



Center for the Healing of Racism

Internalize Oneness

JANUARY - JULY 2024



Sprinkles cupcakes honor Center



APPRECIATION

We so much appreciate the work you do to make the world a better place!

Incredibly fortunate to team with The Center for the Healing of Racism!

Thank you, Cherry,

**Dan Mesches | President/CEO
Sprinkles/Picnik Restaurants11**

Follow-up from United Way's Board Fair

I want to extend my gratitude for the engaging conversation I shared during the United Way Board Fair. It was a pleasure to connect with Elizabeth Boehm-Miller and Kelly Johnson, the Center's board members that staffed the booth. I am particularly excited about the possibility of joining the board and contributing to the mission. With over 11 years of experience in marketing, I am eager to apply my expertise towards enhancing the visibility and impact of the organization within Houston and beyond. It's my belief that together, we can elevate the



From left, Kelly Johnson and Elizabeth Boehm-Miller

organization's profile and ensure that it is recognized for its invaluable contributions, rather than remaining "Houston's best-kept secret." I look forward to the opportunity to work with individuals committed to

making a difference in our community. Thank you again for a memorable and insightful interaction. I am optimistic about what we can achieve together. Warm regards, **Sherri Jones**

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*Visit the Center for the Healing of
Racism **FACEBOOK** page for
updates on events, pertinent articles
and resources.*

<https://www.centerhealingracism.org/>

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Healing of Racism

Message from the Executive Director

A JOURNEY OF 35 YEARS

It is with great joy that I use the number 35 for the Center for the Healing of Racism. In celebrating the 35 years we have been around I am taking you on a journey to be able to see what 35 years looks like.

In 1989, the Center started with people who were a part of the Silent Generation as well as Baby Boomers.

Within the past 35 years, we have educated not only the people of our generations but also the next two generations, Gen Xers and Millennials.

Within the first 10 years of starting out, we were only educating adults, but it became clear that we needed to reach humans at an earlier age. We began to create workshops for kindergarten through 12th grade.

Opening the Breadbasket is a workshop for elementary school children, connecting their common humanity by using breads that people eat globally. Out of that workshop, I published a book titled *Bread is a Simple Food: Teaching Children About Cultures*. This workshop has been conducted throughout Houston, Texas. Many schools as well as churches allowed us to present *Opening the Breadbasket*.

High Schools not left out

For high school students, the workshop *Shadow of Stereotyping (SOS)* was created to help them understand the pain produced by negative stereotypes.

In the past 35 years, we have traveled to 47 states and multiple cities within those states, bringing the healing message offered in our program *Dialogue: Racism*. We



Cherry Steinwender

have also traveled to two countries: Austria and Canada. In Austria, we worked with an international organization. In Canada, we worked at an international school.

When we did not go to the people, the people came to us. There were people from all over Europe, Brazil, Sri Lanka, Rwanda, and Mexico who came to us to be educated on the specific brand of racism in the United States of America. We received an official letter from The Tokyo Metropolitan Government Human Rights Section, Community Education Support Division wanting to send a representative to attend *Dialogue: Racism* in Houston. The representative came to Houston and was educated on what could be done in Japan.

Even before receiving the letter from the letter from the Tokyo Government, we conducted a workshop for members of the Society for Intercultural Education, Training and Research (SIETAR) in Japan via Zoom.

The past head of the White House television production department contacted the Center to come to

Houston with two journalists from the former Yugoslavia to film the Center conducting *Dialogue: Racism*.

In 1998, the Center was mentioned three times in the President's Initiative on Race: the Advisory Board's Report to the President. The study, *One America in the 21st Century*, was presented to Congress.

Lunch and Learn

For two years the Center hosted a program called *Lunch and Learn*, led by Laura Gallier. The titles of each session were a variation of *Racism in ...*, for example, *Racism in Health Care*, *Racism in Foster Care*, *Racism in Mental Health*, and *Racism in the Woods*, to name a few.

Also, for a couple of years, Marcy Jolosky was trained in video production at Houston Media Source. She was able to record several events for the Center, including a few sessions of *Waking News*, a Center gathering of people in our community to share news articles and information about events in the Houston area that highlight issues of discrimination and racism. These were broadcast on the Houston Media Source television station and are in the archives there.

Throughout the 35 years of our existence, I have been interviewed by journalists for radio, TV, newspapers, and magazines, in person, by phone, and even by Zoom for the Dutch magazine *Kanttekening*, by journalist/editor Ewout Klei. I also appeared on *Cityline*, a TV broadcast in

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Tacoma, Washington, about the Peoples Gathering event on the golf course as described later in this magazine. I was interviewed on Zoom by Cliff DuRand, founder of the Global Justice Center in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico. Closer to home, I have had several interviews with the *Houston Chronicle*, local NBC, CBS, ABC, and PBS affiliates, as well as local radio stations KPFT, KUHF and KCOH.

In the fall of 2023, I participated as a featured guest speaker for the Being Luminary summit, *Reimagining DEI*, an online event that was attended by participants from all over the world! It originated in Denmark and was available to all interested in moving forward to heal racism in every place it exists.

Within these 35 years, we witnessed Barack Obama become the first Black male president of the United States. When Barack Obama became president, it caused the members of the Center to work harder because, for the first three months of his term, the news media went on a frenzy, calling the era we were in “post-racial”. The reason we had to work harder was that too many Americans began to believe that we were in a post-racial country. The long history of racism in this

country cannot be erased by electing one Black man to the office of President of the United States of America. Another reason we had to work harder was due to the media coverage. It gave too many White people a pass for not having to do anything because “there was no more racism”, as stated by them, which made our work harder.

Faith communities assisted

We were asked by many faith communities—Buddhist, Christian, Jewish and Muslim—to conduct workshops as a way of understanding why their communities are not more diverse. This is an issue not only in faith communities in Houston, but all over this country. We started with faith communities, and from faith communities we moved into the education arena of corporate America. What we found was that it was easier for people to have this dialogue based on healing as the main focus. Due to the information and dialogue created by the founding members of the Center, we found that everyone in this country, regardless of whiteness or darkness of skin, had been damaged by racism.

Memorable partnerships

Here are two of the many memorable partnerships I can recall: First is with the Dominican Sisters of Houston on Aug. 27, 2012. They aided two bus loads of people from Mexico traveling to 26 states on the way to Washington, D.C., to bring awareness to the 60,000 lives lost in Mexico due to the failed drug war with the United States. They wanted to end U.S. assistance to Mexico’s armed forces, end the punitive approach to human migration, and end systemic incarceration based on

racial minorities. A broad bi-national coalition of more than 100 U.S. civil society organizations joined the Mexican Movement for Peace with Justice and Dignity (MPJD). The family members told stories of the drug war’s human toll on people in Mexico. The Center helped welcome the people to Houston, and Cherry Steinwender served as the keynote speaker.

The second partnership was in 2005 when the Center presented in Houston, Texas, the film *Lost Boys of Sudan*, by Megan Mylan and Jon Shenk. They contacted us to locate a venue to show the film here in the city, and, as a result, we were connected with a community of lost boys here in Houston.

The film educated the world about Islamic fundamentalists in the late 1980s who, because of the war they waged on Sudan’s separatists, left behind over 20,000 male orphans known as the Lost Boys. For those who survived this traumatic ordeal and found their way to refugee camps, some were chosen to participate in a resettlement program in America. The Sudanese saw America as a distant place so presumably full of hope and opportunity that they sometimes called it a heaven. After the boys who live in Houston met me, they started calling me “Mama Cherry!”

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Vision Statement

Our vision is to build One America in the 21st century by connecting people through education and dialogue in a diverse world.

Core Beliefs

The human race is essentially one and racism is a learned behavior that can be unlearned.

Mission Statement

Our Mission is to facilitate the healing of racism through education and dialogue in a safe and supportive environment, in order to empower individuals and transform communities.

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We held our first conference, titled *A Way Forward*, in partnership with Houston Community College Central Campus. The conference educated participants about dismantling institutional racism by identifying strategies that empower individuals to thrive while working to achieve a just universal community. The first one was held over two days on campus. Due to COVID, the second year the conference was held by Zoom. We focused on three topics, one two-hour session a month, over the course of three months.

The COVID years proved to be challenging as we pondered how the Center would stay alive. Our country was totally quarantined, and the closure of schools, houses of worship, and corporate America made it impossible to conduct workshops in physical spaces. Many of these organizations did not survive through COVID, but the Center did. The way we survived was through Zoom. Zoom was new to me, and I had to learn how to use it. By learning how to use Zoom, we pushed out one workshop after another. We created it, and people from across this country came.

Juneteenth Ally Award

One of our largest celebrations is the Annual Juneteenth Ally Award Luncheon. We have held 31 of these



amazing gatherings at many locations. For two years we held it on Zoom (because of COVID) with entertainment and wonderful people, but no food. We have given the awards to some of the most hard-working people and organizations that served to make a difference for all the people in our world.

As the nation celebrated the monthly histories of diverse people and their contributions to America, we presented many of their less told stories in films and in live events: We told of Native people in this country (the American Indian Genocide Museum installation in our office), Asian/Pacific Islanders (*Beyond Barbed Wire*), African Americans (*The Cost of Inheritance*), Jewish Americans (*Rosenwald*), Arab Americans (*A Thousand and One Journeys*), Latinas/Latinos (*Black in Latin America*), women in America (*Without a Whisper*), just to name some of our events.

For those who want to explore their racial conditioning using art, we have held the workshop *Healing Art Circle* for five years. The facilitator, Helen Spaw, uses an art exercise and an adapted format of her workshop *Healing Circle*. Participants attend via Zoom and several regular attendees are scattered all over the United States!

"I can't breathe, I can't breathe, I can't breathe!" Members of the world heard as the police officers lynched George Floyd. The world watched as we saw this modern-day lynching. We all saw this on live television from the comfort of our own homes or other spaces. When the murder happened, the world stopped and began to evaluate as people, "Are we truly what we say we are?" I made a personal commitment to recall the date of May 25th each year, the day that George Floyd was murdered. Due to the murder, I did 16 interviews, via magazines, radio talks, and TV appearances.

For almost 20 years, we have had a very educational Facebook presence maintained by co-founder of the Center Jackie Cone-Newberry. Jackie was always on top of current events and wanted everyone to be aware of what is happening.

As we planned the dialogues, Anna Geyer as our PR person, made sure the city was aware of what programs the Center was putting on. For all of you that called the office to inquire about the Press Releases you hear the voice of Marcy Jolosky.

We had a TikTok account called *Cherry Steinwender Dropping Knowledge*. The TikTok account was up for only three months, but in that short period of time, it went viral four times with 24,000 followers.

Interns a great joy

One of my greatest joys has been having High School and University Students serve as interns, giving a space for students to blossom and increase their knowledge about racism. Once, I had three interns: one Muslim, one Christian, and one Jewish. Bringing together young people from such different backgrounds expands their horizons about what they can learn from each other that can supplement their own growth.

Even though I don't play golf or know anything about the game, the Center was invited to conduct a dialogue workshop in Tacoma, Washington, titled *Out of Bounds Conversations*, which took place on the golf course! We planned another workshop for the 45+ non-golfers that was held in the

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Clubhouse.

Creating, researching and conducting the history of golf for the dialogue was a win, win for participants on and off the golf course.

For five years, we took a bus load of people to Louisiana to visit the plantations to gain first-hand knowledge of what the lives of enslaved people truly looked like. We visited the Laura Plantation, the St. Joseph Plantation, and the Whitney Plantation.

Another amazing workshop that the Center participated in was *The Living Library*. *The Living Library* attempts to challenge prejudice by facilitating a conversation between “books” and “readers”. “Books” are volunteers who have either been subjected to discrimination themselves or represent groups or individuals within society that are at risk of suffering from stereotypes,

stigma, prejudice, or discrimination. “Readers” are attendees who “check out” the books by sitting with the “book” and hearing their story. Living books often have personal experiences of discrimination or social exclusion that they are willing to share with readers. Most importantly, books give readers permission to enter into dialogue with them, in the hope that their perspectives and experiences will challenge commonly held perceptions and stereotypes and therefore affect the attitudes and behaviors of wider society. We were the second city and the second state to conduct *The Living Library*. The first five times we held *The Living Library* were in partnership with the libraries of the City of Houston. Lone Star College invited the Center to its *Human Library*, based on the same model as *The Living Library*. We were able to present to the students on that campus at least six times.

We tried very hard to stay true to our By-Laws, which state that the Board of Directors of the Center has

to be as diverse as possible to represent the ethnic makeup of the city of Houston. Our Board Members have been *amazing* people and served the Center *very well*. We also wanted to try something new by having co-executive directors. The people who have served with me in that role are Barabara Hacker, Sandy Boyd, Nancy Linden, Lucy McLaughlin, and Laura Gallier. I say, “*Thanks with all my heart!*”

These 35 years have been filled with joy, but the other side of that is the sadness of all the people I had to say goodbye to: those who are no longer here and those whose health has failed and are living in assisted living facilities. In conclusion, I would like to say thank you to every person who has supported the Center and lifted me up.

The job is not over, and we will still need your resources, time and donations.

“35 YEARS WE DID A HELL OF A JOB AND WE ARE STILL STANDING!”

Juneteenth Ally Award Luncheon well worth the trip

By **BELINDA WEST**, OTR, MSML, ACC, CDE®
Owns Occupation Humanity,
a consulting and executive coaching firm

During the summer of 2020, the world was on fire with the fever of COVID-19, and America was suffering the complications of a racial reckoning after the murders of Ahmaud Arbery, February 23, 2020, Breonna Taylor, March 13, 2020, and George Floyd, May 25, 2020. Corporations, local law enforcement, and activists rushed forward with pleas for justice and claims of allyship with the realization that America had finally openly witnessed its collective failures to heal the 400-year-old gaping wound of racism.

I was traumatized. Convicted. I was tired of the heavy

grief of it all, so I started looking for more meaningful outlets and partners in the work we all should be doing on an ongoing basis. A dear friend knew this and sent a Zoom link for me to join an educational event already in session offered by the Center For Healing Racism (CFHR) in Houston, Texas. That’s when I met Cherry Steinwender and members of CFHR. Although I had already started organizing efforts to make my corner of the world better, after that session, I felt more energized and moved toward greater compassion for the damage that racism has done to all of us, no matter our ancestry, ethnicity, color, or culture. Although

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Ally Award Luncheon well worth the drive

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COVID was isolating, I was now connected with Cherry and CFHR.

CFHR returned to doing most of its events live, and sadly, I missed that connection since I live in Dallas. I reached out to reconnect, and Mrs. Cherry Steinwender generously invited me to the 35-Year Anniversary and Juneteenth Ally Award Luncheon. I couldn't resist the opportunity to meet her in person and revel in the glow of champions for the cause, so I drove down to be present. This is what I experienced:

The Luncheon was held at St. Paul's United Methodist Church in Houston on June 15, 2024. The venue was tastefully decorated in gold, black, and white, with colorful columns of streamers flanking the stage. A silent auction displayed beautiful artwork in ceramic, painting, print, and paper textile mediums amongst service packages and books. As people gathered, it was touching to see people from varied cultures and ethnicities coming together to support the work of CFHR. We shared a traditional barbecue meal.

The event was opened by the CFHR Board Chair, Sonya Sneed, Ph.D., then emceed by Donna Davis, JD, and Christine Harrison, Ph.D. Her light-hearted review of CFHR's development and work over the past 35 years showed that Cherry Steinwender is tireless and a tenacious networker. She and her staff have worked together to bring hundreds of speakers, authors, trainers, advocates, and more to aid the CFHR mission, and this day was no different. After touching renditions of the songs "Young Gifted and Black, and You're the Best Thing That Ever Happened to Me," sung by professional vocalist Evette Busby, Cherry presented Ally Awards to four advocates for the healing of our world.

THE AWARDEES from top photo clockwise:

Chris Tomlinson, Journalist, for impactful truth-telling by authorship of books (*Forget the Alamo*, and *The Remarkable Story of Two Families Who Share the Tomlinson Name - One White, One Black*), and an esteemed collection of articles and columns.

<https://www.houstonchronicle.com/author/chris-tomlinson/>



Mark Masaoka, on behalf of the Nikkei for Civil Rights & Redress (NCCR) for advocating for reparations for African Americans.

<https://nccr-la.org/about>

Steven and Cheryl Melendez for the American Indian Genocide Traveling Museum to educate museum visitors about the atrocities and resilience of America's First Peoples. <https://aigenom.org/>

Benny Agosto, Jr. for establishing the Benny Agosto Jr.'s Diversity Center at South Texas College of Law Houston to increase the depth of understanding DEI in the legal profession as well as supporting a healthy campus culture and community engagement.

<https://www.stcl.edu/academics/centers-institutes/the-benny-agosto-jr-diversity-center/>

I'm back home now, still smiling when I reflect on the work of CFHR and the day I shared with Cherry and Sigmund, her husband, on such a lovely day of remembrance and celebration. Despite the long journey ahead for unity in our world, my heart is lighter than in 2020. Because of people like Cherry, Sigi, and all the allies making such a significant impact, I feel hopeful, happy, and even more convicted to do my part.

Director and Board Members



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Executive Director



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