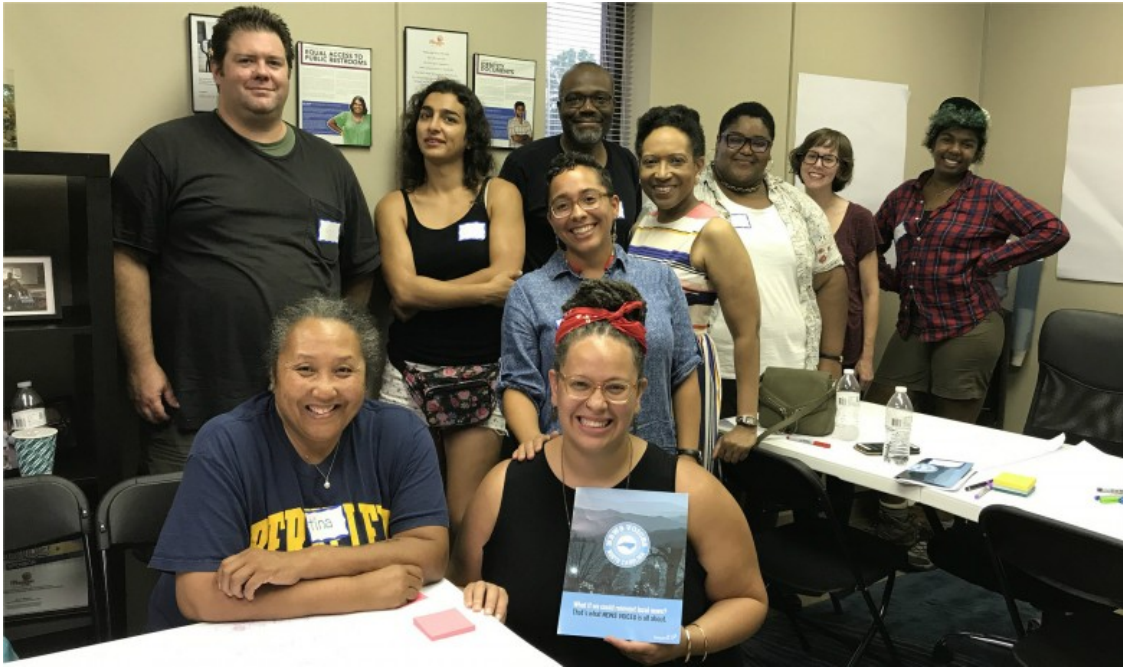


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<http://www.newsvoices.org/blog/2017/08/22/talk-action-charlotte>

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From Talk to Action in Charlotte

Fiona Morgan (/person/106973/fiona-morgan) | August 22, 2017

[News Voices: North Carolina \(/north-carolina\)](#)

There's a conversation going on in Charlotte about who has access to opportunity and who doesn't. While this is an important discussion to have, it's been going on for a long time, and people struggling every day are anxious for change.

Local news can play an important role in moving the public conversation forward, helping community members design solutions and urging Charlotte's decision-makers toward

action.

This Saturday, Aug. 26, Free Press' News Voices: North Carolina project will host The News Charlotte Needs: A Public Forum on the Role of Journalism in Tackling Inequity (http://act.freepress.net/survey/journ_nvnc_event_aug_26/?source=FPblog). We'll bring together local residents, media makers, activists, artists and others to sit down with reporters and discuss the stories they think the city needs to move from talk to action. News Voices forums use structured, small-group conversations to give everyone who attends an opportunity to speak.

The city's lack of economic opportunity has been a top story in Charlotte ever since a 2013 Harvard University study (<https://www.nber.org/papers/w19843.pdf>) ranked Mecklenburg County last out of 50 major U.S. metros for economic mobility. Earlier this year, the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Opportunity Task Force released a report (<https://leadingonopportunity.org>) recommending changes across the city and county's institutions. While the report itself attracted considerable attention, not much has changed since its release.

Meanwhile, Charlotte residents have been living with the many issues this report identified: racial segregation, lack of social capital and struggles to access educational opportunities, health care and affordable housing. Nearly one year ago, people took to the streets (<http://www.charlottemagazine.com/Charlotte->

Magazine/September-2016/Charlottes-Violent-Night/) in response to the police shooting of Keith Lamont Scott. Today, the Charlotte Uprising (<https://charlotteuprising.com>) continues, and a new generation of activist leaders has emerged, with some setting their sights on local elections this fall.

Local media have a crucial role to play at this moment if Charlotte is to truly tackle longstanding issues of inequity. And members of the public have important roles to play in supporting and engaging with local media.

Journalism has the power to hold leaders and institutions accountable for their actions — or lack of action. It has the power to reveal facts, focus the public's attention and set the agenda for democratic civic engagement.

But to do those things, journalists must listen to the public: not only to the task force, but to low-wage workers. Not only to city leaders, but to college students, struggling parents and elders living on fixed incomes. Whose voices are heard determine which stories get told, and the stories set the public agenda. That's why we've invited people from across the city to join us this Saturday (http://act.freepress.net/survey/journ_nvnc_event_aug_26/?source=blog).

These discussion forums are one way that Free Press' News Voices: North Carolina (<https://www.newsvoices.org/north-carolina>) project invites the public to take part in

conversations about the future of journalism so that news can be more responsive to community needs. The initiative also helps newsrooms across the state deepen local engagement, find new sources and broaden their audiences.

News Voices is committed to centering the experiences of people of color, who the news media have historically underserved or misrepresented. And since racial discrimination is one of the entrenched problems at the heart of Charlotte's struggles with inequity, we're centering the lived experiences of Black and Brown Charlotteans in our forum by hosting it at Johnson C. Smith, a historically Black private university, and by doing outreach to communities of color. Simultaneous Spanish-English interpretation will be available.

The Charlotte event is the first in a series of News Voices forums across North Carolina. It comes after months of planning, outreach and interviews with members of the media and civic organizations in the state. The project launched (<https://www.newsvoices.org/blog/2017/04/18/bringing-news-voices-north-carolina>) in April with receptions in Charlotte and Durham (<https://www.newsvoices.org/blog/2017/04/26/news-voices-north-carolina-launches-two-community-building-events>) that featured lively discussions about the ways local media can strengthen communities. In July, News Voices hosted small gatherings in Charlotte

[\(http://www.charlottemagazine.com/DiscussCLT/August-2017/Can-We-Rescue-Local-News/\)](http://www.charlottemagazine.com/DiscussCLT/August-2017/Can-We-Rescue-Local-News/) (*pictured*) to gather insight into the city's news-and-information ecosystem.

Now we're opening the doors wide. Please help us spread the word

[\(http://act.freepress.net/survey/journ_nvnc_event_aug_26/?source=blog\)](http://act.freepress.net/survey/journ_nvnc_event_aug_26/?source=blog) about this Saturday's event, which is free and open to the public. Next week, we'll report back on what we hear, and on our next steps for action.

Event details:

WHAT: The News Charlotte Needs: A Public Forum on the Role of Journalism in Tackling Inequity

WHEN: Sat., Aug. 26, 1–4 p.m. (doors open at 12:30; light refreshments will be served)

WHERE: Grimes Lounge, Student Union, Johnson C. Smith University, 100 Beatties Ford Road, Charlotte

RSVP: Sign up [here](#)

[\(http://act.freepress.net/survey/journ_nvnc_event_aug_26/?source=FPblog\)](http://act.freepress.net/survey/journ_nvnc_event_aug_26/?source=FPblog).

