

# MANDATE FOR THE GREENSBORO TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION

*There comes a time in the life of every community when it must look humbly and seriously into its past in order to provide the best possible foundation for moving into a future based on healing and hope. Many residents of Greensboro believe that for this city, the time is now.*

In light of the shooting death of 5 people and the wounding of 10 others in Greensboro, North Carolina on November 3, 1979, and

In light of the subsequent acquittal of defendants in both state and federal criminal trials, despite the fact that the shootings were videotaped and widely viewed, and

In light of the further investigations, passage of time and other factors which allowed a jury in a later civil trial to find certain parties liable for damages in the death of one of the victims, and

In light of the confusion, pain, and fear experienced by residents of the city and the damage to the fabric of relationships in the community caused by these incidents and their aftermath,

The Greensboro Truth and Community Reconciliation Project, including the signers of its Declaration, calls for the examination of the context, causes, sequence and consequence of the events of November 3, 1979.

We affirm that the intention of this examination shall be:

- a) Healing and reconciliation of the community through discovering and disseminating the truth of what happened and its consequences in the lives of individuals and institutions, both locally and beyond Greensboro.
- b) Clarifying the confusion and reconciling the fragmentation that has been caused by these events and their aftermath, in part by educating the public through its findings.
- c) Acknowledging and recognizing people's feelings, including feelings of loss, guilt, shame, anger and fear.
- d) Helping facilitate changes in social consciousness and in the institutions that were consciously or unconsciously complicit in these events, thus aiding in the prevention of similar events in the future.

This examination is not for the purpose of exacting revenge or recrimination. Indeed, the Commission will have no such power. Rather, the Commission will attempt to learn how persons and groups came to be directly or indirectly involved in these events; it will assess the impact of these events on the life and development of this community. It will seek all possibilities for healing transformation.

In addition to exploring questions of institutional and individual responsibility for what happened, as a necessary part of the truth-seeking process we urge the Commission to look deeply into the root causes and historical context of the events of November 3, 1979.

Members of this community, young and old, still find the events of November 3, 1979 nearly incomprehensible. We owe it to ourselves and to future generations to explain what happened and why. Many citizens and institutions of this city have acknowledged the wisdom of, and necessity for, such a process.

It is in this spirit that we affirm the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission's motto: "Without Truth, no Healing; without Forgiveness, no Future."

Therefore, toward these ends,

1. The Greensboro Truth and Community Reconciliation Project (referred to here as "the Project") hereby establishes a Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission (GTRC), charged with the examination of the context, causes, sequence and consequence of the events of November 3, 1979.

2. The GTRC will consist of seven (7) Commissioners who shall be persons of recognized integrity and principle, with a demonstrated commitment to the values of truth, reconciliation, equity and justice.

The majority of the commissioners will be current residents of the Greensboro area; at least two commissioners will be from outside the Greensboro area. All will be selected in accordance with “The Selection Process for the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission” document, which is attached. The Commission will designate its chair(s).

Commissioners will serve on an honorary basis and in their personal capacity, but may be reimbursed for expenses incurred in the discharge of their responsibilities.

3. The Commissioners will carry out their mandate by reviewing documents, inviting people to come forward with information, consulting with experts and by any other means, public or private, they consider appropriate.

4. The Commission may decide to carry out some activities in private in order to protect, to the extent possible, the security and privacy of individuals and the integrity of its ongoing truth-seeking, but in general the Commission's activities will be carried out in a manner that is as public and transparent as possible.

5. The Commission will issue a report to the residents of Greensboro, to the City, to the Project, and to other public bodies, encompassing the items outlined in paragraph 1 and in keeping with the intentions and spirit of the mandate. The Commission will ensure that its findings are fair, based on the information compiled and reviewed, and adequately documented in its report. The Commission may take steps to protect the identity of individual sources, if requested. The Commission will also make specific, constructive recommendations to the City, to the residents of Greensboro, and to other entities as it deems appropriate, particularly to further the intentions set forth in the mandate.

6. The Commission will have no authority either to pursue criminal or civil claims or to grant immunity from such claims. Its focus is reconciliation through seeking, understanding and reporting the truth.

7. The Commission will convene a first meeting, as determined by the Commissioners, no later than 60 days from the date on which the Selection Panel confirms and announces the selection and acceptance of its members. From its first meeting, the Commission will have a period of 15 months to fulfill the terms of its mandate. This period includes initial planning and set-up, the determination of its internal procedures and selection and appointment of its key staff. The Commission may call upon the Project staff and other resources for administrative support during its initial planning and set-up phase. If absolutely necessary, the period of the Commission’s mandate may be extended for up to 6 more months, with the permission of the Project.

8. The Commission will carry out its mandate while operating independently from any external influence, including the Project. It may reach cooperative agreements with organizations, institutions and individuals in order to strengthen its capacity and resources, in so far as such agreements do not compromise the Commission’s independence. The Commission will have full authority to make decisions on its spending, within the limits of available funds, and may elect to have a fiscal sponsor through another institution so long as that relationship is consistent with the spirit of the mandate and the Commission’s substantive independence.

9. At the completion of its work, all documents of the Commission, its notes, findings, exhibits and other collected materials, shall be permanently archived in Greensboro in an institution whose purpose and tradition is in keeping with the objectives and spirit of the Commission mandate. The identity of this institution and the structure of the archive will be determined by agreement between the Commission and the Project. If deemed appropriate, multiple institutions and locations may be used for archival purposes. Such an archive shall, to the extent feasible and respectful of any recommendations by the Commission with regard to the continued confidentiality of records, be accessible to the public.

***The passage of time alone cannot bring closure, nor resolve feelings of guilt and lingering trauma, for those impacted by the events of November 3, 1979. Nor can there be any genuine healing for the city of Greensboro unless the truth surrounding these events is honestly confronted, the suffering fully acknowledged, accountability established, and forgiveness and reconciliation facilitated.***