the Purpose/Traditions and the Common Ground agreements at this link: <http://www.main.nc.us/wncceib/CHOICEact31305.htm>

WNCCEIB has been the convener and glue for the group from the beginning and will continue in that role in 2014.



WNCCEIB volunteers do landscaping for Femcare showing extra community support during and after the suspension

WNCCEIB Stands with Femcare

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legislation in the country.

WNCCEIB which has coordinated Volunteer Escorts at Femcare for over a decade, stepped up its support for the clinic, including grounds-cleaning work days and driving Femcare's doctor to Raleigh multiple times to meet with DHHS officials there.

Due to hard, tedious work by Femcare staff, the clinic was re-opened three weeks later on August 21. WNCCEIB's sister volunteer organization, the Open Umbrella Collective, which provides volunteer abortion doulas for Femcare patients, organized a "Labor By Choice" fundraiser for Femcare September 5. Attended by hundreds, it was more than a fundraiser, it was an expression of admiration for Femcare's three-decades of work in the region and for the courageous doctor and staff.

Even the fundraiser was picketed by the local anti-choice group. They went to the extreme of taking photos of people attending. In one case, they tried to intimidate a non-profit that works with young girls by sending photos to schools where the non-profit has project sites writing, "Do you want people who directly give public support for abortion running a program that plays such an important role in the lives of young girls, the students in your care?" It was frightening to the non-profit's staff. WNCCEIB worked with the non-profit to help them understand the perpetrator, how he has done this sort of thing before, and strategies for how to address this harassment. The good news is that the non-profit has received nothing but positive support from the schools with which it works.

Black Face

by LaVerne Glover
Asheville, North Carolina

Never forget young Black Face,
If it were not for your brothers
You would have no place

As they marched in the snow
And marched in the rain
And sat in those chairs
Again and again

As they worked long hours
For little pay
And boarded the buses
At the end of the day

It might sound untrue
To some of us,
But those were my brothers
At the back of the bus

As they planned for our future
Their house cold as a tomb
While we were yet sleeping
In our Mother's womb

Never forget young Black Face
If it were not for your brothers
You would have no place

For someone believed in our future
And demanded a stand
And established a goal
For this too is our land

It did happen in Selma
The bloodshed and fear
And to our Red Brothers
Through the Trail of Tears
But crisis must come
For man makes the law
Even Dr. King's death
was for a great cause

Never forget young Black Face
If it were not for your brothers
You would have no place

If you meet in the morning
A very old man,
His face all in wrinkles,
A cane in his hand

Go up with a smile,
And say to him loud,
Your dream is reality
I know you are proud

For your brothers and sisters,
All lives have been changed,
Since you marched through the snow,
the cold wind, and rain

Never forget young Black Face
This too is our world
Believe in your Race.



Mission Hospital Diversity

In August, Mission Hospital's Tarik Glenn asked to meet with WNCCEIB to learn more about the life of Kesha Young for whom Mission's Kesha Young Health Career Scholarships are named. WNCCEIB Chair LaVerne Glover and her late husband were Kesha's guardians. In 1996, Ms. Glover initiated WNCCEIB's action that resulted in Mission hospital's diversity program that continues today. WNCCEIB met with Mr. Glenn at Ms. Glover's home to go over that scholarship history.

Learn more about the Kesha Young scholarships at: <http://heart.mission-health.org/about-us/vision-values/diversity-test/workforce-diversity>

While Mr. Glenn was there, Ms. Glover recited her poem, *Black Face* for him. It has been an inspiring poem for many people, Black and White, over the years. As we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the March on Washington and many other Civil Rights Movement milestones, we include Ms. Glover's poem in this year's newsletter.

That day was also a sad one for us and for Mission as it was Mr. Glenn's last work week at the hospital. He contributed much to the Diversity program and to the HR department. We will miss him greatly. He moved on to Greensboro where he has taken another position as has his wife, who was also a Mission employee.

Mission's internal Diversity Committee met in May with the wider community advisory committee, including WNCCEIB, and ongoing activities continue.



WNCCEIB Chair LaVerne Glover recites her poem *Black Face* for Mission Hospital's Tarik Glenn



Photo: Matthew Woolf

Documentary about WNCCEIB in the works

NY filmmaker Tammy Arnstein reports that the documentary about WNCCEIB on which she's been working for eighteen months is moving right along. She recently wrote, "The interviews are phenomenal. There's too much material, and that's what makes it difficult to pick and choose." She is exploring transcribing some of the interviews and making them available in full on a web site while she is editing and preparing a shorter version for distribution.

Ms. Arnstein and her team were here in August 2012 to interview the WNCCEIB Board and people with whom WNCCEIB has worked.

The documentary is to be a companion piece to a short-film based on a 2010 cross-burning in Fletcher. WNCCEIB worked with that family. The filmmaker, Emilie McDonald, who learned of the incident via a WNCCEIB email appeal for letters to the targeted family, was particularly moved by the love expressed by the 12-year-old in the family and focuses on that forgiving spirit in the film. Information about *Crossing the River* can be seen at: <http://crossingtheriverfilm.wordpress.com/>

When History Calls.... WNCCEIB is ready!

During 2013, WNCCEIB was contacted by the Jewish Community Center for background and documentation on our successful effort in 1989-1991 to persuade the Biltmore Forest Country Club (BFCC) to change its practice of no Jews or Blacks as guests or members and to approve a non-discrimination policy for its bylaws. Yes, 1991.

The JCC is coming up on its 75th anniversary and is looking back at the Jewish community's history in the region. Once the JCC finished with our files, they pointed us to the North Carolina Collection in Buncombe County's Pack Library where their own files are being archived. The staff there is doing amazing work documenting Buncombe County history and are interested, not only in the BFCC issue, but in other issues on which WNCCEIB has worked.

The process reminds us of the importance of history and particularly of citizens' efforts that are often lost to public memory. So, organizers, keep those letters, emails, and clippings! WNCCEIB will work with Pack Library to do our part to fill in that history for posterity. You can view what's been archived so far at this link: <http://history.abls.lib.nc.us/dbtw-wpd/mywebsearchscreens/ablswebsearch2.htm> (put "WNCCEIB" in Subject/Key Word section and click on "Submit Query" at bottom of page).



Monroe Gilmour being arrested in the rotunda of the NC Legislature



Alice Weldon walking into the NC Legislature

NC NAACP Moral Mondays arrestees work off community service with WNCCEIB

WNCCEIB served as the base for two Moral Monday non-violent civil disobedience arrestees to work off their court-required community service hours. Alice Weldon applied her hours volunteering with WNCCEIB as a Femcare Escort and helping with landscaping there on a volunteer work day. Monroe Gilmour, counted his unpaid hours working on Femcare Escort trainings and on the false shoplifting accusation case reported on page one.

WNCCEIB works to be a strong ally

For the twenty-two years WNCCEIB has been working in the region, we have found that being an effective, supportive ally is as important to overall justice as doing our own work. In that spirit, the past year has seen us be there for the Campaign for Southern Equality's We Do events in NC, TN, and SC. We worked closely with the Open Umbrella Collective in support of Femcare. We worked closely with the AB Community Relations Council on a case where a man was called racial epithets at a tax preparation business. We worked with local Scout families in organizing a demonstration at the Asheville Boy Scouts of America headquarters urging the national council to drop the ban on gays in the organization. We worked with Planned Parenthood on an outreach education house party in Black Mountain. We worked with students at Davidson College on their efforts to persuade the college to divest from fossil fuel companies. We worked with other groups urging the Buncombe County Public Schools to affirm a policy of separation of church and state. We continued working as part of People of Faith for Just Relationships on gay marriage issues. And with others!

WNCCEIB shares community organizing experience

During the year, WNCCEIB used our forty or so laminated posters as resource materials for sharing community organizing principles, strategies, and tactics. Each poster portrays various issues during our twenty-two years of work. The talks and seminars in 2013 included Western Carolina University social work program; Warren Wilson College's early childhood development class on diversity; and the Sunday adult class at the Warren Wilson College Presbyterian Church. WNCCEIB also continues to mentor individual community organizers at our Black Mountain office, in Asheville, or over the phone.



Warren Wilson College students studying WNCCEIB issue posters



WNCCEIB/Gilmour featured in Asheville Citizen-Times

On Sunday, March 17, Barbara Blake, reporter for the *Asheville Citizen-Times* wrote a long feature on WNCCEIB's work and on Monroe Gilmour, WNCCEIB's coordinator. It was entitled *Fearless Force For Change: Community organizer Monroe Gilmour stands up against hate, intolerance, and discrimination.*

You may read the feature at: <http://www.citizen-times.com/article/20130317/LIVING/303170037/>

In Memoriam

**Joe Haun
1922-2013**

WNCCEIB, and indeed the world, lost a great friend when retired Clemson horticulture professor Dr. Joe Haun died on January 25, 2013. Joe's life was an amazing journey and his activism legendary in issues ranging from election finance reform to choice to standing with targets of discrimination. Joe supported WNCCEIB for years financially and as a volunteer, as recently as 2011, when, even at age 89, he attended court numerous times with cross-burning target Salena Wilson in Hendersonville. We'll miss you, Joe, and send our best wishes to his wife Helen and their large extended family.





Don and Pat Merzlak

Founding Board member Don Merzlak retires

In 1996, Don and Pat Merzlak filed a complaint with the US Department of Justice stating that the “squaw” mascot for women athletes at Erwin High School in Buncombe County was disrespectful and perpetuated stereotypes thus creating a hostile learning environment for American Indian students. Many people do not realize that “squaw” or the s-word is a vulgar way to refer to American Indian women, involving crude sexual innuendo. That

complaint was expanded to include the use of the broader “Indian” mascot also.

WNCCEIB began working that year with the Merzlaks and the Buncombe County Native American Association. That collaboration has led to “squaw” being eliminated and to forty public schools in the state retiring their “Indian” mascots completely. For a period, the Merzlak family was demonized by some Erwin alumni as “outsiders” even though they had five children graduate from the school.

When WNCCEIB incorporated and set up a board in 2006, Don was a founding board member and this past year served as Vice Chair/Secretary. Living now in east Tennessee and attaining his 80th birthday, Don decided it was time to retire from the Board. At the annual meeting on December 9th, Don was presented with a plaque which read, *“One Humongous Thank You to Don Merzlak...Your dedication to justice and dignity for all people exemplifies WNCCEIB’s work. Your service has been invaluable and we are honored to have worked with you.”* There was a PS, on the plaque thanking Pat, too, for, indeed, they are a powerful team celebrating their 62nd wedding anniversary this year!

WNCCEIB works with homeless female Vets

Although not reported in last year’s newsletter due to ongoing sensitivity of the issue at the time, WNCCEIB had the privilege of working closely with Western North Carolina Women Warriors and the Southern Poverty Law Center in the complaint to the US Department of Labor about gender discrimination in facilities and job training opportunities for homeless women staying in the Asheville/Buncombe Community Christian Ministries shelter.

As WNCCEIB said before Asheville City Council: “There may be a reluctance to ruffle feathers or cause problems for an organization that plays an important role in our community’s response to homelessness. Yet, the City has a fiscal and moral responsibility to make sure the reality of what ABCCM is doing matches its claims.”

That complaint is still pending with the Department of Labor. The courage of the women who stepped up was and is inspiring.



Emily Bagby, who filed the complaint, with her daughter



Monique Gillum of Southern Poverty Law Center and Alyce Knaflich with WNC Women Warriors

“Indian” mascot issue heats up around the country, quiet in NC

WNCCEIB through its NC Mascot Education & Action Group (NCMEAG) has, since 1996, persuaded forty public schools in this state to change their “Indian” sports mascot. With the current political atmosphere in NC, that number has not changed in over two years. We continue to educate schools and educators behind the scenes, but it is difficult to push against a reactionary political environment. Don Merzlak, WNCCEIB Board member, and his wife, Pat, pushed for change in Tennessee, and, in response, the legislature made it illegal for schools to change their mascot under pressure from outside groups!

Encouragement is found in the more active national arena where significant pressure is on the NFL and team owner Dan Snyder to change the mascot for the Washington R*****. WNCCEIB has contributed to that pressure with letters and emails.

Also, in November, McAdory HS in Alabama put up a large, disrespectful banner with a reference to the Trail of Tears when they played the “Warriors” of Pinson Valley HS. The banner went viral and the McAdory principal wrote an apology. WNCCEIB wrote to the principals of both schools noting that both schools share responsibility, the one making the banner for obvious reasons and the one with the “Indian” mascot for putting American Indian culture into a position where it can be stereotyped and disrespected. WNCCEIB has offered to share our materials and experience with the schools and with the Jefferson County, AL school district.



P.O. Box 18640
Asheville, North Carolina 28814



“Saying YES to Human Rights is the best way to say NO to racism and bigotry”



Jane and Alton Hancock give WNCCEIB a thumbs-up

Focus on our donors

Alton and Jane Hancock live in Black Mountain and have a unique way to support and partner with WNCCEIB's work. Each month, (and they never miss!) they write a check to WNCCEIB for \$50 and send it to us. As they say, we give "because this group is there when people in our community need a supportive advocate. They do for others what we would want others to do for us in similar circumstances."

Whether you give once or multiple times, whether you give a big amount or a small amount, your support enables WNCCEIB to do its work.

Contribute today!

This past year WNCCEIB's operated on less than \$18,000 so your help makes a BIG difference in making us go!

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

Or contribute on-line via PayPal at our website:
www.main.nc.us/wncceib/
(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 2014**



LaVerne Glover, *Chair*

Don Merzlak, *Vice Chair, Secretary*; Sue Walton, *Treasurer*

Staff: Monroe Gilmour, *Coordinator*

Board Member Emeritus: Bob Warren

