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PRESS RELEASE

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"DIVERSITY UNITED"

Congregation Ahavas Sholom and the City of Newark's Year-Long Program of Outreach to Urbanites and Suburbanites of All Faiths and Races

[Congregation Ahavas Sholom](#) is proud to announce the launch of a program of education, discussion and action targeted to people of all faiths and races living in Newark, its suburbs and beyond. Designated as a National and State of New Jersey historic site, Ahavas Sholom--which means "Love of Peace"--is Newark's last remaining synagogue of the great Jewish immigration of the early 20th century. As part of Ahavas Sholom's mission, we remain steadfast in our commitment to serving the Newark Black, Indigenous, and People of Color community, as both advocate and ally.

The City of Newark, nationally-recognized in the past year for its peaceful dynamism in confronting issues of poverty and racism, is the co-sponsor of this program.

The program features a monthly forum of three panelists in a roundtable discussion:

[Mildred Crump](#), Newark's longtime community leader and first African-American Councilwoman and City Council President

[Rabbi Capers Funnye](#)—"Obama's Rabbi," Michelle Obama's cousin, the leader of 200-member Beth Shalom B'nai Zaken Ethiopian Hebrew Congregation of Chicago

[Pastor Steffie Bartley](#), New Jersey Coordinator, National Action Network and Pastor, New Hope Memorial Baptist Church, Elizabeth, New Jersey

"DIVERSITY UNITED" is formatted as a book club, with participants viewing films, documentaries and reading materials before each of the monthly meetings, where the panelists will lead discussion. The inaugural program will be **Tuesday, March 16, 2021, from 7:00 - 8:00 p.m.** During this session these African-American leaders who have spent their lives in the trenches battling for their people, equality, and justice will introduce the topics to be discussed over the year.

The forum will present issues of social justice: including mass incarceration, education, housing, healthcare, environmental justice, poverty, Jim Crow, and public monuments, all from the viewpoint of the systemic inequalities that have resulted from 401 years of American History.

After the inaugural forum, participants will watch the [Netflix documentary "13th"](#), which will be discussed at the second session, April 13th. Succeeding programs will be the third Tuesday of each month and will discuss "[When Heritage Equals Hate: The Truth About the Confederacy in the United](#)

[States](#)” by ACLU’s Jeffrey Robinson and “[The Untold Story of Emmett Luis Till](#)” by Keith Beauchamp and other relevant articles and books.

The City of Newark and Ahavas Sholom present “DIVERSITY UNITED” as a public forum with the aim of not only educating residents of Newark and its suburbs about the anti-racist agenda, but equally as important—to create a tangible platform to work collectively towards a just society. Said Council President Crump, “I am so excited to have been invited to explore a face-to-face conversation on how our diversity can become a unifying life experience. Working with Eric Freedman, Rabbi Funnye and Reverend Bartley will be a major event for me. I hope that everyone can join us. You will not regret being present.”

“I am indeed honored to be a part in this important project called ‘Diversity United,’” said Rabbi Funnye. “I strongly believe it is within our diversity that lies our strength. Our strength as religious communities, civic communities, and the various ethnic communities, that make all of us one nation united. It is my hope and prayer that through our effort of sharing insightful information, we will develop a better understanding of each other and learn to respect each other.”

Said Pastor Bartley, “New Jersey is one of the most diverse states in the country, and I think this event is going to be major! I am looking forward to having the opportunity to push for more change and a chance to establish more unity within the races. I hope everyone is present to witness this pivotal moment.”

Initial programs will be held remotely on Zoom; to register and receive the link, click here: [Registration Form](#) When the nation’s health crisis warrants, subsequent programs will be held in person, with participants able to remotely participate as well.

As part of its mission, Congregation Ahavas Sholom is committed to the passionate pursuit of “tikkun olam,” (repair of the world) and “tzedukah” (social justice). Rabbi Simon Rosenbach is its spiritual leader.

For further information, contact [Eric Freedman](#), cahavassholom@optimum.net, President and CEO, Congregation Ahavas Sholom, or 201.988.3799.