

IGNITE

MC

NEWSLETTER

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2018



When the Charlotte branch of Ignite NC heard the Charlotte-Mecklenberg school system (CMS) had an open forum to discuss an addition to their inclusivity policy, they rallied as many people as they could and took to the Government Center in downtown Charlotte. Once there, Ignite fellows Nikolai Mather (pictured on the right) and Kaleia Martin (pictured below), took to the podium to vocally and boldly defend the proposed amendment, which would expand the CMS definition of "multiculturalism" to include LGBTQ youths. If passed, CMS would now include gender identity and sexual diversity within their policies, and now actively work to include these things within the curriculum.

As they spoke and cheered, Nikolai, Kaleia, and the other proponents did so over the aggravated rumblings of a conservative audience, who would rather deny trans and queer students the right to be comfortable while learning, than see them be able to prosper and thrive in a welcoming academic environment. At one point, a hostile and homophobic Reverend utilized all of his speaking time, and then continued to approach the dias, all while raising both his volume and aggression. He was eventually escorted out of the room by police, where he watched, much to his dismay, the board pass the policy expansion 4-0. Now, the board plans to meet later on in the year to discuss a substantive plan of action and release a statement detailing how they plan on incorporating the new changes into the classroom. So what does that mean for Ignite's branch in Charlotte? It means this half of Ignite NC will continue advocating for social rights and pushing forward with its newest mission of creating a LGBTQ center on UNC Charlotte's campus. In short: we're going to relentlessly show up, and show out.

ASHA

COUTRIER

MECKPAC



On February 23rd-24th, several Ignite NC Fellows from the Triad hosted the Activist Academy, a weekend of workshops at the Beloved Community Center in Greensboro, NC, for new and experienced activist and organizers. I interviewed two key organizers for the event, Carly and L.A, to get their perspective on the Activist Academy. Carly and L.A are involved in Defund Racism, a student organization on UNCC's campus that is committed to fighting injustices on university campuses as well as fighting oppression outside of the university. In L.A.'s words, the Activist Academy was "a weekend of workshops and trainings for young folk interested in stepping into the world of activism and organizing." Their intent, Carly mentions, was that they wanted "new folks to be able to come and learn organizing skills like base building and power mapping, but (they) also want it to be a space where folks who are already doing work in the community and on campuses to build collectively with other youth."

Earlier this year, the Activist Academy gathered the attention of other Ignite NC fellows from A&T and Guilford college, and preparation for the event became a cross-campus endeavor. I asked Carly and L.A to tell me about their experience working with folk across campus. Carly says "With so many hands in the pot, working on this project was surprisingly smooth for the daunting task it seemed like at the beginning. One thing that I have found very supportive in this group is that we are all in a similar stage of creation. Reva (Ignite NC fellow) is in the process of creating a student group at Guilford. Folks at UNCC are transitioning members of Defund Racism into leadership roles and getting intentional about their strategy. And A&T students want to use this event to build further strategy. And all of our goals are just working together so well!". L.A echoes a similar attitude, he says "Everyone is so hungry and driven, it really inspires me! It also makes me very grateful to get to know all these individuals and see them work and build together."

The drive and want to build community of the organizers of the Activist Academy resonated throughout the weekend. More than forty participants attended the activist academy, this was beyond the number of people who rsvp. On the first day we got to know one another and define system of oppression such as transphobia, Racism, classism, fatphobia, anti-black, ect. through conversations and collaboration. Folx who weren't aware of these issues were thankful for coming, and as collective we expanded our understanding of we and our neighbors are affected by systems of oppression. The first day ended with a mood check, and mostly everyone was hungry for more. On the second day, more people attended and the room felt way smaller than the day before. We went over direct action, facilitation, intersectionality, and much more. The activist academy was a great experience, I met with new and old friends, learned so much from the facilitators and the participants, and most important of all I left with sense a great sense of community and the drive to tear down systems of oppression.

The Activist Academy is great example of how cross campus collaboration can and will build our movements stronger and more effective.

DIEGO

VERGARA

ACTIVIST ACADEMY



Appalachian State University, a university that stands for justice and equality for all individuals and believes that diversity is imperative for the success of faculty, staff, and students, has recently ran into a problem with the naming of some of their buildings on campus. Two senators of the Student Government Association of Appalachian State University have decided to take this matter into their own hands and into the hands of the Student Government, by writing a bill that would challenge the Residence Hall Association and the Provost to implement the process of looking at two residence halls that are named after white separatists that opposed integration and ultimately renaming these halls. These two residence halls were named specifically after Edward Lovill, a Confederate Army soldier, and Clyde Hoey, a former U.S. Federal Attorney. The actions of these men do not currently represent the values of diversity and inclusion that Appalachian State University and prove to counterproductive to the university's mission. It is time that we begin to make the necessary change on our campus to be able to truly foster a culture of community and inclusiveness, and sometimes all it takes is for students to use their voice and stand up for what is right, not only for ourselves, but for every individual that calls Appalachian home. The Student Government Association of Appalachian State University strives to make positive change that will affect the students of Appalachian State as they represent the senators represent their constituencies to their best ability. This bill to rename these residence halls has just recently been through the legislative branch of the Student Government and will be presented in front of the entire Senate on Tuesday, where the senators will have open discussion about the bill and will vote to either pass or dismiss the bill.

JOE

WILKES

"JUSTICE FOR ALL. RENAME THE HALL"



An issue in the Charlotte area is affordable housing. With Mecklenburg being in the top 100 largest counties, it is ranked 79th hardest to live in. The increase in tech/ banking industries has caused inflation on housing prices and a desperate need for affordable housing units. ELI (Extremely Low Income) is defined as an income that stands at or below 30% of their area.

In Charlotte, the Median income is \$54,836 versus at or below 30% being \$16,475. The average rent in Charlotte has increased by 35% in the past 5 years. Neighborhoods in Charlotte such as Belmont and Cherry, once poor urban areas, became gentrified, causing an increase in housing prices, pushing those residents further from their jobs, homes and livelihoods.

But what are some solutions to combat this crisis?

Unfortunately, there is no perfect solution because of this issue's complexity and fundamental roots in racism, oppression and poverty.

Here's an example: In Chicago and many similar cities, affordable housing was confined to already low income/ deprived areas, causing students to be zoned into underfunded schools, creating stigmas around those areas and increasing poverty.

Though many people are advocating for "mixed housing" in Charlotte, some people believe that the term itself, when not clearly defined, can be used by a neoliberal state to use public funds to gentrify. There are many problems but a start to the solution is allocating enough and proper funds for affordable housing in general. One way to ensure enough monetary resources for affordable housing is adopting legislation inclusionary zoning. This will force developers to allot a certain number of units per development that is allocated to affordable housing. The use of Land Trust, through nonprofits like West Side Community Land Trust help buy property and land to prevent redevelopment. Another tactic is using wealthy philanthropists (like churches) to fund/ donate to projects around affordable housing. The use of legislation to grow subsidies for housing projects is one of the most important solutions to consider because it effects all these tactics.

With the housing crisis growing, the lack of funding will increase that disparity even more. Centralizing an issue that impacts a disproportionate amount of people yet doesn't bring investors a high enough return on investment is difficult but bring people together and legislation change is a good start.

NIFEMI

OGUNRO

AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN CHARLOTTE

103 years after D.W. Griffith's Birth of A Nation film Black people are still being misrepresented in news and film. Birth of a Nation perpetuated stereotypes that would follow Black people for over a century. Griffith made it a point to destroy the character of Black men in particular. Glorifying the Klu Klux Klan and their role as the white savior. While many Americans have not seen Griffith's film they have seen the effects of its historical presentation. The War on Drugs initiatives and media coverage were being broadcasted nation-wide depicting narratives of Black folks that would haunt them for decades to come. Brutalized bodies lay slain in the streets as the local news reported live. Gruesome images of black bodies are seen all too often. Twitter feeds are flooded with raw video footage just hours or even minutes after a murder at the hands of a Police officer. While the footage reveals truth and light into a dark justice system it has desensitized a whole generation of Black folks. In an age where personal videos have created an industry of lifestyle vloggers turned millionaires via YouTube and Instagram shouldn't Black folks be receiving funding to tell the stories of their communities? Instead Schools are training our youth to become STEM professionals to make some of the top engineering companies more diverse. While the need for STEM professionals is ever-present, so is the need for an authentic Black narrative. In 2018 and beyond it is imperative that Black folks not only exist under a hashtag affirming our infinite magic or our joy but a true and valid depiction in news, film and every white comedic video content based website. Black women, trans and queer folks have led movements and organized their communities time and time again. Yet their stories aren't being documented. When hundreds of Black trans-women were murdered in 2016 there were no blockbuster films made to tell their stories. Instead Black Twitter took to their timelines and Facebook Live feeds to tell the story. The reality is white film legends may never tell the story of Black folks without oppressive circumstances but Black folks can document their own journeys. Document the revolution and document your truth. Besides who can tell your story better than you? After all we owe it to our ancestors to document the truth in ways they would have only dreamed of.

KALIAH
CORBETT
BIRTH OF A NATION





UPCOMING EVENTS

MARCH

3/10 - DEE DEE'S BASEBUILDING TRAINING

3/11_ VIDEOGRAPHY TRAINING WITH COURTNEY, KENNETH,
AND AMBRIA

3/17-DIY RADICAL ARTS INTERVENTION TRAINING WITH
HOLDEN

3/19-23 - BOG WEEK OF ACTION

4/17_COMMUNITY GARDEN TRAINING WITH ACG



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