Anti-Poverty Community Roundtable  
Friday, April 15, 2016  
8:15 am – 12:30 pm  
Brown Chapel AME Church, 410 Martin Luther King, Jr. St., Selma, AL

Agenda
8:15 – Brown Chapel in Civil Rights History: Pastor Leodis Strong

8:45 – Welcome and purpose of roundtable: Ted W. Small, Chair, Commission on Homelessness and Poverty  
Today’s agenda: Craig H. Baab, Alabama Appleseed Center for Law & Justice, Inc.

9:00 – Race and Poverty in 2016 Alabama  
Ainka Jackson, Executive Director, Selma Center for Nonviolence, Truth & Reconciliation

9:15 – First Framing Question:  
How do our organizations, churches, the criminal justice system and lawyers collaborate to lessen poverty’s adverse impact on personal and physical safety?

10:30 – Break

10:40 – Second Framing Question:  
What racial and economic challenges impair your ability to collaborate with each other and regional and state partners for better:  
Education and schools  
Shelter and Housing  
Mental health, AIDS and other Healthcare

11:30 – Break

11:40 – Third Framing Question:  
How can we collaborate across racial lines to better educate the public and public officials about the reality of race and poverty today?

12:15 – Next Steps:  
How can the ABA and the Alabama legal community support a local anti-poverty dialogue and your collaborative efforts?

12:30 – Adjourn
Background:
Nearly 50 million Americans now live below the federal poverty line. Recent societal, economic and political events (economic meltdown, mortgage foreclosure epidemic, Trayvon Martin, Hurricane Katrina, Ferguson, Missouri, Michelle Alexander’s “The New Jim Crow,” 9/11, the “school to prison pipeline,” unaccompanied minors coming across the border, etc.) have given rise to unprecedented public awareness of income inequality in America, the number of children living in poverty and the disparate treatment and impacts of the law and justice systems on communities of color and populations that face other barriers and obstacles to justice, such as disability, limited English proficiency, immigrant status and other factors.

Initiative Goal:
Identify and help promote and implement best practices for eliminating legal and justice system-related policies, practices and procedures that unfairly perpetuate or worsen the harmful effects of poverty on low-income people and communities, including obstacles and barriers to public benefits, employment, housing, treatment and services needed by people experiencing homelessness or living in poverty.

Working Definition of Poverty:
Poverty is a state or lived experience caused and perpetuated by various, often compounded, factors such as:
• Inadequate economic resources and opportunity to build assets, including employment, adequate income and assets to meet basic human needs such as food, housing, clothing, etc.;
• Insufficient access to social resources such as healthcare, justice and education;
• Weak political standing and limited opportunity for meaningful association and engagement;
• Isolation and lack of cultural identity support;
• Inability to hold institutions and individuals accountable for fair and equitable behavior;
• Disparate treatment based on poverty compounded by other forms of structural unfairness and disparity based on race, ethnicity, gender identity, disability, age, religion, sexual orientation, indigenous identity, national origin, etc.
Manifestations of Poverty:
1. Substandard and unaffordable housing and homelessness;
2. Disproportionate involvement in criminal and civil justice systems;
3. Food inadequacy;
4. Inadequate healthcare and poor health outcomes;
5. Inadequate education outcomes;
6. Lack of opportunity for full employment at a living wage;
7. Living through an unending and continuous cycle of crises;
8. Lack of personal and physical safety;
9. Stigma and lack of personal dignity; and
10. Isolation from community and political infrastructure.

Implementation: Anti-Poverty Roundtables, Toolkit for Communities Seeking to Develop and Operationalize Local Anti-Poverty Agendas, and the ABA Online Quilt of Community Anti-Poverty Discussions
The goal of each roundtable is to bring together 10-15 community stakeholders who are interested in identifying, promoting and implementing best practices for eliminating policies, practices and procedures that unfairly perpetuate or worsen the harmful effects of poverty on low-income people in that particular local community. To connect other communities with the national anti-poverty discussion, the Commission will encourage the designation of at least one panelist in each community who is willing to develop an edited summary of the ideas exchanged and proposed new programming for posting to a Commission-moderated online blog entitled, “Operationalizing A New Anti-Poverty Agenda: An Online Quilt of Community Discussions.” This online blog would allow each roundtable to share its diverse perspective on the most pressing manifestations of poverty within their community as well as its proposed solutions. With the addition of notes from each roundtable, the Commission would add a patch to the national Online Quilt in order to bring together diverse patterns of anti-poverty ideas. These shared ideas could be implemented by other communities who in turn share their own strategies for combatting poverty, creating a resource for all communities to use in removing the practices, policies and procedures that worsen or perpetuate poverty. Additionally, in furtherance of its goal of educating the bar and the general public about homelessness and poverty and the ways the legal community can collaborate with other stakeholders to assist those in need, the Commission is developing a resource entitled: Toolkit for Communities Seeking to Develop and Operationalize Local Anti-Poverty Agendas, in which the Commission will compile a wealth of ABA policy and programming knowledge into a series of “blueprints for action” that are cross-disciplinary and specifically address each of the identified Manifestation of Poverty areas.
American Bar Association Commission on Homelessness & Poverty
Spring Meeting & Anti-Poverty Community Roundtables
April 13 – 16, 2016
Birmingham, Selma & Montgomery, AL

PARTICIPANTS

Birmingham
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Pastor Dion Culliver, Tabernacle Baptist Church, pastorculliver.tab@gmail.com
Mayor George Patrick Evans, Mayor of Selma
Malika Sanders Fortier, The Democracy Project, mfortier@chestnutsanderslaw.com
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Montgomery Police Department

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American Bar Association Commission on Homelessness & Poverty
ambar.org/homeless • 202/662-1693 • homeless@americanbar.org
Henry "Hank" Sanders (born October 28, 1942) is a Democratic member of the Alabama Senate, representing the 23rd District since 1983. He is the longest-serving chair of a legislative budget committee in Alabama, having first been named to Chair of the Senate Finance & Taxation Committee in January 1996 and serving in it for four consecutive terms. Hank Sanders is serving his ninth term in the Alabama Senate. Senator Sanders graduated from Douglasville High School, Talladega College and Harvard Law School. At the age of twelve, Sanders was inspired to become a lawyer after reading about Thurgood Marshall in a magazine article. Hank Sanders graduated near the top of his high school class in 1960 and college class in 1967; winning the Catherine Wardell Award after his freshman year as the "Student who contributed most to Talladega College the previous year." He received a special scholarship to Boston University for his junior year and Harvard Summer School after his sophomore year. He attended Harvard Law School on a Felix Frankfurter Scholarship and served as President of Harvard Black Law Students Association. In 2008, he received an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters from Talladega College.

After law school, Sanders won a Ford Foundation Fellowship that sent him to Africa for a year and a Reginald Heber Smith fellowship that sent him to Huntsville, Alabama to work for the poor with Legal Services. In 1971, Hank began Chestnut, Sanders, Sanders, and Pettaway, P.C., at one time the largest Black law firm in Alabama and one of the largest in the country. His law practice has been one of service helping poor people save their lands, protecting Constitutional rights of citizens, incorporating new towns and building strong sensitive governmental institutions. As a community person, Hank has helped found or build many organizations including Alabama New South Coalition; 21st Century Youth Leadership Movement; Alabama Lawyers Association; Black Belt Human Resources; The National Voting Rights Museum and Institute; C.A.R.E. (Coalition of Alabamians Reforming Education); the Slavery and Civil War Museum, and many others. In 2007, Sanders received the Federation of Southern Cooperatives Estelle Witherspoon Lifetime Achievement Award for his outstanding work over a lifetime.

Hank Sanders was first elected to the Alabama State Senate in 1983 and has championed issues pertaining to education, children, health, women, and removing sales tax from food. He served as Chairman of the powerful Finance and Taxation Education Committee; selected as Outstanding Legislator by the Alabama Legislative Black Caucus; voted a finalist in the Legislator of the Year Award by his fellow senators, and received a 1999 Nation Builder Award from the National Caucus of Black State Legislators.
Pastor Otis Dion Culliver

Pastor Otis Dion Culliver, a native of Monroeville, Alabama, currently serves as the senior pastor of the Historic Tabernacle Baptist Church in Selma, AL. He accepted his call at the age of twenty – one and preached his initial sermon on August 26, 2007. Prior to accepting the call to serve Tabernacle Church, he severed as the pastor of Morning Star Missionary Baptist Church of Beatrice, AL for four and one half years. He founded ODC Ministries in 2014 to equip the saint, evangelize the sinner, and exalt the SAVIOR.

Pastor Culliver is a 2003 graduate of Monroe County High School. He furthered his education at Alabama Southern Community College, where he received an Associate of Science degree in General Business in 2005. In 2007, he obtained Bachelor of Science degrees in Psychology and Business Administration from Troy University. In May 2012 he obtained the Master of Divinity (M. Div.) degree from Beeson Divinity School at Samford University in Birmingham, Alabama. He was the recipient of the 2012 James Earl Massey Preaching Award for outstanding achievement in the study of pastoral theology and the practice of Christian ministry through the proclamation of the gospel.

Pastor Culliver is a strong advocate for Christian Education. He believes there can be no true transformation without truth (biblical information). He is presently a professor in the Religion department of Selma University. He plans to pursue doctoral studies in Homiletics and Spiritual Formation. His future plans are to continue to pursue excellence in ministry as a pastor, preacher, teacher, and writer. He desires to embrace the world with a ministry that shows the love of Christ, edifies the body of Christ, and glorifies the name of Jesus Christ. He is a member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. Although he has been the recipient of numerous honors, awards and accolades, he considers himself a humble servant of the Most High God. Soli Deo Gloria!
MICHAEL W. JACKSON graduated from Centre College in Danville Kentucky with dual Bachelors of Science degrees in Economics & Management and in Government. He later received his Juris Doctor degree from the Florida State College of Law. He began his legal career with the District Attorney’s Office in the Fourth Judicial Circuit in 1990, where he remained until he ventured into private practice in 1994. In 1995, Michael was named Municipal Judge for the City of Selma and was featured in JET Magazine as one of the youngest judges in the State of Alabama.

In June 2004, Michael made local and national news when he was elected District Attorney, becoming the first African-American elected to the position in the Fourth Judicial Circuit and the only African-American currently so elected in the State. Michael was featured in JET, Ebony, and Time Magazines.

Michael has received numerous awards and much recognition during his career, including being named Young Alumnus of the Year in 1996 at his alma mater, Centre College. Moreover, Michael remains active in the community. He is former Board Chairman for the Youth Development Center, a board member of Sabra Sanctuary, which is a group dedicated to helping battered and abused women and a member of the Children Policy Council in Selma. Michael is also a board member of V.I.P. (Visionally Impaired People). Michael also is a graduate of the Selma-Dallas Leadership Class and is affiliated with the various political and legal organizations.
Nancy Sewell

Mrs. Sewell is an educator, media specialist, civic leader, and strong advocate for children. Since 1993, she has tenaciously served the City of Selma, AL, as the first black female elected to its city council. Mrs. Sewell is multi-talented and has excelled in every avenue of her life, as indicated by the numerous honors and awards bestowed upon her by her peers and community. She has never been content with the status quo. Each endeavor throughout her rich life has been met with new and innovative ideas, insurmountable energy, and the ability to motivate people.

Born and raised in Alabama, Mrs. Sewell married her college sweetheart, retired Coach Andrew A. Sewell, and became the mother of three children, Terri, Andrew, and Anthony. Her distinguished educational background includes a Bachelor of Science degree from Alabama State University, a master’s degree from Purdue University, and advanced course work in other graduate studies at Atlanta University and the University of Alabama.

Among many of Mrs. Sewell’s outstanding achievements and honors, she pioneered the development of elementary libraries in the Selma City Schools, was instrumental in maintaining accreditation status for their libraries, implemented the "Accelerated Reader's Program," revitalized the Selma-Dallas Youth and Government Council, and lobbied for grants to improve literacy through school libraries, just to name a few.
**Expert Biography and Organization Profile: Black Belt Arts & Cultural Center, Inc.**

**Speaker/Title>Contact Information:**
Margaret Hardy, President

**Biography:**
Margaret Hardy is a lifelong resident of Selma, AL. She was employed by the State of Alabama as Manager of the Unemployment Office and Employment Office, respectively. After thirty-five years of employment, she retired in 2012. She is a Trustee and Personnel Committee Chair of Freedom Baptist Church, President of Black Belt Arts & Cultural Center, Inc., President of Freedom Community Development Corporation, Treasurer of Bridge Crossing Jubilee, and Board Member of Slavery & Civil War Museum. She received her B.A. at Knoxville College, her M.A. at Troy State University and J.D. at Jones School of Law.

**Organization Name, Website, Twitter and Mission:**
Black Belt Arts & Cultural Center, Inc.

**Describe the work of your organization to address (one or more of) the manifestations of poverty:**
Sustained engagement with youth in the community through weekly afterschool and summer programs that, in relevant part, foster and promote self-worth, reading, Black history and economics

**Success, Best Practices, Model Approaches:**
The integration of the arts with academics has proven to be a powerful tool in enhancing learning and lifting the self-esteem of our youth. Peer mediation, mentors for both youth and parents, and incentive team based learning.

**Barriers and Challenges:**
Lack of sufficient community collaboration, apathy, bureaucracy, inadequate resources

**Does your organization currently collaborate with lawyers/legal services/court programs?**
Yes. Legal Services Corporation, Teen Court Adjudication, District Court (Small Claims) mediation, Fatherhood Initiative Referrals
Expert Biography and Organization Profile:
Dallas County District Court; Dallas County Children’s Policy Council

Speaker/Title/Contact Information:
Robert (Bob) E. Armstrong, III
P.O. Box 987
Selma, AL 36701
bob.armstrong@alacourt.gov
Office phone: 334-874-2529

Biography:
Robert (Bob) E. Armstrong, III was born May 6, 1959 in Selma, Alabama. He is married to Ann Harwell Armstrong (32 years) and father of three – Robert (30), John Reese (27) and Catherine (23). He received his Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Alabama in 1981 and Juris Doctor from University of Alabama Law School, 1984. He also graduated from the ABA Trust School, Northwestern University in 2003. He has served as the District Judge and Juvenile Court Judge of Dallas County since January 2005. He is involved in a number of organizations that are committed to bringing revival & transformation to Selma & Dallas County.

Organization Name, Website, Twitter and Mission:
Dallas County District Court
Dallas County Children’s Policy Council

Describe the work of your organization to address (one or more of) the manifestations of poverty:
We operate family, adult, & veterans drug courts that help deal with social, relational, & addictive barriers to success of the participants & their families. We also have a number of programs designed to provide therapy, job training, job placement, life coaching, entrepreneurship, academic remediation, tutoring, and opportunities in the arts & music.

Success, Best Practices, Model Approaches:
Since 2005 we have recorded the following:

Successes:
1) 73% drop in juvenile crime in Dallas County
2) 65% drop in violent juvenile crime
3) 92% drop in the rate of incarceration of our juveniles

Best practices:
1) We received a statewide award for excellence with our drug courts. We use best practices in them.
2) We administer right at $1.4 million in grants annually & have more than 40 people working in our court to implement our social justice programs.
3) We utilize contracted staff & an internship program that provides the manpower for the programs. We have a Vista grant & we are able to recruit quality individuals & young college graduates to fill the Vista positions. We will have 15 Vistas for the coming year (summer 2016-2017) & 10 more summer Vistas for 8-10 weeks in the summer of 2016.

Barriers and Challenges:
1) Funding is always an issue
2) Personnel
Does your organization currently collaborate with lawyers/legal services/court programs?
Yes. We have a mediation program. We also have lawyers who participate in pro bono services. We also have lawyers who participate on our drug court treatment teams.
Expert Biography and Organization Profile

Please complete this template to describe your work and/or the work of your organization to address (one or more of) the manifestations of poverty highlighted by the Commission below. Templates will be circulated to the Commission and other roundtable participants prior to the program to provide background information and context in an effort to allow for more time to delve deeper into the critical issues and best practices. Please feel free to attach/hyperlink documents.

Ten Manifestations of Poverty:

1. Substandard and unaffordable housing and homelessness
2. Disproportionate involvement in criminal and civil justice systems
3. Food inadequacy
4. Inadequate healthcare and poor health outcomes
5. Inadequate education outcomes
6. Lack of opportunity for full employment at a living wage
7. Living through an unending and continuous cycle of crises
8. Lack of personal and physical safety
9. Stigma and lack of personal dignity
10. Isolation from community and political infrastructure

Speaker/Title/Contact Information: Geraldine Turner-Wofford, Managing Attorney, Legal Services Alabama, Selma Office, 801 Alabama Avenue, P.O. Box 954, Selma, AL 36702-0954. Tele. (334)872-1355; E-mail: gturner-wofford@alsp.org; Fax: (334)875-7610.

Biography (Please insert a short bio):

Geraldine Turner-Wofford is Managing Attorney of the Selma Office of Legal Services Alabama. She is a graduate of Shaw University, Raleigh, North Carolina, with a Bachelor of Arts in English, cum laude, June 1967; and a graduate of the University of North Carolina School of Law, Chapel Hill, North Carolina, Juris Doctor, May 1980. She is a member of the Alabama State Bar and the Dallas County Bar Association. With Legal Services Alabama and its predecessor, her legal career has been devoted to providing assistance and representation to low-income citizens of the Black Belt of Alabama in various civil matters, including consumer, family, landlord-tenant and other housing, land- loss prevention, public benefits, employment and unemployment, and similar issues. Prior to her legal career, for a number of years, she was a member of the faculty, staff, and administration at Shaw University.


Mission Statement: Legal Services Alabama serves low-income people by providing civil legal aid and by promoting collaboration to find solutions to problems of poverty.

Describe the work of your organization to address (one or more of) the manifestations of poverty:
Through legal assistance, counseling and advice, and in-and out-of court representation, Legal Services Alabama strives to meet the civil legal needs of low-income citizens of the State. The Selma Office has served the Black Belt of Alabama for over thirty-seven years. The manifestations of poverty addressed by our organization include many, if not all of the ten manifestations of poverty identified by the American Bar Association’s Commission on Homelessness and Poverty and particularly the following:

1. Substandard and unaffordable housing and homelessness
2. Food Inadequacy
3. Inadequate healthcare and poor health outcomes
7. Living through an unending and continuous cycle of crises
8. Lack of personal and physical safety
9. Stigma and lack of personal dignity

Success, Best Practices, Model Approaches:

Through collaborative efforts with community organizations, including participation in community education and other community events, we seek to identify and address issues affecting low-income citizens. This involves providing counsel and advice, legal representation, and otherwise assisting with one-on-one issues and identifying and seeking to address, through systemic approaches, cases that impact or have the potential to impact many. Approaches include educating on means of avoiding the pitfalls of debts, as in addressing payday loans, garnishments, third-party debt collection efforts when not proper, and the like; identifying and addressing issues related to unfair and improper termination of benefits, as with SNAP, disability, housing, etc.; providing limited assistance and/or legal representation in hearings and court appeals involving unemployment or other benefits when there are meritorious claims and entitlement to benefits is threatened; improving families through assistance with benefits, housing, relief from domestic violence, etc.

Barriers and Challenges:
1. Poverty
2. Limited education
3. Lack of consumer literacy
4. Political climates

Does your organization currently collaborate with lawyers/legal services/court programs?
Yes. See above. A component of our services includes referrals through the State Volunteer Lawyers Program; also, the Private Attorney Involvement Program, through which private attorneys assist clients for less than normal fee, with compensation by Legal Services Alabama. Efforts are made to educate the entire bar, law enforcement, etc. on the applicable law and specifically related issues affecting low-income persons.
Expert Biography and Organization Profile: The National Voting Rights Museum & Institute Inc; The Heirs Property Retention Coalition

Speaker/Title/Contact Information:
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Biography:
Carolyn Gaines-Varner is an attorney practicing in a private, activist law firm in Selma. For 34 years she served in management roles of Legal Services Alabama, a statewide nonprofit which provides civil legal aid to Alabama's low-income community. Her specialty is black land loss and community economic development. She has taught Constitutional Law at Tuskegee University. She serves on several non-prof boards of directors, including the National Voting Rights Museum & Institute, Inc. (president), and the Bridge Crossing Jubilee, Inc., based in Selma. She is part of Insights Experts of Color Network and the Heirs Property Retention Coalition. Her bar memberships include the Alabama Bar Association; Dallas County Bar Association; Black Belt Bar Association; Alabama Trial Lawyers Association; National Bar Association and the National Council of Black Lawyers. Ms. Gaines-Varner received her B.A. from Fisk University and J.D. from Boston College Law School.

Organization Name, Website, Twitter and Mission:
2. The Heirs Property Retention Coalition –Is dedicated to stop the erosion of heirs property as an asset of poor people, particularly as an asset and housing possibility of rural poor African Americans. www.southerncoalition.org/hprc/ . By addressing and amending laws that have resulted in mass land loss, the organization also addresses homelessness of rural African Americans and lack of personal dignity of poor persons who have lost all meaningful assets.

Success, Best Practices, Model Approaches:
Efforts of The Heirs Property Retention Coalition have successfully changed laws governing partition sale procedures and practices which will slow and hopefully eventually stop the loss of family owned property known as heirs property.

The Voting Rights Museum and the Bridge Crossing Jubilee celebrate the accomplishments of disenfranchised persons attained during the civil rights movement. The Bridge Cross Jubilee is the largest annual civil rights event in the country.

Barriers and Challenges:
Lack of consistent and adequate funding.

Does your organization currently collaborate with lawyers/legal services/court programs?
Yes, we have collaborated with Legal Services employees, The Federation of Southern Cooperative Rural Land Retention Program; Insights' Bridging the Racial Wealth Gap Initiative and Experts of Color Network; Sop the Violence Movements and the Heirs Property Retention Coalition.
Expert Biography and Organization Profile:
Selma Center for Nonviolence, Truth & Reconciliation

Speaker/Title/Contact Information:
Attorney Ainka Jackson, Executive Director
Selma Center for Nonviolence, Truth & Reconciliation

Biography:
Ainka Jackson is the Executive Director of the Selma Center for Nonviolence, Truth and Reconciliation at Healing Waters Retreat Center. She was previously the Metro Guardian ad Litem for the Metro Nashville Public Defender's Office, where she represented children who have been abused or neglected. Prior to that position, she was a Department of Children’s Services Case Manager, a teacher and an Assistant Public Defender, adult division. She has witnessed how these systems connect and feed into one another. Born in Montgomery, Alabama and raised in Selma, Alabama, she appreciates that every successful legal and legislative movement required a people movement. Therefore, she also helps organize students, parents and the faith community to address the over-representation of black and brown children in the juvenile justice system and being pushed out of school, as well as mass incarceration. As a co-founder of the Nashville Campaign to End the New Jim Crow, she has helped organize Mass Incarceration forums for Judicial, District Attorney and mayoral Candidates. Jackson also recently was one of the organizers and presenters for the Revisioning Justice Conference at Vanderbilt University where Michelle Alexander, Bryan Stevenson and Howard Zehr were keynote speakers. She was the Vice President of the Children’s Defense Fund Nashville Freedom School Partnership Board and also a leader on the Criminal Justice/Mass Incarceration taskforce for Nashville Organized for Action and Hope (NOAH) and presented at the largest mayoral forum Nashville has ever had. She is a graduate of Spelman College and Vanderbilt Law School.

Organization Name, Website, Twitter and Mission:
The Selma Center for Nonviolence, Truth, & Reconciliation
http://www.selmacenterfornonviolence.org/
@SelmaCNTR

The mission of the Selma Center for Nonviolence, Truth, & Reconciliation is to partner with institutions to promote love, the establishment of justice and build the Beloved Community. The Center is committed to transforming and healing the root causes of physical, political, psychological, environmental, economic and racial violence at personal, family, community and systemic levels.

Describe the work of your organization to address (one or more of) the manifestations of poverty:
Part of the Center’s mission is to work on all 10 of the manifestations of poverty. However, we are currently engaged in work on the following manifestations:

- Disproportionate involvement in criminal and civil justice systems
- Inadequate education outcomes
- Lack of opportunity for full employment at a living wage
- Living through an unending and continuous cycle of crises
- Lack of personal and physical safety
- Stigma and lack of personal dignity
- Isolation from community and political infrastructure
The Center works in nine sectors, partnering in institutional contexts to address the root causes of physical, mental, emotional, economic, political and racial violence—including racial profiling—with the two-pronged goal of implementing long-range solutions to systemic violence and building the Beloved Community. The implementation of the programs in each sector will occur according to our strategic plan timeline.

These nine sectors are:

Family - To create a culture of harmony through nonviolent conflict resolution in families—helping families to develop new traditions and practices and to deescalate conflict rather than escalate conflict within and between families. Families are a major pillar of the Beloved Community and therefore families must also develop just and loving relationships, foundational to just systems for generations to come.

Education - To partner with schools and colleges to develop curriculum as well as model classrooms where there are peer-to-peer conflict resolution processes, and Beloved Community World History, as well as to support the development of parent/student advocacy centers and adult learning forums that promote the values of the Beloved Community.

Law/Justice Systems - To use a restorative justice model in the development of community courts and mediation centers by partnering with families, the judicial system, schools, and other agencies to address the unresolved complaints of citizens, especially youth, which can lead to violence or unfair outcomes. To focus on reconciliation amongst community members from different factions and groups. To help develop models, such as the Due Process Committee and the Criminal Retainer Program, that allow everyday citizens to influence and enhance the justice system where it lacks support in order to help eliminate mass incarceration and the school to prison pipeline.

Governance - To work with a Council of Elders in each community to help solve community problems and build community social infrastructure. This council will help develop community patrols to reduce police intervention and racial profiling, allowing police to focus on more severe threats to the community. This will also allow community members to participate in governance in a way that will inspire them to be more participatory as citizens as they have personal experiences with the fruitfulness of self-governance. To advocate for policies that encourage the community to participate in government and to vote, including voter restoration for people convicted of felonies, automatic voter registration and prohibiting purging of inactive voters.

Community, Social, and Cultural Institutions - To encourage the use of the arts and artistic venues, such as community choirs and theater, as well as, social contexts such as neighborhood homes, community centers, and the NeighborCircles program to promote racial healing and understanding through dialogue and cultural education. To use our planned community restaurant, stage, and local vegetable garden to build meaningful relationships between people from different backgrounds, in part by providing a physical space, basic facilitation, and food to help people engage in the age-old practice of breaking bread together.

Health Care and Well Being - To holistically address internal violence birthed from health-related issues, such as lack of nutrition, exercise, and stability. Additionally, numerous studies have shown that racism, isolation and loneliness all negatively impact health. Therefore, to deal with traumatic effects of our collective history, the Center also facilitates therapeutic opportunities like counseling and Sister Circle in order to encourage healing.
Economic - To support the development of local economies by supporting unemployed and underemployed people in developing their own businesses and reaching their dreams, with a particular focus on promoting worker-owned and community-owned cooperatives. To convene community members and business leaders to promote a spirit of cooperation and develop a plan to bolster local economies. To use nonviolence and conflict resolution training to help prevent and resolve customer service and employee Human Resource issues in existing businesses.

Faith Communities - To help faith communities focus on those principles of their belief systems that deal with conflict resolution. To bring people of different faiths together in order to build relationships and collectively solve problems in their communities.

Media - To promote communication, culture and related images and sharing of information that enhance the building of the Beloved Community.

The Center will help create new relationships across race, class, religion, and other common divides using practices of popular education, institutional and community trainings, and community organizing. We will also work in solidarity with civic and social organizations, businesses, police departments and other government agencies, so that the Beloved Community becomes our new reality.

**Success, Best Practices, Model Approaches:**

We have a two-part strategy. The first major part of the strategy is sharing a vision of how life in a Beloved Community can make us all healthier, more fulfilled and prosperous. Through partnering with institutions and street organizing, we will build awareness that the current culture and systems are not working for the whole community, including people of color and impoverished communities. The present culture creates dysfunction and makes us all feel more desperate and unsafe. Helping people to see that the Beloved Community is based on win/wins for all community members is key to breaking down the divisions that prevent lasting change which only exacerbates violence and poverty in our nation. It is critical that people understand that issues we face are based on both people’s collective and individual challenges but all have community wide impact.

We believe that changing the cultural, political (i.e., policies) and institutional fabric of society (in Selma and beyond) is key to transforming violence and poverty. Therefore, we see the action-oriented building of the Kingian concept of the Beloved Community across race and income barriers, and in targeted sectors of the Selma region (economic, legal, cultural, etc.), as the second major part of our strategy. This second component includes shifting institutional cultures toward cooperation through teaching Nonviolence and conflict resolution. Additionally, it includes identifying alternative best practices, rooted in the principles of nonviolence and cooperation that will help the Selma region become the Beloved Community by decreasing violence and giving people tools they need to have healthy lives and to prosper financially. Our constituency involves people from different backgrounds such as race, socioeconomic status and gender in Selma, AL and the Black Belt with the goal of being one model of the Beloved Community for the nation.

As a part of the second strategy, the Center enacts and facilitates change in nine sectors, partnering in institutional contexts to address the root causes of physical, mental, emotional, economic, political and racial violence—including racial profiling. These nine sectors are: Family; Education; Law/Justice Systems; Governance; Community, Social & Cultural Institutions; Health and Wellbeing; Economics; Faith Communities; and Media.
Barriers and Challenges:
Physical, emotional, economic, racial and political violence have historically impacted the development of Selma, the Alabama Black Belt, and the South. Centuries of unaddressed racial violence still define attitudes and customs that, if genuinely addressed, could unleash the potential of the area in ways that could impact the Nation. Selma has emerged as a symbol of human conquest over violence. Yet it remains one of the most violent cities of its size in the country. According to the U.S. Census and the FBI Uniform Crime Report in 2012, Selma had the third highest number of murders per capita in the state, and the fourth highest number of property crimes, making it the fourth highest area for crimes overall.

In 2015, Selma was named the Most Dangerous Place to Live in Alabama. Selma remains engulfed with racial and class divisions that hinder the city’s progress. Selma, like most of the South, has never confronted years of racial violence and prejudice that keeps the city from a healing path forward. The overwhelming majority of white students attend segregated private schools. The country club remains all white. After the first black Mayor was elected in 2000, most white citizens left the city, many helping to incorporate an adjacent town named Valley Grande.

Poverty grips the city and economic justice is far from secure. The unemployment rate is almost twice the national average. With more than 36 percent of residents and 60 percent of children living at or below the poverty line, the county was the poorest in the state of Alabama in 2014, and one of the poorest in the country. Violence threatens the safety, health, and economic potential of the area and beyond. Physical, emotional, economic, racial and political violence must be overcome and addressed to allow Selma and the Nation to grow.

Does your organization currently collaborate with lawyers/legal services/court programs?
Absolutely! Many of our board members are lawyers. Additionally, in collaboration with the Due Process Committee, the Selma Center for Nonviolence has accomplished the following in relationship to the criminal justice system, which can perpetuate a cycle of poverty:

- Weekly sessions with male and female inmates at Dallas County Jail, providing information and post jail support.
- Identifying attorneys to work with indigent defendants and working with overtaxed court appointed attorneys. Examples of work:
  - Help secured the release of a young man under a $2.7 million bond for a crime he did not commit.
  - Secured the release of a man under a $2 million bond for an alleged attempt to kill a police officer which proved to be false. Found him a job after he was released. All charges were dropped because of our support and investigation, which proved the charges unfounded.
  - Paid the bonds and secured the release of several people including a black man accused of raping a white woman with her help. She said the charges were false. He lost his job and his home due to the charges. Provided shelter and resources after his release.
  - Secured the release through bond reduction and payment of a lower bond of a young man accused of murder. Arranged for his transport to another community when he was threatened.
  - Recruited an attorney and assisted in the investigation to prove that a victim of domestic abuse was innocent, when she was charged with Domestic Violence herself when she was indeed the victim of abuse.
• With all the people we help, we assist in counseling, job/financial stabilization and other services needed to achieve respect and self-sufficiency.
• We have met individually and collectively with the District Attorney, the Police Chief, the Sheriff, District and Circuit Judges about concerns with the criminal justice system, including extremely high bonds for low income people, which assures their incarceration for several years often sinking them lower into deeper poverty. Some policy changes have been made in this area due to our intervention with elected officials.

Some of our other recent work includes:

• Assisted a group of young men, including former drug dealers, ex-gang leaders, to establish Operation RESTORE, “Restoring Excellence, Serenity, Toughness, Order, Resiliency & Economy.” We assist them in requiring resources, including space, to address gang violence in the Selma community. The men receive weekly training and canvass the community weekly. Some of these men currently receive stipends to assist them as they assist their community. We are also assisting them in starting a restaurant cooperative with a community center attached. This will be a space for people to break bread together while getting to know each other. The coop will also serve as a way for people to invest in their community as their community invests in them. As the community makes investments in the restaurant either financially or through labor, they will learn skills needed to participate in investing in the stock market and other businesses. Additionally, we are working with them to have an urban farm that will help to provide nutritious food for the restaurant while providing jobs for low wealth and formerly incarcerated individuals. We already have a well, green house and the land.
• We sponsored a Week of History & Healing where we trained hundreds of youth and adults about nonviolence, conflict resolution and restorative justice. We have had extremely positive feedback from participants, including from a young man who was in the Dallas County Juvenile Detention Center at the time who has since been released who said the training was life changing. We are currently planning a follow-up to these trainings.
Expert Biography and Organization Profile:  
Selma Center for Nonviolence, Truth and Reconciliation

Speaker/Title/Contact Information:  
Brendan O’Connor  
bhoconnor@gmail.com  
703/254-8712

Biography:  
Brendan O’Connor is originally from Virginia, where he grew up as one of five kids in the blue mountains of the Shenandoah Valley. He has worked in various jobs over the years, from a locally-owned paint store to national non-profits, federal government, social science research, and community organizing. He has been trained in non-violent direct action via the James Lawson Institute, community organizing through the Gamaliel Network and other groups, and as a dialogue facilitator by Everyday Democracy. His deepest interests are around dialogue, race, and civil society, with the goal of building action-oriented solidarity across diverse groups, while still dealing directly with our country’s oppressive past and present; his hope is that these efforts contribute in some way to turning back deep racial and other inequities in U.S. society. He recently moved to Selma, AL to do work in that spirit—specifically, to work with the Selma Center for Nonviolence, Truth and Reconciliation to build a hybrid community center/restaurant, aimed both at building solidarity across diverse groups and contributing to wealth creation through a cooperative economics model.

Organization Name, Website, Twitter and Mission:  
Selma Center for Nonviolence, Truth and Reconciliation (Advisory Council Member);  
http://www.selmacenterfornonviolence.org/; https://twitter.com/SelmaCNTR

Mission: The mission of the Selma Center for Nonviolence, Truth, & Reconciliation is to partner with institutions to promote love, the establishment of justice and build the Beloved Community. The Center is committed to transforming and healing the root causes of physical, political, psychological, environmental, economic and racial violence at personal, family, community and systemic levels.

Describe the work of your organization to address (one or more of) the manifestations of poverty:  
Our belief is that while laws have changed since the Civil Rights Movement, hearts and minds have not changed enough, and Dr. King’s hope for the Beloved Community has not been realized enough—hence the rolling back of some laws (such as the Supreme Court’s weakening of the Voting Rights Act), the cropping up of new forms of racism (such as stop and frisk laws and disproportionate mass incarceration of people of color), and the stubborn persistence of the effects of our oppressive history (such as the racial wealth gap). The efforts of both the Selma Center and the envisioned community center/restaurant are focused on changing hearts and minds and building the Beloved Community in concrete ways; in part, this builds on social science that suggests our country’s place as one of, if not the most diverse countries in the world has made the formation of solidarity more difficult—and that lower levels of solidarity play into structural racism and a less equitable society. We believe intentional relationship building between these diverse groups in the U.S. is some of the core work of changing hearts and minds and building the Beloved Community; in turn, changing hearts and minds can lead to lasting changes in policies and laws that build on the important work of past generations.

Additionally, the Selma Center is focused on concretely building the Beloved Community in nine sectors of society, focusing on Selma as a hyper-local place to work in those various sectors. The nine sectors of
focus are: family; education; law/justice system; governance; community, social and cultural institutions; health care and well-being; economics; faith communities; and media. The community center/restaurant noted is an experiment in building some of the Beloved Community in the two sectors of 1) economics and 2) community, social and cultural institutions. As suggested above, our hope is that focusing on building the core solidarity of our society will contribute to the willingness of those in our society to address poverty and inequality at its deepest roots.

Success, Best Practices, Model Approaches:
The Selma Center started last year and we are in the early building stages of the community center/restaurant. That said, we have had some early successes at the Selma Center and believe there are some model approaches we are currently, and will be eventually, working on for the community center/restaurant. My colleague, the Executive Director of the Selma Center, Ainika Jackson, is also participating in the ABA Anti-Poverty Roundtable, so I will allow her to speak to some of this question in her organizational profile, but I will focus on a brief description of best practices and model approaches for the community center/restaurant.

Some relate to our planning process, which has deliberately been slow, collaborative, and exploratory; we believe this builds on the idea of “emergence” that groups such as the Fund for Democratic Communities suggest occurs when individuals spend intentional time together with openness to innovative approaches to intransigent issues. Additionally, we have begun conversations with members of the Selma community to get input—something rarely done by businesses of any sort. We plan to do more of this, utilizing grassroots organizing practices and learning from similar efforts of deep community engagement, such as those by the soon-to-open Renaissance Community Coop in Greensboro, NC.

Beyond our planning process, the mash-up—borrowing from that language and practice in technology—of two seemingly different entities (a community center and a restaurant) is done in the spirit of not only technology, but also areas such as project-based learning—which is increasingly showing that separating learning into subject areas for students does not reflect their lived experience. So for us, separating an institution that deliberately builds community from an institution that serves food and drink does not make sense; the act of breaking of bread together is at the core of this idea. Additionally, we are working to form as a cooperative, likely partly owned by workers and partly by the community (the Federation of Southern Cooperatives is helping advise on this front). We also intend to build aspects of the Selma Center’s focus on nonviolence into the effort, such as training employees in nonviolent communication.

Barriers and Challenges:
The main barriers and challenges are time and people power for building the effort, funding for aspects of it, and technical assistance in cooperative restaurant development. However, we are in touch with some groups and beginning to reach out to other groups about funding and technical assistance, such as the Federation of Southern Cooperatives, the Democracy at Work Network, the US Federation of Worker Cooperatives, Restaurant Opportunities Center United, and actual restaurant cooperatives and community centers (e.g., the Little Grill in Harrisonburg, VA, COLORS Restaurant in Detroit, MI, the Beloved Community Center in Greensboro, NC, and the SHAPE Community Center in Houston, TX). We are also encouraged that there is a growing group of folks involved in building this effort.

Does your organization currently collaborate with lawyers/legal services/court programs? Yes, we collaborate with local law firms, we have brought in Attorney Bryan Stevenson to speak at the Selma
Center, and we work with groups such as Save OurSelves (S.O.S.) and their related due process committee efforts.
The Center works to enact and facilitate change in nine sectors, partnering in institutional contexts to address the root causes of physical, mental, emotional, economic, political and racial violence—including racial profiling. These nine sectors are:

- Family
- Education
- Law/Justice Systems
- Governance
- Community, Social & Cultural Institutions
- Health and Wellbeing
- Economics
- Faith Communities
- Media

The Center will help create new relationships across race, class, religion, and other common divides using practices of popular education, institutional and community trainings, and community organizing. We will also work in solidarity with civic and social organizations, businesses, police departments and other government agencies, so that the Beloved Community becomes our new reality.

50 years after Bloody Sunday, named for the unmitigated violence against marchers on the Edmund Pettus Bridge, the Center was established to address the violence and conflicts that still plague Selma and the Nation. The founders of the Center include Dr. Bernard Lafayette, a comrade of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Dr. Lafayette was a primary architect of Selma 1.0 (the Voting Rights Movement) and was nearly killed by white supremacists in Selma in 1963 while organizing youth for voting rights. The vision of the Center is to bring to fruition in Selma, Dr. King’s dream of the Beloved Community, functioning as a model for other communities across the U.S. to bring that same vision to life in their local contexts.
Vision

The Voting and Civil Rights Movement in the deep American South has impacted the world. However, it birthed hope of promises that have not yet been fulfilled. In the 1960s, many leaders of the movement held a long-term vision beyond desegregation and the ability to participate in the voting process. They envisioned a nation, indeed a world, where the systems and institutions that governed citizens and families were based on love and justice. For the Center, these and other key values are encapsulated in the primary values of nonviolence, truth and reconciliation. The architects of the Voting and Civil Rights Movement called this vision the Beloved Community.

The Selma Center for Nonviolence, Truth and Reconciliation envisions the Beloved Community as a world where there is a spirit of cooperation, where people’s similarities and differences are celebrated, and where policies in government and community institutions, as well as the culture they create, support fairness, equity, harmony, compassion and love in our interactions, as well as the sharing and preservation of resources for generations to come.

Through building people up with the power of love, instruction and utilizing Kingian nonviolence and conflict resolution as our primary philosophies, the Center works to create a shift in our way of life. We will also work in solidarity with all people of goodwill to create local sector-level changes in areas such as our justice system, economy, and social/cultural institutions that make Dr. King's vision of the Beloved Community a defining part of our everyday lives in Selma and beyond.

Goals

Nonviolence - Helping people in community to resolve conflict (personal, interpersonal, and systemic) nonviolently by the development and implementation of creative ventures, workshops, training models and activities that teach and enhance skills and motivation to identify and address conflicts in ways that promote healing, harmony, compassion and just outcomes.

Truth - Facilitating the creation of spaces and places where "unarmed truth", as Dr. King called it, can be sought among people with varying opinions to help resolve conflict. We recognize that until we are able to hear each other’s truths and acknowledge each other’s pain, conflict and violence will continue to erupt and hinder reconciliation.

Reconciliation - Promoting understanding and healing through the development of dialogues, sensitivity trainings, and new social relationships across race, class and other divides that enhance respect, understanding and appreciation for racial, cultural, religious and other differences. Additionally, the Center recognizes that economic healing is necessary due to broken relationships. The Center seeks to reconcile relationships and reimagine a more democratic, cooperative economy in order to spur equitable economic health in Selma and beyond.

About

Selma remains engulfed with racial and class divisions that hinder the city's progress. The unemployment rate is almost twice the national average. With more than 36 percent of residents and 60 percent of children living at or below the poverty line, the county was the poorest in the state of Alabama in 2014, and the most violent in 2015. Violence threatens the safety, health, and economic potential of the area and beyond. Physical, psychological, environmental, political, racial and economic violence must be addressed and overcome to allow Selma and the Nation to grow.

For this purpose Dr. Bernard Lafayette, Master Teacher and Chair of the Board of Directors for the Center, who was instrumental in creating "Selma 1.0" returns to help create "Selma 2.0." Following Dr. King's mandate to "institutionalize nonviolence," he has taught nonviolence throughout the world for the past 40 years. The Center presents workshops, trainings, and symposiums that teach nonviolence and conflict resolution skills, as well as engages the community in a process of truth and reconciliation.