

Moving the needle on equity

By Shelby Fiegel

2020 has been a year for the history books. Not only have we been contending with the ongoing threat of the COVID-19 pandemic, but also the deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and other Black individuals which sparked protests that have highlighted the importance of addressing the issues of race and inequality. To develop a better future for our citizens, children, grandchildren and beyond, we must recognize the importance of promoting and creating equity in our communities.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation defines equity as “the state, quality or ideal of being just, impartial and fair” and shares that to be achieved and sustained, equity needs to be thought of as a structural and systemic concept.

As we thought about equity and social justice, our team at the University of Central Arkansas Center for Community and Economic Development asked ourselves how we could leverage our resources and skills to be more intentional in our work. Knowing our strength lies in convening and training, we launched the inaugural Arkansas Racial Equity Summit on October 8, 2020. With support from our partners at ARcare, the Conway Area Chamber of Commerce and Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas, more than 200 Arkansas leaders came together to learn about the history of racial injustice in Arkansas, information on what inequities exist today (in health, education, wealth/income and the criminal justice system), and participated in an interactive discussion on what we can do to counteract those inequities to create a better future.

The Summit covered a plethora of resources available to leaders about equity and social justice, but here are five tangible first steps you can consider to promote and create equity in your community or organization:

- 1. Celebrate the National Day of Racial Healing:** In 1995, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation established the National Day of Racial Healing as part of its Truth, Racial Healing & Transformation (TRHT) process,



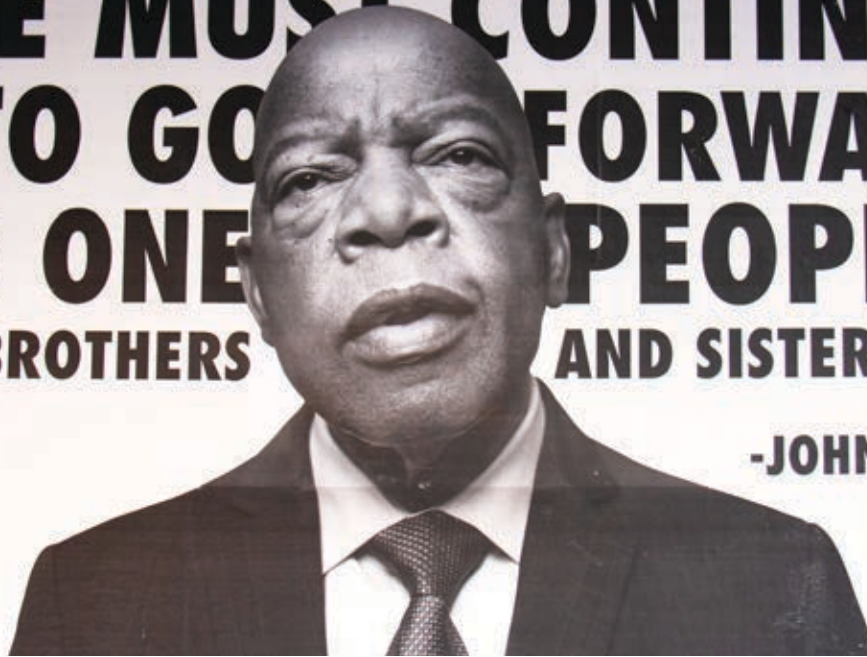
PHOTOS BY ANDREW MORGAN

Started during Peace Week in 2016 and growing over time, especially after the deaths of Breonna Taylor and George Floyd, the murals along Little Rock's 7th Street have given dozens of local artists a canvas to express their anger and their hope.

which was a restructuring of its funding priorities to promote healing as a critical path for ending racial bias and creating a society in which all children can thrive. In January 2020, Arkansas Governor Asa Hutchinson became the first governor to issue a gubernatorial proclamation in observance of the National Day of Racial Healing. One of the goals for the 2021 observance is for Arkansas to become the first state where all of its mayors, county judges and school superintendents issue proclamations, along with Governor Hutchinson. You can view a sample proclamation in this issue on page 15.

**WE MUST CONTINUE
TO GO FORWARD
AS ONE PEOPLE,
AS BROTHERS AND SISTERS.**

-JOHN LEWIS



A mural on Little Rock's Main Street honors recently passed civil rights icon John Lewis.

2. **Take the Harvard implicit bias test:** The Implicit Association Test (IAT) measures attitudes and beliefs that people may be unwilling or unable to report. The IAT may be especially interesting if it shows that you have an implicit attitude that you didn't know about. Taking the test is a good way of becoming more aware of implicit biases that may be playing a role in your community or your life. You can take the test at implicit.harvard.edu/implicit.
3. **Utilize the Equity Assistance Center:** The Equity Assistance Center (EAC) in the Arkansas Division of Elementary and Secondary Education has the responsibility of assisting and assuring that all school districts comply with state and federal regulations that prohibit discrimination. The EAC also offers resources to promote and develop equity in our schools. Learn more at dese.ade.arkansas.gov/divisions/legal/equity-assistance.
4. **Review and implement the Race Equity and Inclusion Action Guide from the Annie E. Casey Foundation:** The seven steps outlined in the Action Guide represent a set of tools that can be utilized to incorporate race equity and inclusion. As shared in the guide, "Following these steps will help ensure that strategies to help children, families and communities are informed from the beginning by the knowledge and data on race that we know are critical to achieving results for a whole population." You can view the guide at www.aecf.org/resources/race-equity-and-inclusion-action-guide.
5. **Review and implement the Municipal Action Guide on Racial Equity from the National League of Cities (NLC):** The NLC's Race, Equity and Leadership (REAL) initiative compiled six steps municipal leaders can follow to begin improving equity throughout your city and creating better outcomes for everyone in your community. You can read the guide at www.nlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/NLC-MAG-on-Racial-Equity.pdf.

These are just a few ways you can begin to move the needle on racial equity in your community. If you are interested in learning more, all resources from the Summit can be found at www.uca.edu/cced/arkansas-racial-equity-summit. As CCED continues to develop training and programming centered on equity, please reach out to our team if you want more information at sfiegel@uca.edu or 501-450-5269.



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