

ALLIES FOR RACIAL JUSTICE YEAR IN REVIEW



Throughout 2024, ARJ has been committed to living out our new strategic priorities—**CONNECT**, **UNITE** and **ACT**—by creating or promoting an integrated calendar of events, programs and activities in support of our mission:

Building authentic relationships to eliminate the existing racial divide between our churches and communities.

In doing so, ARJ continued to build meaningful relationships, inform and educate people about racial injustice issues, and work together to create racial healing, cooperation, understanding and acceptance. We've introduced you to many like-hearted organizations, resources, and events in our communities to help us on this journey.

Our monthly newsletter and other communications aim to keep people informed and encourage us to reach out, try new things, and get to know others in our community. We thank everyone for participating in ARJ programming in 2024. We look forward to

connecting, uniting, and interacting with you, face-to-face and heart-to-heart, in the coming year.

Now here's a review of our 2024 ARJ events, programs and activities:

ARJ began the year in January with **Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday** serving events at both St. James Church and Resurrection.

Further connections were made when we hosted **North – The Musical** a live theatre event at Johnson County Community College. A pre-talk covered history of the Underground Railroad in the KC area.

We promoted the Midwest Center's **Holocaust Education Panel**, the Michelle Norris lecture and her book **Our Hidden Conversations**. Also, the movie **Rustin** – the story of Bayard Rustin, advisor to MLK and lifetime advocate for racial equality, human rights, and worldwide democracy.

In February, ARJ worked with Resurrection Pastor Robert Johnson and Dr. Shana Mashego to present the 5-week virtual series **We, Too, Sing America: The Christian Role in Knowing Black America**.

We promoted numerous church and civic learning opportunities associated with **Black History Month** including the KC Chamber of Commerce **Allyship in Kansas City Workshop**, the Rockhurst University Visiting Scholar Lecture **Slavery, Memory, and Reconciliation at Jesuit Universities**, the **Buy Black Expo**, and a screening of the movie **The Big Payback**. We hosted another live ARJ theater event, **Nina Simone – Four Women** by the KC Rep.

During March, ARJ focused on our churches many Lenten studies and music performances. We encouraged attendance at the KC Library online workshop **How to Rightly Write About Race When Afraid to Say the Wrong Thing**; and at the Jewish Community Relations Bureau and American Jewish Committee's **Driving Out Darkness in the Heartland**, a regional summit on combating antisemitism.

In April, ARJ introduced the **Praying for Change – Daily Prayers for Anti-Racism** program created by the UMC Discipleship Ministries, offering a link to sign up and receive the inspirational messages.

We promoted the **10th Annual Seven Days** campaign to overcome hate with kindness and understanding through education and dialogue; the **Pursuing Unity Through Racial Justice Conference**, a collaboration of local churches; and the University of Kansas live and streamed lecture **Brown v Board at 70—Looking Back and Striving Forward**.

By May ARJ was deep in preparations for our big Juneteenth Celebration event, announcing the theme and urging folks to save the date. We encouraged people to get

involved in **The Good Faith Network Nehemiah Action** to urge local government and civic leaders in Johnson County to take action on three important issues—Mental Health, Homelessness and Affordable Housing. We also supported **KC's Annual Community Walk**, and the **National Bail Out Collective** initiative to free Moms from jail and pretrial detention.

In June, ARJ presented our **3rd Annual ARJ Juneteenth Celebration**, held in the Resurrection sanctuary with the theme **Lift Every Voice and Sing... Together**. Keynote speaker Dr. Shana Mashego, provided a historical and lyrical analysis of the 1900 communal anthem “Lift Every Voice and Sing,” tracing its roots from the enslavement of Africans in 1444, through American colonization, the Civil War, Reconstruction, Jim Crow, and the early Civil Rights movement. The celebration included a quilt display and a host of Kansas City-based artists performing in music, song, dance and spoken word. In 2025, our 4th Annual ARJ Juneteenth Celebration will be held at St. James Church.

ARJ also promoted: **Let the World See**, a touring exhibit by the Emmet Till and Mamie Till-Mobley Institute at the Spencer Museum of Art in Lawrence, KS, and the companion art exhibit **One History, Two Versions** featuring contemporary Black artists. The upcoming **KC Jazz District Juneteenth Celebration** and parade were highlighted along with both of our church's many summer events.

People were encouraged to watch PBS's powerful documentary **The Riot Report** covering the 1967 bi-partisan commission's final report revealing the fundamental cause of urban unrest was white racism. The unvarnished assessment of American race relations doomed the report's finding to political oblivion, though its findings still resonate today.

During the summer, ARJ presented a **Memorial to Rev. Dr. James Lawson Jr.** who died June 9th. He was a distinguished leader in the United Methodist Church and a revered civil rights activist. We encouraged participation in **Resurrection's 7-Day Civil Rights Tour** and announced the release of the JOCO Arts & Heritage Center Museum's digital version of the **Redlined Exhibit**. People were encouraged to watch PBS's **The Extraordinary Life of Alvin Brooks**, a local KC personality, and **Quindaro Ruins**, a documentary on slavery in our own backyard. We also launched our **Get Out the Vote** messaging and provided links to various voter guides.

In September we introduced our new **ARJ logo and branding** to bring greater focus on our three key objectives to help accomplish our mission.



CONNECT

Bringing people together to CONNECT through engaging educational events.

Let's start a conversation.

UNITE

Bringing people together to UNITE by growing authentic relationships through interactive programs.

Let's learn from each other.

ACT

Bringing people together to ACT by supporting racial justice activities throughout our churches and communities.

Let's act together.

In September, ARJ also invited people to join the ARJ Leadership Team to participate in a pilot program for our **Cultural Competency Workshop**, an intercultural training event to be held in 2025. A spin-off small group has been formed by several of those participants.

National Hispanic Culture Month (Sept 15-Oct 15) was promoted with background and links to local activities. ARJ's voting awareness messaging continued with promotion of American Public Square's **How to Raise a Citizen** discussion group, KC Library's documentary film **Suppressed and Sabotaged: The Fight to Vote**, and the

Dock C. Brady Center for Human Reconciliation's webinar **The White Power Movement: Its History, Threat and What You Can Do About It.**

In October, ARJ promoted, and our volunteers supported, the **National Summit on Mass Incarceration**, sponsored by Strengthening the Black Church for the 21st Century (SBC21) and held at St. James Church.

Theatre opportunities to learn about the African American experience were promoted including "Horse Power: Tom Bass's American Story" and "Lady Day at the Emerson Bar & Grill," plus an early announcement of ARJ's planned sponsorship of August Wilson's "Fences" in February.

Tips for Advocating Inclusive Education from SPLC Learning for Justice were promoted. ARJ's **voting preparation** messaging included the **UMC Social Principles & Voting** guidance, key registration and voting dates in Kansas and Missouri, The Kansas City Defender's 2024 Black Voters Guide, and resources for finding factual information on candidates and election issues.

The Hike for Reconciliation along the Troost corridor brought attention and reflections on the history and disinvestment in the east side of KCMO. The William Jewell College lecture, **The Shared History of German Immigrants & African Americans**, provided new insights on how we're all connected.

In November, ARJ promoted the **Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day**, providing background on the momentous events in 1960, local involvement opportunities, and Ruby Bridges' guest appearance in Topeka on that day to stream her story to students across Kansas.

To close out our **Get Out the Vote** efforts, people were encouraged to vote, to participate in the American Public Square and Harry S. Truman Library & Museum post-election panel discussion **The 2024 Presidential Election Unpacked**, and to read the fall issue of Learning for Justice Magazine focused on **Dialogue Across Differences for a Stronger Democracy**.

Among many other activities, people were encouraged to go and see the play **The Buffalo Hero of WWI: The Wayne Miner Story** at the Black Archives of Mid America, attend the 17th Annual Urban Summit, and to shop **Black-owned businesses** on Small Business Saturday.

A must-watch PBS premiere on American Experience was highlighted. **American Coup: Wilmington 1898** reveals how self-described white supremacists used intimidation and violence to destroy Black political and economic power and overthrow Wilmington's democratically-elected multi-racial government. This "hidden" historic event is finally brought to light.

In December, ARJ invited people to learn the untold story of the first **Black Barbie** by attending the documentary screening and talk with writer and director Laqueria Davis, sponsored by the National Museum of Toys & Miniatures and UMKC.

We reminded folks to watch the other “untold story” mentioned in November – the PBS documentary **American Coup: Wilmington 1898**. We also provided links to a follow-up article, **How to Cover Up a Coup**, to see how school books have been misused to disinform young people about our history for generations.

With 2024 soon coming to an end, we look forward to seeing you at one of our many ARJ events being planned for 2025.

From all of us at ARJ to you and your family, we wish you a Merry Christmas and abounding love and blessings throughout the New Year!