

Benton County's
Black History Month
Event

PANEL PRESENTATION:

PUBLIC DISCUSSION NWA 

Presents

Race In Arkansas: Benton County's Black History Month Event

When: Thursday, February 23, 2017
6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Where: Peterson Auditorium
Shewmaker Center for Global Business
Development on the campus of NWA
Community College 1 College Drive,
Bentonville, AR

PANEL PRESENTERS

(Audience Participation After Each Speaker)

Harrison Community Task Force on Race Relations

George Holcomb and **Layne Ragsdale**, Task Force members, will explain the development, experience and challenges of the Task Force in the City of Harrison over the years and currently.

Racial Disparities in Arkansas Criminal Justice System Research Project

Steering Committee Member(s) will explain findings of the Research Project.

Furonda Brasfield, Executive Director, Arkansas Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty;

I. Malik Saafir, President, Janus Institute for Justice;

and/or **John Gibson**, Attorney (via video conference only)

Black History

Raven Cook will share synopsis of significant moments in American Black History that likely will surprise many of us.

Allies for Equality Workshop

Heather Platt will help us understand that in order to speak out against racial injustice in the Black community, it is critical that we learn how to communicate the truth about racial injustice in such a way that it is possible for hearts and minds to be changed.

*Moderator – Jon Comstock, Former Benton County Circuit Judge
Direct Inquiries to PublicDiscussionNWA@gmail.com*

About the Presenters

Layne Ragsdale and **George Holcomb** have been associated with the Harrison Task Force on Race Relations since 2003. Wait. Harrison, Arkansas has a Task Force on Race Relations? You're kidding, right? No, as a matter of fact Harrison's Community Task Force on Race Relations is serious about its contribution to the town's culture. The Task Force works every day to do some things that someone in Harrison needs to do: Counter the unfriendly image the world has of our town. The fact that we have people working to project and maintain that image increases the challenge; represent the opinions of the people who want Harrison to welcome and encourage all people of good will to live and work here; (we think we speak for most of our fellow citizens); reach out to the world, refuting stereotyping by our willingness to engage, learn and interact; and maintain a rallying point for people who want our town to be better and to earn a better perception in the eyes of the world. Layne and George will talk about their experience with the group, in hopes they can answer some questions and learn some things from the discussion.

I. Malik Saafir is the President & Founder of Janus Institute For Justice (Little Rock, AR). He has devoted his career to ending racial, economic and health disparities in low-income communities. He trains advocates and activists how to interpret, translate and apply theories of justice through social and environmental justice projects. He also teaches in the Department of Philosophy & Religion at Philander Smith College.

Malik received a Masters of Divinity from Vanderbilt University where he was a Kelly Miller Smith Scholar and graduated with Honors. He currently serves on the GreenFaith Board of Directors and UALR William H. Bowen School of Law Racial Disparities in the Arkansas Criminal Justice System Research Project Steering Committee.

Ms. Raven N. Cook was born in Mesa, AZ and raised in Little Rock, AR to military parents. Ms. Cook began her studies in African American History at the age of eight. Since that time, Ms. Cook has been passionate about teaching others the accounts of triumph in the midst of adversity endured by her people to bring consciousness to all.

Ms. Cook is the Founder of Foundations: Black History Educational Programming. She is currently employed by Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, where she works in K-12 school programs as a museum educator in the Education Department. Ms. Cook has taught Inspire 365: A Journey through Black Experience since 2013 which seeks to educate all people in the discipline of African American History.

Heather Pratt is the Director of Formation and Evangelism at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Fayetteville. In her past career, she was an instructional designer and a technical trainer, and she loves being able to put her knowledge of training development and adult learning theories to good use on such an important topic as racial injustice. Heather worked closely with Compassion Fayetteville's Black History Team to put together the Allies for Equality Workshop, and Heather is the first one to admit that she is not an expert in Black History or empathetic communication skills. She is pretty good at being vulnerable and admitting when she has a lot to learn, but still being brave and taking action anyway when it feels like the right thing to do.

Public Discussion NWA is an activity of Comstock Conflict Resolution Services. Public Discussion NWA intends to broaden the pool of participants from the typical two party dispute-driven mediation model, to a facilitation of the general public's discussion of and education on policy-type issues that matter to them. The programs presented are moderated with the belief that talking with each other and learning together lead to collaboration – which is often defined as win/win in the world of conflict resolution. Most forums involve presentations from panelists with expertise on the subject presented and active audience participation.