

Topeka Center FOR Peace & Justice



Carl Frazier

Interim Executive Director & Board Chair

Topeka Center for Peace & Justice (TCPJ) Mission: *To promote justice and peace through education and action for social change by working with individuals and organizations in Topeka.*

We are in the holiday season! This is clear as we look around at the weather, music, decorations, special deals, and the distribution of love. The Topeka Center for Peace & Justice (TCPJ) wishes everyone would spread a little more love, not only in this season, but during all seasons.

Moving Forward

I would like to thank all the previous Executive Directors (EDs) from the founding of TCPJ in 1985. This includes the founder, Bill Beachy, and EDs Jim McCullough and Glenda DuBoise. The Center continues to move forward providing restorative circles and mediation for our community. As we continue to improve our services, we have accomplished the following:

- Promoted Nancy Kelley as our interim program manager. Nancy has many years of mediation experience;
- Received approval from the City of Topeka's American Rescue Plan Act grant for over \$100,000 for training and facility improvements;
- Received special funding from the Sunflower Foundation to train more minority mediators;
- Finalized conversation on mediation training in the spring of 2023;
- Met with Shawnee County District Attorney, Mike Kagay, on how the TCPJ is beefing up mediator training to ensure we are ready and equipped for referrals; and
- Met with our computer technician and bookkeeper to see how we can move our data into cloud-based and other solutions.



Building Relationship

In order for the TCPJ to not just survive but thrive, we must maintain our current relationships and build new ones. I have met with many community leaders, but would like to highlight the time I spent with the Sunflower Foundation's CEO Billie Hall and her staff. My daughter, Emersen Frazier, met with us too. Emersen is the Director of Health Equity and Policy at Stormont Vail Health and was able to share about her work. After our meeting with Billie, I truly feel that we are partners. The Sunflower Foundation staff was awesome. As a father, it felt great to spend time with my daughter and learn how she's making a difference in her field and the Topeka community.



Emersen Frazier, Carl Frazier, Sunflower Foundation's CEO Billie Hall, Elizabeth Stewart Burger, Brandon Skidmore



Carl Frazier & Sunflower Foundation's CEO Billie Hall

I talked about the future needs of the TCPJ. The Sunflower Foundation and the TCPJ discussed future partnering opportunities such as using their beautiful facility for trainings and meetings. As a Sunflower Fellow, I am so happy for their new location and how they will continue to support the community.

2023 MLK Program

The TCPJ is finalizing our annual program: "Whose Dream Is It?". The program will be held at New Life Baptist Church at 3601 SW 10th Street in Topeka on January 16, 2023 with chili at 6:00 pm and the program starting at 7:00 pm. Our guest speaker will be Dr. Beryl New from USD 501. Dr. New is an accomplished speaker with a wonderful voice. We will also have Ms. LaQuanda Jacobs who was freed from prison by The Innocence Project after serving over 27 years for a crime she did not commit. Come hear her sing and share her powerful testimony. We hope you join us for another wonderful evening.

Think About It

Although Nancy Kelley and I voted this past election, African Americans and women have not always had the right to vote. When the 15th Amendment was ratified, it granted Black men the right to vote; however, laws, including poll taxes, literacy tests, and clauses, mostly enacted in southern states, continued to suppress Black voting rights. This was until the 1965 Voting Rights Act was signed by President Lyndon Johnson, banning literacy tests and enforcing the 15th Amendment on a federal level.

On August 18, 1920, after decades of protests and struggles for change, the 19th Amendment was adopted. It granted women the right to vote. Unfortunately, this amendment did not stop southern states from restricting minority women from voting through the enactment of discriminatory laws.



***There is power in your vote**
Carl Frazier & Nancy Kelley*

Later, many others such as Native Americans and Asian Americans gained these rights. We have come a long way, yet, I believe we still have a long way to go. Poll times and numbers are limited, legislators are continuing redistricting, laws have passed stating that you cannot give people water while they are waiting to vote, etc...

In 2013, the late Representative John Lewis said "I gave a little blood on the bridge in Selma, Alabama for the right to vote. I am not going to stand by and let the Supreme Court take the right to vote away from us". The blood stain of my ancestors' fighting in the south for me is why I will continue to vote for peace and justice.

COME CELEBRATE
WITH US!

TOPEKA CENTER FOR PEACE AND JUSTICE
PRESENTS

A NIGHT OF *Celebration*

IN HONOR OF

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s *Birthday*

MONDAY
JAN 16TH
2023

@6PM

NEW LIFE BAPTIST CHURCH
3601 SW 10TH AVE, TOPEKA KS.

KEY NOTE SPEAKER: **DR BERYL NEW**, DIRECTOR OF
CERTIFIED PERSONNEL & EQUITY FOR TOPEKA PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

CHILI AND DESSERT WILL BE SERVED, A VEGETARIAN OPTION IS AVAILABLE

FOR FURTHER DETAILS OR QUESTIONS PLEASE FEEL FREE TO CONTACT TCPJ @ **785-329-6349**

Come celebrate with us! Topeka Center for Peace & Justice is hosting a night of celebration in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King's Birthday. Monday, January 16th, 2023 at 6:00 pm we will be meeting for a night of celebration at New Life Baptist Church located at 3601 SW 10th Ave, Topeka KS.

Dr Beryl New, Director of Certified Personnel & Equity for Topeka Public Schools will be speaking. LaQuanda Jacobs will also join us to tell her story of working with Project Innocence. After being falsely accused and wrongly imprisoned for a crime she did not commit, she was released only after working with Project Innocence.

We will be providing chili (with a vegetarian option) and dessert for those who attend. We hope you will join us for this Celebration of Dr. King's life and his mission to bring equality, peace and hope to all.

For further details or questions please feel free to contact our office at 785-329-6349.



Nancy Kelley

Interim Program Manager

Restorative Justice & Mediation Coordinator

Victim Offender Mediation using Neighborhood Accountability Boards

Victim/Offender Mediation, sometimes called victim/offender conferencing, is a type of mediation that is focused on the needs of the victim. In the court system the question is asked, "What crime was committed?" In Restorative Justice teaching, the question is, "Who has been harmed?"

Funded through the Reinvestment Grant of Shawnee County, the Topeka Center for Peace & Justice (TCPJ) receives referrals from Shawnee County Courts to mediate juvenile offenders who are first time offenders charged with a misdemeanor or low level felony. The TCPJ provides a mediation, a confidential, facilitated conference between the offender and those who were harmed. In many cases the harmed do not wish to or may not be able to attend the mediation session. In those situations we call in the Neighborhood Accountability Board (NAB) volunteers to hear the offender, to talk about the harms caused to the community by the offender, and to assist in developing an agreement with the juvenile to repair the damage, as much as possible.

In November, five community members participated in a two-hour training preparing them to serve on the NAB. The training consists of understanding the Restorative Justice process, the types of juvenile offenses that are appropriate for an NAB, and how to think creatively to help the juvenile and family to craft an agreement that moves the youth beyond the crime.

Beginning in January, Kelley will offer NAB training on a monthly basis. Interested community members can contact her at 785-329-6349 for more information.

Black Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) Mediator Training

Mediation is a process in which a neutral professional assists parties in co-creating solutions to a problem. In mediation, the parties express their concerns, interests, and goals. They look for common ground and a better understanding of the other. For more information on mediation, click on the website below:

<https://www.vilendrerlaw.com/mediation-frequently-asked-questions/>

Two important qualities of a mediator are the ability to remain neutral and to create trust when working with the parties who are dealing with conflict. A trained mediator holds those qualities important as she or he values the importance of confidentiality.

In Topeka, the majority of our mediators are white, retired individuals who are well trained and have years of experience in many areas of mediation. Even as these trained individuals have worked at identifying their biases, believe that they "park them at the door," and do not make judgements concerning the mediation, they often mediate with individuals who differ in their culture and in their problem solving strategies.



Regina Platt, Racial Justice and Advocacy Coordinator for the YWCA

Where a bias occurs, a mistrust can grow. A young, black male who has been referred to the Topeka Center for Peace & Justice (TCPJ) for mediation may not be as open and trusting when speaking to a white mediator as he would be to a person who looks more like him and shares a similar background.

Regina Platt, Racial Justice and Advocacy Coordinator for the YWCA, offers the following observation:

Training and developing Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) individuals as mediators is relevant in assisting the BIPOC population feeling safe and supported while advocating for themselves. Color and cultural blindness have no space when assisting people of color in obtaining favorable outcomes for all parties involved. It is vital when offering services that mediators can see, hear, and support participants through connecting and understanding the culture of individuals without biases. Historically, a natural system of mediators was represented by elders who were trusted individuals of wisdom, knowledge, and understanding that held spaces of accountability to gain peace. Restoration and healing are impactful for the involved parties and our entire community.

Because the TCPJ sees the need for BIPOC who are trained mediators, we are committed to solutions. In the spring, the TCPJ will provide training in core and parent/adolescent mediation for people of color through grants provided by the Sunflower Foundation and American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). For more information about the training contact Nancy Kelley, Program Director at 785-329-6349.

Restorative Kansas: A Regional Conference for Mediation and Restorative Practices

The Topeka Center for Peace & Justice is participating in the planning of a regional conference that will be held at Haskell University in Lawrence in June 2023. Areas of interest will be community building, social justice, restorative justice for juveniles and families, Native American/Indigenous influence of Restorative Practices and more. Circle your calendars for June and watch our website for more information. The planning committee will be meeting every other Wednesday beginning in January .

Restorative Practices in Schools

Nancy Kelley visited Seaman High School to bring Restorative Practices to the classroom teachers.

Dr. Laura Lyons, Seaman High School Principal, says about the training day:

Twenty Seaman High School teachers learned about using circles instructionally as community building activities within their classrooms. Nancy Kelley taught these teachers the basics of circles and helped them generate ideas of how they might be used in Viking classrooms. Having teachers learn about the power of listening to and honoring all voices will change the culture of classrooms as a step to honoring all people in our school. Administrators are already using Tier 3 circles to resolve conflicts and address harm in discipline situations, so adding Tier 1 circles supports our building improvement plan and helps all Vikings develop understanding and care for one another as they live out our value of respect for one another.



Circle Training at Seaman High School

Bring Peace into the Region

by Carl Frazier, Interim Executive Director & Board Chair

I received a call from the Highland Community College (HCC) staff. A HCC class visited the Iowa and Sac & Fox Mission in Highland, Kansas after it opened back up after a few years of being closed. After the closing, The Kansas Historical Society moved items from the Iowa and Sac & Fox Mission to their facilities to preserve all the items.

HCC noticed a lot of the items were missing during their visit this year and wanted to see how The Kansas Historical Society can return the items back to the Iowa and Sac & Fox Mission. HCC staff wanted the Topeka Center for Peace & Justice (TCPJ) to intervene and determine how we could help without political issues. I was glad to intervene for the parties, which included HCC and the Iowa and Sac & Fox Museum. I talked with both individuals which led me to the Kansas Historical Society. I am pleased to announce that the Iowa and Sac & Fox Mission and Historical Society are sitting at the table to talk. Because some items might be too frail to be moved, these items might have to stay put. However, they are talking about moving other items back to the museum.

Normally, this is something that TCPJ does not try to resolve, but we were so happy to intervene for a great cause. Now, I must make a trip to the museum once the items are returned. TCPJ is so happy for all parties!

Current TCPJ Board Members

Carl Frazier, New Hope and Love Community Church, Chair
Rev. Donna Gilchrist, West Side Christian Church, Vice Chair
Carol Christensen, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Secretary
Lou Saadi, Islamic Center of Topeka, Treasurer
Virginia Barnes
Lori Brown, Baha'i Faith of Topeka
Rebecca Morrissey
Rev. Clarence Newton, New Life Baptist Church
Dr. Glenda Overstreet-Vaughn
Esther Potts, Temple Beth Sholom
Megan Waltner