

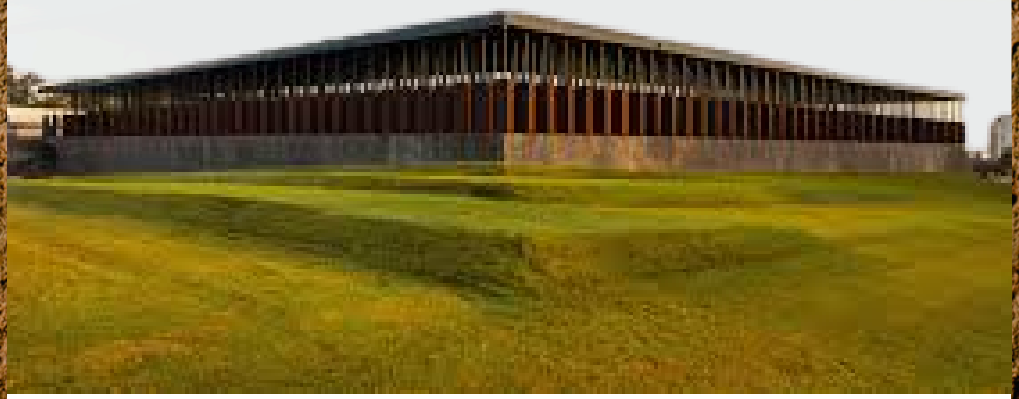




MONTGOMERY
STUDY TOUR 2026

PROGRAM BOOKLET

The Legacy Museum
Montgomery, Alabama
May 29 - 31, 2026



Healing Illinois
NAACP
ARTSPACE Southern Illinois
THE FIELD FOUNDATION OF ILLINOIS
SICF
SOUTHERN ILLINOIS COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

Dear attendees,

As we prepare to travel to Montgomery, Alabama, to experience the Equal Justice Initiative's Legacy Sites, I want to extend my deepest gratitude to each of you for choosing to be part of this trip. This tour is more than a simple travel itinerary; it is a shared commitment to truth, remembrance, healing, and community. Together, we are stepping into spaces designed to honor history, challenge our understandings, and inspire a more just future.

Over the course of our visit to the Legacy Museum, the National Memorial for Peace and Justice, and the Freedom Monument Sculpture Park, we will encounter powerful and sobering truths about our nation's history. I encourage you to approach these sites with an open heart and a reflective mind. While the history we engage with is heavy, we carry it together, and there will be intentional space for us to process, lean on one another, and find strength in our collective presence.

Thank you for your dedication, your openness, and your support on this vital journey. I look forward to the profound conversations and connections ahead of us as we witness this history side by side.

Warmly,

Ammiel

Welcome . . . how this all began

Written by: Lynne Chambers

In October of 2024, as a second-year law student (2L), in between campaigning as the first Black woman to run for Pulaski County Commissioner, I stumbled upon the work of Bryan Stevenson. I was immediately intrigued by his clarity, his compassion, and his relentless pursuit of justice. I read Just Mercy. Then I watched the film adaptation, Just Mercy. Around that same time, I also watched Philadelphia DA.

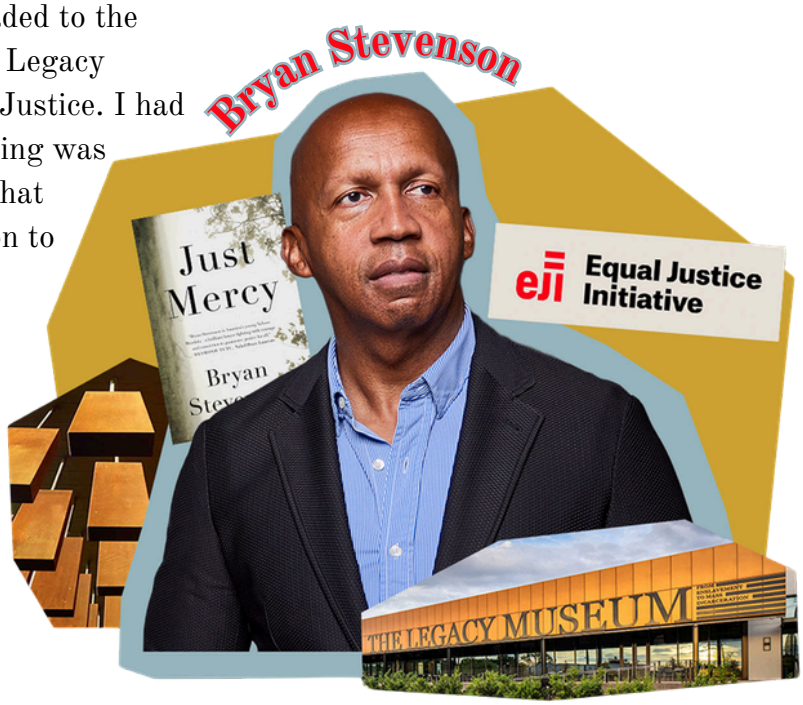
Those three experiences didn't just inform me, they unsettled me. They planted a question that wouldn't leave me alone: What does it mean to pursue justice in a system that has never been fully just?

Fast forward to October of 2021. I stopped by Mission, Missouri. I had one goal: go in, pick up copies of The Second Chance Journal, and leave. Those journals had become a gift to my clients. They told me the reflections inside helped them think differently about their lives, gave them hope, and reminded them they still had value. I had run out. That was the only reason I was there. Five minutes. In and out.

Jane (Mission, Missouri, Founder/Executive Director) excitedly beckoned me to her office. "Lynne, you're here!" she said, smiling. I smiled back, already knowing I was in trouble. "We're going to Montgomery," she said. I blinked. "What?" "We're taking a group. There's an extra bed. Everything's covered. See you at 5:30 a.m. tomorrow."

I didn't hesitate. "Janie, I'm not doing that. I'm exhausted. I just got off the road from Akron at midnight last night. I don't have anything left in me." She didn't argue. She didn't push. She just smiled and said, "Okay... we'll pray about it." And right then, the smell of my goose being cooked wafted through the air.

The next morning, I was on that bus. We were headed to the Equal Justice Initiative in Montgomery to visit the Legacy Museum and the National Memorial for Peace and Justice. I had been invited to go right after it opened, but the timing was wrong. I was exhausted but excited. Being aware that something exists in the abstract pales in comparison to being immersed within.



There are some things you can read about. Some things you can watch. And then there are things you have to stand in front of. I remember seeing the sculptures. Bodies in chains. Men. Women. Children. Bent. Restrained. Straining against a force you couldn't see but could feel. They weren't abstract. They were human. Too human.

I entered the museum, watching the storm-tossed waves of the Atlantic Ocean. I stood on a slave ship bound for the Americas. I felt the terror, the seasickness. I smelled human feces, vomit, and flesh.

Then came the stories. Mr. Jones was lynched for talking to a white woman. Mrs. Dixon was lynched for chastising white children for throwing rocks at chickens. Panels filled with history, previously withheld from me. From 1877 to 1950, thousands of Black Americans were victims of racial terror lynchings. Not hidden. Not secret. In broad daylight. Often with no consequences.

This stopped me and sent a cold shiver down my spine. Only 1 percent of lynchings committed after 1900 resulted in a criminal conviction. That's not failure. That's design. And then I saw the timeline. Slavery. Then the Black Codes. Then Jim Crow laws. Then lynching. Then mass incarceration. Not separate events. One continuous story. I didn't just observe it. I felt it.

Every time I've gone, I've cried. But that first time... That first time, I broke. Not quiet tears. Not something I could hold in. I mean, weeping. Gut-wrenching. Body-shaking. Breath-stealing grief. A kind of howling that came from somewhere deeper than words. Because suddenly, it wasn't just history. It was an explanation. And in the middle of that grief, a thought hit me: Why didn't I know this? I stood there, trying to catch my breath, and the question wouldn't let go. Why wasn't I taught this? Not mentioned. Not summarized. But truly taught. Because this wasn't hidden. It was documented. It was real. And yet somehow, I had lived so much of my life without fully understanding it.

Then another realization followed: If I didn't know... who else doesn't know? And that's when everything shifted. All the questions I had carried the confusion, the frustration, the things that never quite added up. They started to make sense. The disparities. The over-policing. The assumptions. The weight of being seen a certain way before you even speak. It wasn't random. It wasn't accidental. It was connected.

For the first time, I wasn't just living the experience of being Black in America; I understood the why behind it. And once you see it... You can't unsee it. Once it clicks... You can't go back. That question, "Why didn't I know this?" became something else. It became: "Who else needs to know?" That question changed my life. Because what I experienced there was too important to keep to myself.



So welcome to the fourth Study Tour. Through my work with the NAACP and the Healing Illinois initiative, I began organizing trips to create space for others to see, feel, and understand what I had experienced.

Everyone who goes offers the same first impression. “This changed my life.” I know exactly what they mean. Because I almost didn’t go. I almost chose comfort over calling. This experience gave me clarity. Purpose. And responsibility. Because this history doesn’t just belong in museums. It belongs to us. And once you understand it, you carry an obligation to share it.

From the forthcoming memoir by Lynne Chambers, Esq.

References:
Bryan Stevenson, *Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption* (Spiegel & Grau 2014).
https://.www.oyez.com - US Supreme Court, Miller v. Alabama



A/P NAACP Study Tour of the Legacy Sites, Montgomery, Alabama
05/29/26 - 05/31/26

With support from Healing Illinois, The Field Foundation, The Southern Arts Fund, and Artspace Southern Illinois, we are pleased to host a study tour to the Legacy Museum, The Freedom Monument Sculpture Park, and National Memorial for Peace and Justice in Montgomery, Alabama.

Contact Information:
Ammiel Russell - 618-306-5713 | Lynne Chambers - 618-306-3256

Friday, May 29, 2026

8:00 A.M. – Arrive and load bus at
Shawnee Community College
8364 Shawnee College Rd, Ullin, IL 62992

8:30 A.M. – Depart from SCC

11:50 A.M. – Lunch at Cracker Barrel
420 Franklin Commons Ct, Franklin, TN 37067

5:30 P.M. – Arrive at Elevation Convening Center and Hotel – Downtown Montgomery
Dinner on your own

Saturday, May 30, 2026

9:00 A.M. – Meet in hotel lobby and depart for the Legacy Sites

9:15 A.M. – Visit The Legacy Museum
400 N Court St, Montgomery, AL 36104
(Self-guided experience)
Lunch Onsite – Pannie - George's Kitchen

4:45 P.M. – Meet at the Legacy Museum and board the bus back to the hotel

6:15 P.M. – Meet in hotel lobby and load bus

6:30 P.M. – Group Dinner, Debrief, and Brainstorming Session at
Martha's Place
7780 Atlanta Hwy, Montgomery, AL 36117

8:30 P.M. – Depart Martha's Place and return to hotel

Sunday, May 31, 2026

8:00 A.M. – Breakfast on your own and hotel checkout

9:00 A.M. – Depart from hotel

11:50 A.M. – Lunch at Buc-ee's
2328 Lindsay Ln S, Athens, AL 35613

5:30 P.M. – Arrive back at
Shawnee Community College
8364 Shawnee College Rd, Ullin, IL 62992

IMPACT REPORT

2026

The Legacy Museum
Montgomery, Alabama
May 29 - 31, 2026










Free at Last.
Free at Last.
Thank God Almighty
I'm Free at Last.












John
Henderson
Corsicana, Texas
March 13, 1901




7053




7053






Martin Luther King Jr.


Montgomery Square

We asked...

What part of the experience impacted you most and why?

ATTENDEES RESPONSES...

"The installations were the most impactful to me because they were amazingly executed- I can tell the amount of research and time put into each and every detail. From the journey over by ship(museum installation), to the installation with the sculptures in the sand, to even the memorial site with all the names of people enslaved and lynched. I felt like I was there. I could see the undeniable facts clear as day. Typically, we see movies or read articles about the past, and it always feels so unreal and distant. This trip made everything real. I could feel the disbelief, fear, confusion, and anger of my ancestors at the injustices society tries so hard to water down. This trip has educated me more than any book could have."

"Being able to experience and explain it to my children who were with me."

"Walking through the entrance of the museum almost stopped me in my tracks, looking at the figures of so many men, women, and children in shackles with the sounds of the ocean echoing in the background hit home in a way that I will never forget."

"The Legacy Museum was extremely impactful! All of the factual events, stories, videos, memoirs, displays, art, etc. Really had a profound effect on my experience."

"Conversations with people on the bus about their experiences every day with racism. Going out to the bar with karaoke where there was a wide diversity, having fun together and thinking about how this place was 200 years ago. The artist in Africa that did the sculptures and spoke to the communities there who remember and carry that pain."

"The memorial because it really touched my soul to just think about how many people lost their lives to lynchings."

We asked...

What actions are you inspired to take as a result of this experience?

ATTENDEES RESPONSES...

"I work in the community as an advocate for several different groups. It's time to organize an effort to get everyone back at the table and have a think tank on how to approach disparities in our community through group economics and group politics."

"speak up"

"Talk to the young folks"

"I will be open to more art projects. I will teach my students and anyone who will listen. I really want to bring a group of my white college students on a field trip and some of my family as well."

"Looking for every single chance or opportunity to support people who experience racism, be an example of anti-racism, and most importantly, confront policies and systems that are just wrong. Electing officials who agree that we have a problem here."

"I will be more active in informing the members of my family and community that we must continue to be vigilant in our fight for justice and equality."

"To work with our youth and educate them on the struggle of what it took to get us here."

"I am inspired to get involved with the NAACP chapter in my area and also to work to address racial inequalities in political leadership"

"Share my experience with family and friends. Planning a trip back to the museum so others can experience this. Meeting with others to determine how to better support/address needs in the community to elevate those who struggle with economic, educational, and health disparities."

"Be patient and understanding for what individuals go through"

Post-Survey Report: Healing Illinois Montgomery Study Tour

This report is based on the post-study tour survey conducted following both the 2025 and 2026 Healing Illinois Montgomery Study Tour.

Summary

There were 68 individuals who participated in the Healing Illinois Montgomery Study Tour. The majority of the participants were over the age of 44, most were from Southern Illinois and identified as Black or African American. The majority reported likely or extremely likely to Continue learning about racial history and equity; Share what you learned with others; Support organizations advancing racial equity; Participate in or start initiative for equity and inclusion in your community. Participants share what parts of the tour had the greatest impact on them, what they are inspired to do as a result of having taken the tour and what resources they need to take action.

Age

The majority of tour participants were 44 and older, with those in their 50s capturing the demographic for both years. The range for 2025 was 14 -80 years and for 2026 was 17-71 years.

Age Range	2025 n=33		2026 n=35	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
14-19	1	3	3	8.5
20-29	2	6	5	14.25
30-39	1	3	3	8.5
40-49	2	6	5	14.25
50-59	15	45.5	10	28.5
60-69	4	12	8	23
70-79	7	21.25	1	3
80+	1	3	0	0

Zip Code

As a way to track where participants reside, we asked for zip codes. For 2025, 89% and for 2026, 82% were from Southern Illinois as defined as Jackson County and South. Note that for 2025 there were 78% and 2026, 58% from the southernmost counties Alexander and Pulaski.

Race

Participants were asked to check: Black or African American. American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, White, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, Other. In 2025 91.5 % of the participants identified as Black or African American. In 2026, 88% identified as Black or African American. There was 1 in 2025 and there were 2 who identified as both Black and White in 2026. There was 1 who identified as American Indian or Alaska Native and white. There were 2 people in 2025 and 1 in 2025 who identified as white.

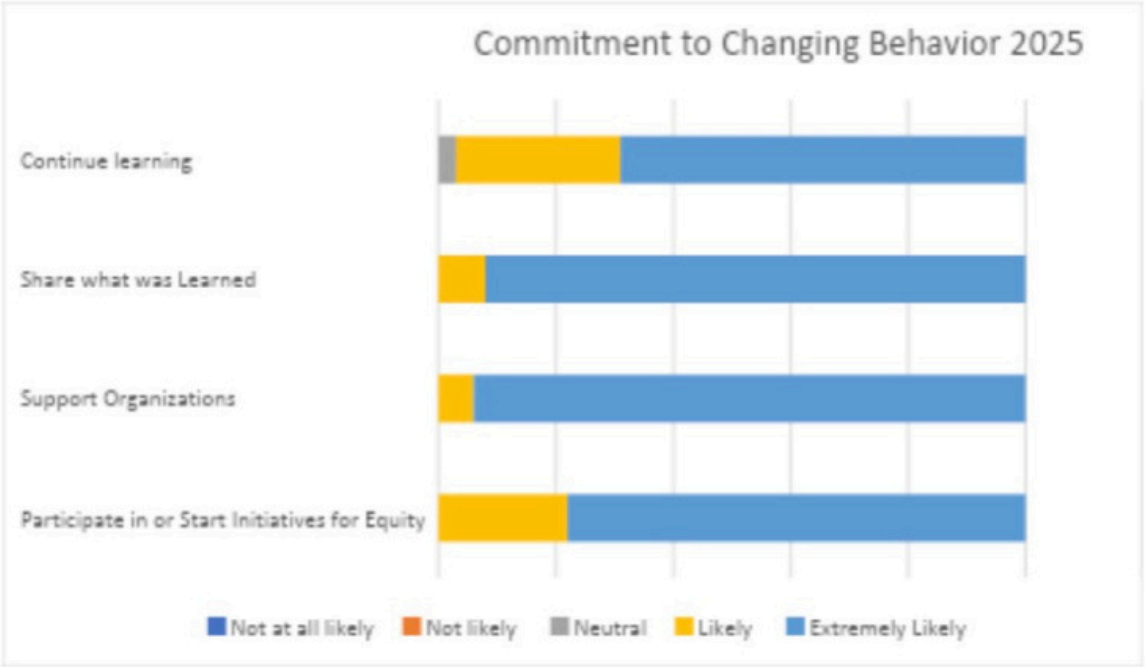
Overall Experience and Understanding Racial Injustice in America

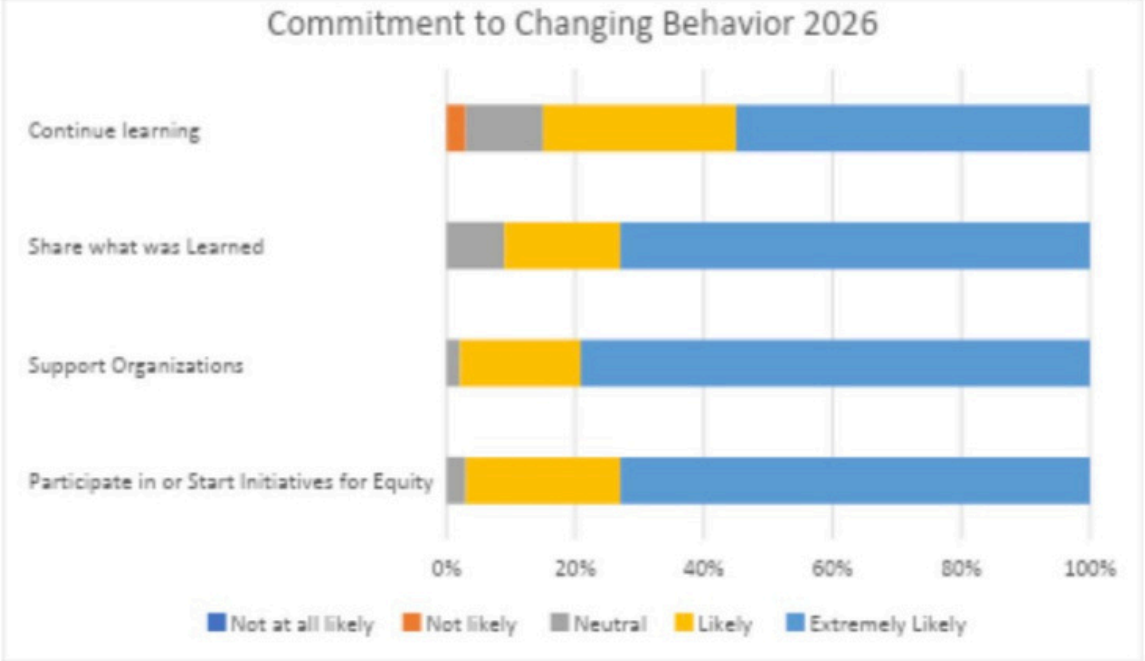
Participants were asked to rate their experience at The Legacy Sites as “Excellent, Good, Fair, Poor.” Almost all responses were, “Excellent” (97% for 2025 and 94% for 2026). Participants were asked to what extent the tour increased their understanding of racial injustice in America. For both years, 100% of the participants said that their understanding was significantly Increased or somewhat Increased.

Commitment to Changing Behavior

Participants were asked to reflect on how likely they would be to engage in behavioral changes as a result of the study tour to the Legacy Sites experience based on a 5-point Likert type scale where 1 indicated “not at all likely” and 5 indicated "extremely likely.” Four specific actions were included: Continue learning about racial history and equity; Share what you learned with others; Support organizations advancing racial equity; Participate in or start initiative for equity and inclusion in your community (e.g., volunteer, advocate, educate)

Although that on all potential behavioral changes, participants reported that they were likely of extremely likely to engage, the 2026 cohort had some not likely or neutral and less of the “extremely likely” response. The difference in age between the 2 years may be one hypothesis to account in the difference to explore further.


Commitment to Changing Behavior 2025
Continue learning
Share what was Learned
Support Organizations
Participate in or Start Initiatives for Equity
Not at all likely
Not likely
Neutral
Likely
Extremely Likely


Commitment to Changing Behavior 2026
Continue learning
Share what was Learned
Support Organizations
Participate in or Start Initiatives for Equity
0%
20%
40%
60%
80%
100%
Not at all likely
Not likely
Neutral
Likely
Extremely Likely

What Part Impacted the Most?

Participants were asked, "What part of the experience impacted you most and why?"

Facts

The most frequent comment (14 times for 2025 and 12 for 2026) was that the presentation of facts was most impactful. This included the statistics, the historical records from news and lynchings, the 13th Amendment, mass incarceration and the documented experiences represented in stories, letters, photos and names. One person said it was, "the magnitude and number of transatlantic slave trade." Several mentioned being able to look up their names either at the "kiosk to search names of enslaved people by state and county," or "finding their name on the wall". At the Freedom Monument Sculpture Park, which is part of the Legacy site, is the National Monument to Freedom. This is a 43-foot-tall wall that displays the more than 122,000 last names of the newly freed Black Americans recorded in the 1870 US Census. One person said, "Seeing my last name on the wall in the sculpture park…. Seeing it on the wall was kind of life altering."

Suffering

Beyond the numbers, participants were impacted by the reality of the suffering, the brutality of slavery, the separation of families, the transition to racial terror lynching, and then to mass incarceration. For example, one participant said, the "information in an immersive format. Reading the information from a book or seeing a film does not have the same impact." Another said, "Sculptures because it shows exactly what happened, how it looks, seeing those was like reality." "The detail was detail was impeccable and showed the slaves' agony." Several noted kidnapping and family separation. ".. we were kidnapped and separated from our families, mothers and children, husbands. Family is everything and the unit should never have been forced into separation from one another into slavery. There were "the stories and letters that was wrote trying to find loved ones, very touching." Understanding the terror of lynching, "All the lynchings back stories," and "their reasoning for being so evil towards blacks

Mass Incarceration

About mass incarceration one person noted, "How things have shifted gears from slavery to the imprisonment of our people, but not a big change has taken place. Just an illusion Fooling us to believe a big change has happened. "Many participants noted the imprisonment of young black men and "stories of incarcerated people who received life sentences at young ages. "As one participant wrote, "I was most impacted by the mass incarceration exhibit at the end of the legacy museum. I find it so disheartening that slavery persists in government sanctioned ways

and that dehumanization is present in a way that is just accepted." Participants noted that the part about mass incarceration is impactful because it's not a thing of the past, "its occurring in my lifetime.

Fellowship

Participants mentioned interactions with the other participants and networking as being impactful. This included conversations on the bus and during the debriefing during the evening after dinner. One said the "debrief and fellowship with participants" and another said, "the shared thoughts within our group" were most impactful. One participant said, "I was impacted by a feeling of camaraderie and collective discovery between all of the participants, with whom I feel a connection." One person said they were impacted by "We as people of different races coming together and doing things together. "

Enduring

Participants used the words endured and resilience "have endured" referring to "how the blacks have endured so much hatred." One participant said, "I think the thought of seeing how far we have come, but still have so much more to do, is what has been weighing on my mind." Another said they were impacted by "How our students do not know about our history and how far we have come."

What actions are you inspired to take as a result of this experience?

Participants were asked to comment on what they are inspired to do having had the study tour experience.

Spreading the Word

For both years, the most frequent response was about telling others about what they saw. This took the form of educating others, especially young people, making art or music and the importance of spreading the word to others. This includes, "Talking to the young people more," "Educate young people," and "To try and to help educate our young generation." There was a participant said they are inspired to "Teaching our children our history and why it is important." One person says, "I want to make art. And tell people about what I saw." The inspiration to educate was related to learning facts. "I will do more to spread the message to ALL people to visit the museum and see, hear, and touch the FACTS in order to formulate an opinion based on facts! Not a created narrative!!"

Education is also connected to motivation to change. A participant said they plan to "Educate others who take slavery as a joke." One person said they will "Speak boldly with others about

our history," and "To work with our youth and educating the on the struggle on what it took to get us here." One said they are inspired to "engage with others about the untold American history." Another, said they were inspired "to initiate conversations individuals to better educate them on racial injustice." In sum one participant said they will "Encourage Black American to know our history and to work together. The boycott shows we can work together and not be crabs in a bucket."

Advocacy

Several participants from both years have spoken about advocacy. "I have and will continue to be an active community advocate." One said they are inspired to "Help others to make a difference in our lives" and "being a voice for the less fortunate and people alike in my community, fighting injustice." Another said, "I work in the community as an advocate for several different groups.

Community Action

Some participants are inspired to take action. "I will be more active in informing the members of my family and community that we must continue to be vigilant in our fight for justice and equality." "It's time to organize an effort to get everyone back at the table and have a think tank on how to approach disparities in our community through group economics and group politics." One participant said, "More likely to vote in these next elections and encourage others to do the same." Another said that they plan to "educate myself more on the current administration's plans to impede voting rights of people of color and other oppressed people." Three people specifically name being involved with the NAACP. "I plan to join the AP chapter of NAACP." One participant said they were inspired to act by "Looking for every single chance or opportunity to support people who experience racism, be an example of anti-racism and most importantly, confront policies and systems that are just wrong. Electing officials that agree that we have a problem here."

What support or resources would help you take action in your community?

Participants were asked about the resources to help them take action.

People

"We are powerful in numbers. I believe a team of like-minded individuals would be a great start." There were multiple references for the need for other people. "More people." "Like minded people." "People coming together." One said, "People working together as one."

Another participant, wrote, “Continue to work together.” Another specifically said, “Black people to support each other.” The resource of people could be in the form of community. “Community group.” “My church.” “Community support,” and “participation from members of the community.” One articulated, “Being in touch with the other participants will be very helpful… I appreciate the directory provided to us.”

Education

Participants requested more education, knowledge, “ongoing workshops, tours.” Several requested a “library” and many requested education and other reading materials. “Any literature, books, videos.” There were requests for additional tours and “more opportunities like this Legacy experience.” There were also requests for “information on politics and policies in a more understandable or summarized manner by trusted source.” Similarly, “Information about current events that affect people of color.” They need, “knowledge and information on how to properly address issues.” And “classes or meetings on how to mobilize action groups.” One participant said the support they need is a “Call to action to provide education on how we humanize one another.”

Resources

In addition to information and educational resources, some participants say “funding” would help. Several mention “Local organizations,” “NAACP and local government. On person said, “I’d like a grant to create a series of free community art programs that aim to employ and educate members of the community on racial injustices.”