

TRUTH-TELLING & RECONCILIATION

PROPOSING A FRAMEWORK FOR THE CITY OF PROVIDENCE



ROGER WILLIAMS UNIVERSITY
& PROVIDENCE CULTURAL EQUITY INITIATIVE

LAST UPDATED
FEBRUARY 21, 2022



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**ROGER WILLIAMS UNIVERSITY
& PROVIDENCE CULTURAL EQUITY INITIATIVE**

**ON BEHALF OF THE CITY OF PROVIDENCE
& AFRICAN AMERICAN AMBASSADOR GROUP**

LAST UPDATED FEBRUARY 9, 2022

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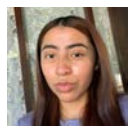


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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We recognize the unique and enduring relationship that exists between Indigenous people and their traditional territories. We acknowledge that the City of Providence is located in Masswascutt and Moshassuck, the ancestral lands of the Narragansett and Pokanoket - lands that served as a gathering place for Indigenous nations throughout the region. Let this acknowledgment serve as a reminder of our ongoing efforts to reconcile and partner with the Narragansett and Pokanoket and all Indigenous peoples whose lands and waters we benefit from today.

The work detailed in this report was made possible through a grant originating from the Nellie Mae Foundation and administered by the City of Providence. We thank them both for their generous support.

Mayor Jorge Elorza deserves recognition for his guidance and involvement throughout the project cycle, and several of his staff played an outsized role in shepherding this project from beginning to end: Tracey Giron, Bret Jacob, Quintin Nard, and Shawndell Burney-Speaks.

This project would not be possible without the groundbreaking work of the 1696 Heritage Group and Rhode Island Black Heritage Society in authoring [A Matter of Truth](#), which informed our approach at every step. We are especially grateful to Keith Stokes for discussing our project with us and assisting us in locating various images and documents referenced in their report.

The City's [African American Ambassador Group](#), and in particular the Truth-Telling and Reconciliation subgroup, provided essential guidance and insights throughout the project cycle, especially in the



early months as we workshopped with them our emerging framework.

Likewise, we owe the Providence Public Library (particularly Kate Aubin, Angela DiVeglia, Janaya Kizzie, and Kate Wells) a debt of gratitude for supporting our initial grant proposal as a coauthoring institution, working closely with us to identify a creative team member from their pool of Rhode Coder graduates, advising us on the development of our interview and data storage protocols, and offering their space for future phases of this work..

We'd like to recognize the expert guidance provided to us in the early months of the project by Linda J. Mann of the African American Redress Network, who helped us think through how our work can connect historical truths to specific individuals and meaningful reparations.

A project of this size requires a dedicated team of staff working behind the scenes to ensure all runs smoothly. Thank you to everyone at our organizations who provided administrative support for our work.

Thanks too to all the students who approached a challenging project with open minds and took on those challenges ethically and professionally.

Our appreciation goes out to all of the organizations that hosted our interview sessions, including Haircuts and Heritage, Mount Hope Community Center, Victory Outreach Center, and YMCA of Greater Providence, and to Kin Southern Table + Bar for catering several of them.

Lastly and most importantly, thank you to all of our lead stakeholders and survey and interview participants. Your stories and perspectives are the heart of this project. We hope we've done them justice.

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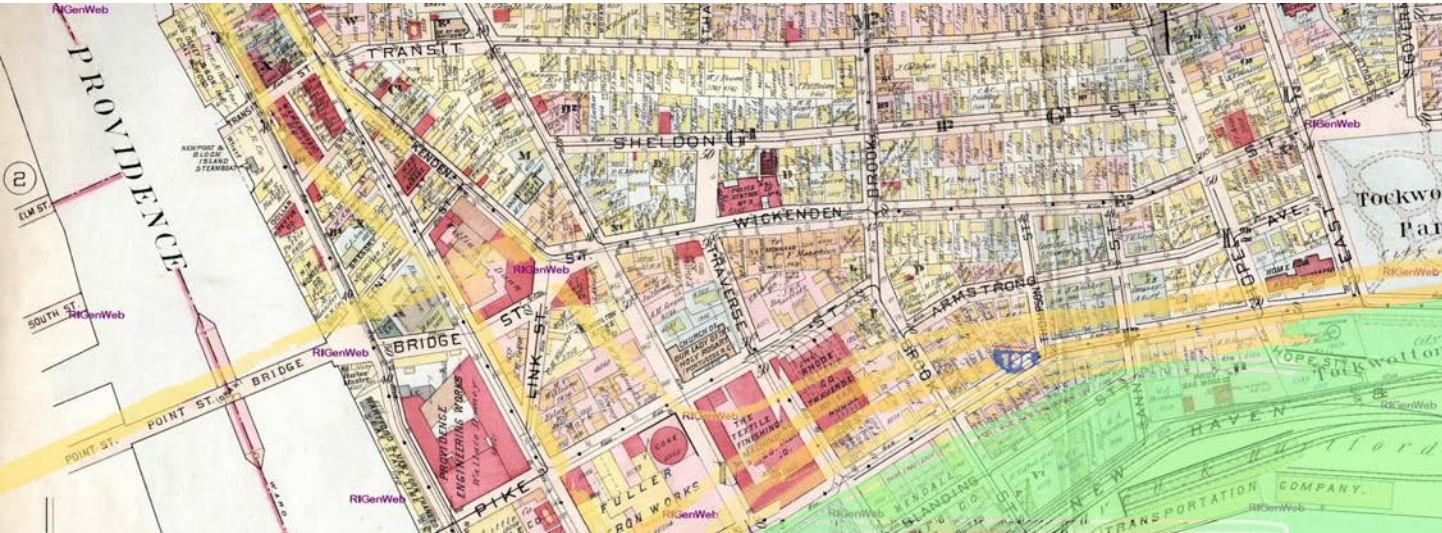
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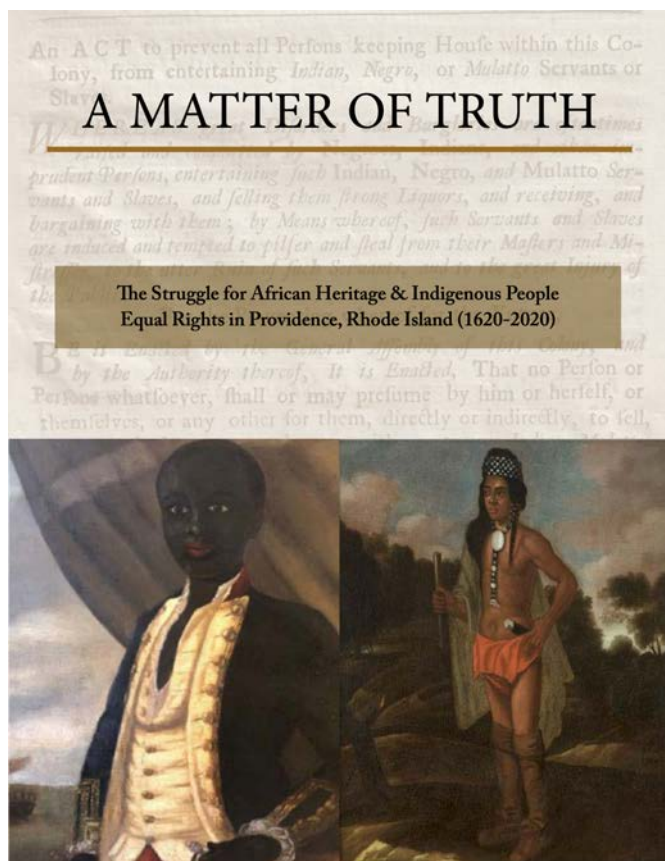
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On July 15, 2020, Providence Mayor Jorge O. Elorza, joined by members of the [African American Ambassador Group](#) and community, committed the City of Providence to a process of Truth, Reconciliation, and municipal Reparations for Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color (BIPOC) in the City. The truth-telling phase of this initiative involved the publication in March 2021 of [A Matter of Truth: The Struggle for African Heritage & Indigenous People Equal Rights in Providence, Rhode Island \(1620-2020\)](#).

Shortly thereafter, the City issued a [request for proposals](#) related to the reconciliation phase of the process. In response, our team extrapolated two key objectives on which we have focused throughout the course of the project we share with you here:

Objective One: Community-based approach to developing a proposal for a reconciliation framework for the City.

Objective Two: Engaging and accessible multimedia presentation of [A Matter of Truth](#) that serves as a central





component of the reconciliation framework.

This report details our team's efforts to fulfill these objectives by developing and piloting a reconciliation framework grounded in the stories and perspectives of African heritage and Indigenous residents with generational familial and community connections to the four neighborhoods of Fox Point, Lippitt Hill, Upper South Providence, and West Elmwood, and to the mid-twentieth century urban redevelopment projects that A Matter of Truth documents as having occurred there.

We initiated our project by developing a set of **guiding principles** through which we would ensure that every aspect of our approach aligned with our vision to establish an ongoing process of racial healing anchored in the stories and perspectives of particular communities and leading to meaningful municipal reparations.

We then developed an initial community engagement questionnaire that evolved into a **survey** of 378 individuals, aiming to get a sense of the public's engagement with A Matter of Truth and their perspectives on reconciliation, and to identify individuals interested in participating in our framework. Our findings indicate that:

- The City does need to design more interactive and engaging ways to share the findings of A Matter of Truth with the public
- Housing is the most important injustice for the reconciliation process to address, followed by education and the legal system and policing
- Reconciliation must be a community-driven process in which elected officials and government offices must participate

In addition to conducting **initial community engagement** with an estimated 1,500 individuals at approximately 11 community cultural events, where we shared information about the City's truth-telling, reconciliation, and reparations initiative, the African American Ambassador Group, our survey, and our upcoming interview sessions,

we recruited 16 **lead stakeholders** with considerable community connections to the four neighborhoods' African heritage and Indigenous communities, to help us spread the word and to be interviewed and identify additional interview participants.

Our **interview** findings aligned with the findings of A Matter of Truth and our survey results in that interviewees described the urban redevelopment projects in question as

- Intentionally targeting tight-knit and economically vibrant African heritage and Indigenous communities
- Rending their social fabric
- Producing generational racial disparities in home ownership, wealth accumulation, health outcomes, and educational opportunity
- Creating an environment ripe for the onset of violence and drugs, which in turn led to further racial disparities, such as those involving unequal treatment under the law

Interviewees reported that the City has intentionally denied, downplayed, and ignored the impacts of these projects on the



Reconciliation Team Lead Jonathan Lewis speaks with Mayor Elorza during an interview session at the YMCA Providence Youth Services Branch in Upper South Providence, November 13, 2021. Photo by Jeny Hernandez-Watson

African heritage and Indigenous residents of the neighborhoods in question, and they call for reparations in the form of redress targeting housing, wealth, and education gaps.

To implement a reconciliation framework grounded in our interview and survey findings, the findings of A Matter of Truth, and publicly



available data on racial disparities in social determinants of health, we designed a proof of concept for an **interactive, multimedia presentation** that includes a web portal, art installations, documentary footage, soundscapes, and augmented, virtual, and mixed reality interfaces.

Built around the concepts of quilting and cartography, our web portal serves as a point of entry into an immersive multimedia experience regardless of one's proximity to the locations in question.

There the public will be able to:

- Navigate an ongoing conversation around reconciliation and reparations by time, incident, and neighborhood, with the intent that future phases of the City's reconciliation framework will be able to extend the work of the pilot phase
- Access documentation regarding our reconciliation framework pilot and how to replicate and improve upon it in future phases
- Listen to and watch fully recorded interviews and edited documentaries positioned alongside multimedia content that enriches and expands upon the content of A Matter of Truth
- Locate guides for conducting their own interviews and holding their own community conversations on reconciliation and reparations
- Submit audio and video recorded interviews and results of community conversations for public display on the web portal and to inform future phases of the City's truth-telling, reconciliation, and reparations initiative

Our five **public art installations** will consist of doorframes intended to monumentalize both past loss and future possibility. Constructed in public spaces in the four neighborhoods in question, with a central exhibit in the Providence Public Library, these doorframes will serve as entry points into:

- Interactive augmented, virtual, and mixed reality exhibits and walking tours with immersive soundscapes and visuals that weave

together the stories, perspectives, archival assets, and data we have collected

- Ongoing community conversations about the future of the City's truth-telling, reconciliation, and reparations initiative

In conclusion, we propose a **pathway from reconciliation framework pilot and proof of concept to implementation** that, with additional financial support from the City and other stakeholders committed to truth-telling, reconciliation, and reparations, our team is prepared to undertake in the coming months, including:

- Finalizing our multimedia presentation and community engagement protocol
- Recruiting and orienting four additional community organizations to lead and document additional community engagement sessions for a projected total of 20 sessions
- Beginning to analyze findings from community engagement sessions and integrate into interactive multimedia presentation

While these steps will ensure the City's truth-telling, reconciliation, and reparations initiative maintains momentum in the months to come, we also strongly encourage **a proactive approach to ensuring the longevity of this work.**

We hope you'll join us in envisioning together what reconciliation looks like for the City of Providence, now and in perpetuity.



GUIDING PRINCIPLES

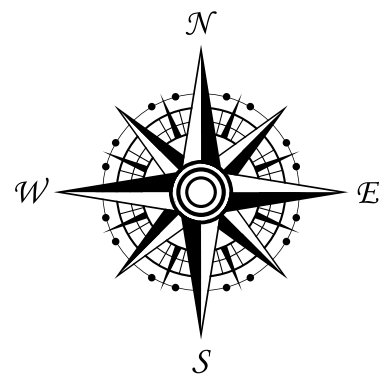
Upon receiving notification of the award from the City, our team began developing a set of shared, guiding principles grounded in the scholarship and practice of restorative justice.


Accordingly, at our first formal presentation to the TTR subgroup of the AAAG on July 21, 2021, we laid out the following principles to guide our approach, defining Truth-Telling and Reconciliation as:

ONGOING, COMMUNAL LEARNING

We took to heart the City’s vision to establish “a framework that can be used . . . in perpetuity,” because we have yet to reconcile with so much of our past, because new truths are always being uncovered, because reconciliation will mean something different to and require something different from different populations, including future generations, and because we are all, always in the process of reimagining our relationships to one another and what they require of us. We therefore envisioned our prospective framework less as an outcome to achieve and more as a perpetual invitation to reimagine our ways of being together in the world.

We felt strongly that that invitation should first be extended to those who have been directly impacted by the injustices that must be redressed, but privileging certain voices within a conversation does not mean






ignoring the necessity of including others - especially the voices of those who have been directly or indirectly complicit in perpetrating and perpetuating injustice. Only together can we determine what reconciliation looks like for the City of Providence.

PARTICULAR PEOPLE, PLACES, EVENTS

While all of the City's BIPOC residents have undoubtedly experienced racial injustice in some way, shape, or form, treating all BIPOC residents and their experiences as one and the same ignores how particular individuals have been more directly affected by particular instances of racial injustice, thereby further racializing individuals' identities, erasing their family and community histories and lived experiences, and obscuring pathways toward actionable and impactful reparations. Our approach still aims to invite the entire community into a conversation that arrives at a shared understanding of the truth and a shared vision for racial healing through reconciliation and reparations, but by centering the stories and perspectives of those most directly affected by a discrete subset of the racial injustices detailed in [A Matter of Truth](#), set the tone for a series of ever-expanding conversations leading to situationally appropriate reconciliation and reparations, and setting an example for how this framework can be scaled out across time and space, incidents and affected communities.

CROSSING AND DISMANTLING BARRIERS

Racial injustice erects barriers within and between us, limiting who we are and and what and how we know, feel, and do. We approached this project as a re-mapping of these boundaries, with the intent of charting pathways across them, and in some cases, removing them entirely. And we envisioned that act of re-mapping as a creative act



that invites the public to engage with the truth not just on a factual and historical but on an affective and imaginative level, immersing themselves in a network of new connections to the past and present and to one another in order to imagine a different future together.

RELIVING TRAUMA, CELEBRATING RESILIENCE

This process inherently asks victims of racial injustice to return to painful places and relive traumatic events. We are therefore obligated to ensure that we honor the weight of the burden borne by the victims of the racial injustices we spotlight by refusing to further victimize them as a result of their participation in this initiative. We do so by:

- Rejecting depictions of our participants that reduce them to racialized identity categories and infantilizing tropes
- Creating new opportunities to showcase and celebrate the resilience of the City's African heritage and Indigenous residents, then and now

COMMUNITY OWNED, INSTITUTIONALLY SUPPORTED

Upholding our responsibility to the City's African heritage and Indigenous communities requires that whatever processes or products we design are ultimately owned by them. In this case, ownership is constituted by:

- Centering the stories and perspectives of the City's African heritage and Indigenous communities at every stage of the design and implementation process, including through the design of interfaces that enable the community not only to interact with

- but to contribute to the stories we tell
- Positioning institutions both private and public, our own and the City included, as stewards and sponsors of reconciliation and not as owners or arbiters
 - Securing the sustainability of this framework by building coalitions of invested community organizations and public-private sponsors

NOT WITHOUT REPARATIONS

On the one hand, the process of restorative justice can be broken down into discrete phases: first identifying the truth regarding particular racial injustices, then reconciling with the truth as a community, and finally identifying appropriate reparations intended to make the victims whole.

The reality, though, is that reconciliation cannot be accomplished without reparations, because coming to a shared understanding of the truth means nothing if that shared understanding does not compel us toward collective action. Rather than a precursor, then, reconciliation can serve as a necessary complement to reparations.

This is especially true given that there are plenty of actions toward reparations that the City can and should take now. Reparations need not only consist of land repatriation and financial compensation. It may also entail satisfaction, which can include symbolic reparations, such as public apologies and repairing the public image and social standing of victimized parties. Additionally, reparations involves transforming the policies and practices of public and private institutions. These sorts of reparations can only be effected through the deliberative process of reconciliation.

WHY AFRICAN HERITAGE & INDIGENOUS?

Our Guiding Principles explain why restorative justice initiatives should focus on specific people. To develop and pilot a framework that can be expanded to redress a range of racial injustices perpetuated against the City's various BIPOC communities, our team chose to focus on the City's African heritage and Indigenous residents.

We do so partly to align with our charge of developing a proposal and proof of concept for an interactive presentation of A Matter of Truth, which itself documents African heritage and Indigenous peoples' centuries-long struggle for equal rights in Providence and Rhode Island more generally.

That decision seems appropriate to us, given that as A Matter of Truth attests, "From the moment when the English colonists settled Providence and Rhode Island, African heritage and Indigenous people were denied equal standing and a chance at self-determination."

Furthermore, the City's African heritage and Indigenous residents were disproportionately negatively affected by the incidents we have chosen to focus on in this pilot.



WHY THESE FOUR NEIGHBORHOODS?

It is easier for us as a community to recognize injustices from which we are further removed. On the other hand, we have a harder time recognizing how something like the interstate we drive on every day evidences the lingering effects of systemically racist approaches to urban redevelopment in 1950s-60s Providence - not because the evidence isn't there, but because it is, and reconciling with the truth requires that we reckon as a community with how we were and continue to be complicit, so long as we refuse to act.

We've therefore chosen to focus our pilot on the four neighborhoods of Fox Point, Lippitt Hill, Upper South Providence, and West Elmwood because we are only yet a generation or two removed from the racist urban redevelopment initiatives that displaced and disenfranchised their African heritage and Indigenous residents, and because the stories and perspectives of those with generational



familial and community connections to those neighborhoods can and should guide us in our efforts to reconcile with the truth of what happened then, what continues to happen now as a result, and what we can do now to redress those injustices with those most directly impacted.

FRAMEWORK PILOT OVERVIEW

In alignment with our guiding principles, the project team developed and piloted our framework in consultation with the Office of the Mayor, the City's African American Ambassador Group, Providence Public Library, Roger Williams University's Human Subjects Review Board, and Columbia and Howard Universities' African American Redress Network:



Initiate community engagement via survey and interviews

We designed this initial stage of the framework to raise and gauge public awareness and gather assets and information that would inform how we engage the public in a more robust set of community conversations anchored in the stories and perspectives of those most directly impacted by the injustices in question.

We designed our **survey** to:

- Promote the truth-telling, reconciliation, and reparations initiative online and at community events
- Learn about the community's engagement with [A Matter of Truth](#) and perspectives on reconciliation
- Identify and recruit relevant and interested participants

We recruited **lead stakeholders**:

- As African heritage and Indigenous individuals with generational familial and community connections to the

- four selected neighborhoods of Fox Point, Lippitt Hill, Upper South Providence, and West Elmwood
- To serve as interview participants and recruiters of additional participants

We designed our **interview protocol** to video record African heritage and Indigenous residents' stories and perspectives regarding 1950s-60s urban redevelopment in the four selected neighborhoods, including:

- Life before and after (effects of) urban redevelopment
- Community resistance/resilience
- Ignoring/downplaying/denying the truth (who/how/why)
- What reconciliation and reparations look like



Design presentation linking A Matter of Truth to reconciliation and reparations

We designed our multimedia presentation of A Matter of Truth to:

- Appeal to audiences who might not read A Matter of Truth in its entirety
- Contextualize relevant findings of A Matter of Truth with our own survey and interview findings as well as relevant secondary data on social determinants of health
- Enhance A Matter of Truth into an interactive, mixed reality experience
- Anchor community discussions about reconciliation and reparations in the stories and perspectives of those with generational community and familial connections to the injustices being redressed
- Adopt A Matter of Truth's strategy of celebrating the resistance and resilience of African heritage and Indigenous communities in the face of racial injustice

- Enshrine truth-telling, reconciliation, and reparations as an integral element of our City's physical and cultural ecology

3

Model an Educational Approach

We designed our overall approach to involve students in a multitude of ways, but for our framework pilot, we specifically focused on involving students in the process of designing and implementing the framework itself, as a model for what future coalition members or teams might do when applying the framework to other neighborhoods, populations, time periods, or injustices. Student contributions included:

- Researching and designing our interview questionnaire
- Conducting interviews
- Coding survey and interview data
- Designing data visualizations
- Researching and designing college-level curricula and interactive timelines
- Conducting archival research to identify assets for our presentation

Our goal was to model out ways that students can fulfill integral roles in the City's truth-telling, reconciliation, and reparations initiative, not just as consumers of the final product but as designers of the process.



FRAMEWORK PILOT TIMELINE

July-August 2021

- Objectives, guiding principles, and project plan refinement/revision via team and stakeholder consulting/norming
- Research, design, and secure institutional research approval for survey
- Hire and train RWU student Project and Research Assistants
- Preliminary outreach and engagement at community events

September 2021

- Begin circulating survey
- Research and design interview and documentation protocols
- Draft and circulate creative team call for applicants
- Continued outreach and engagement at community events
- Begin lead stakeholder recruitment

October 2021

- Assemble creative team and begin ideating
- Solidify lead stakeholder list and engage in interview planning and survey circulation
- Create storyboard and begin collecting assets for promo video
- Begin preliminary survey data analysis

November 2021

- Begin interviewing

- Develop creative team design concept and begin drafting design element proofs of concept
- Expand creative team to hire additional graphic designer

December 2021

- Close survey at end of month with 378 responses
- Continue interviewing
- Expand creative team to hire post-production video editor
- Begin preliminary interview data analysis

January 2022

- Complete preliminary survey and interview data analysis
- Begin coordinating with City archives on asset identification
- Close interviewing with approximately 29 completed
- Finalize proposals and proofs of concept for framework implementation



SURVEY

After vetting our approach with the Office of the Mayor and African American Ambassador Group on July 21, 2021, our first task was to design a survey ([view preview](#)) to which we could direct community members when engaging them online and at community events. Several drafts were vetted by the Office of the Mayor and African American Ambassador Group before receiving approval on September 10 from Roger Williams University's Human Subjects Review Board,

The survey received **378 responses** between then and its closing date of December 31.

The survey is broken down into two parts:

Part One seeks information on participants!:

- engagement with A Matter of Truth
- perspectives on the injustices that should be addressed and parties involved in reconciliation

Part Two first seeks participant demographic information that can be correlated with results from Part One while also aiming to identify individuals interested in playing further roles in the City's truth-telling, reconciliation, and reparations initiative.

What follows is an overview of significant findings, including additional coding of qualitative responses. More comprehensive reports can be accessed below (with final identifying responses removed):

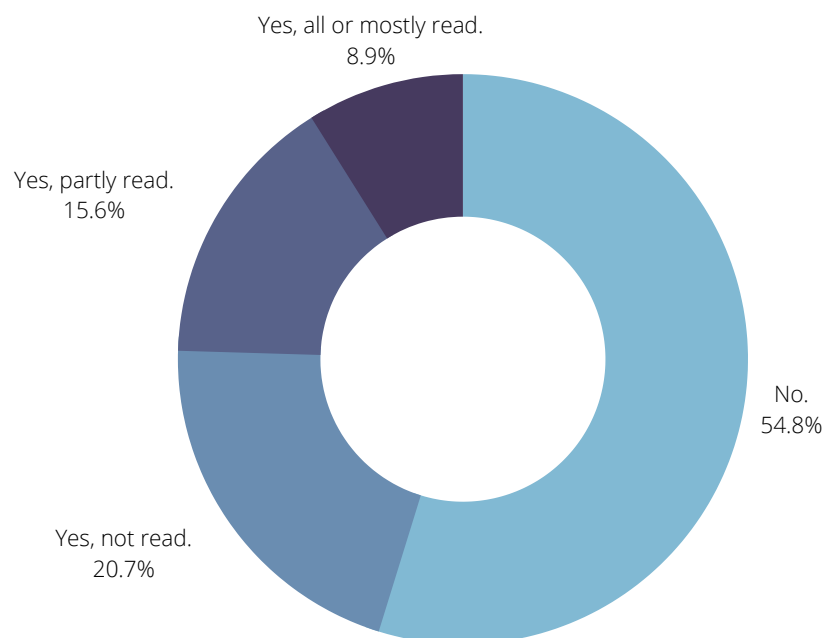
- [Spreadsheet including all raw data](#)
- [Report with visuals including responses from all demographics](#)

- Report with visuals only including responses from BIPOC participants
- Reports with visuals including responses by those affected by urban redevelopment projects that dislocated and disenfranchised African heritage and Indigenous residents living in:
 - Any of the four neighborhoods
 - Fox Point
 - Lippitt Hill
 - Upper South Providence
 - West Elmwood

THE TRUTH MUST BE AMPLIFIED

Our results suggest that more needs to be done to make important truth-telling work like A Matter of Truth visible and accessible,

Despite the likelihood that those responding to our survey learned about it through the City's African American Ambassador Group newsletter or through communication networks connected to the work of that group, **more than half (55%) of participants had never heard of A Matter of Truth**. That number increases to 60% for BIPOC participants.

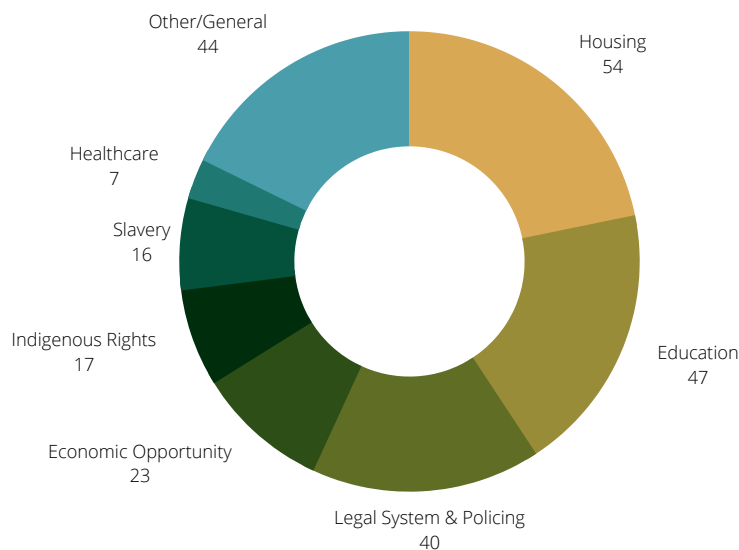


The most commonly provided reason for participants knowing about it but not having read it was that **they didn't know where to find it (55%)**. The second most common reason (other - 35%) mostly consisted of responses such as "haven't gotten around to it yet."

EFFECTS OF REDEVELOPMENT, TODAY

Participants' responses align with our pilot project's focus on the longterm impacts of the City's racist mid-20th century redevelopment projects.

Upon provisionally coding participants' responses to the question asking them to identify one or two injustices that must be addressed as part of the City's truth and reconciliation process, **the largest thematic category we identified was Housing**. This consisted of responses that included terms like "homeownership," "gentrification," "homeless," and "redlining."



The second largest thematic category we identified was Education, which included phrases such as "the lack of ethnic studies in PVD schools" and "failing schools in communities of color."

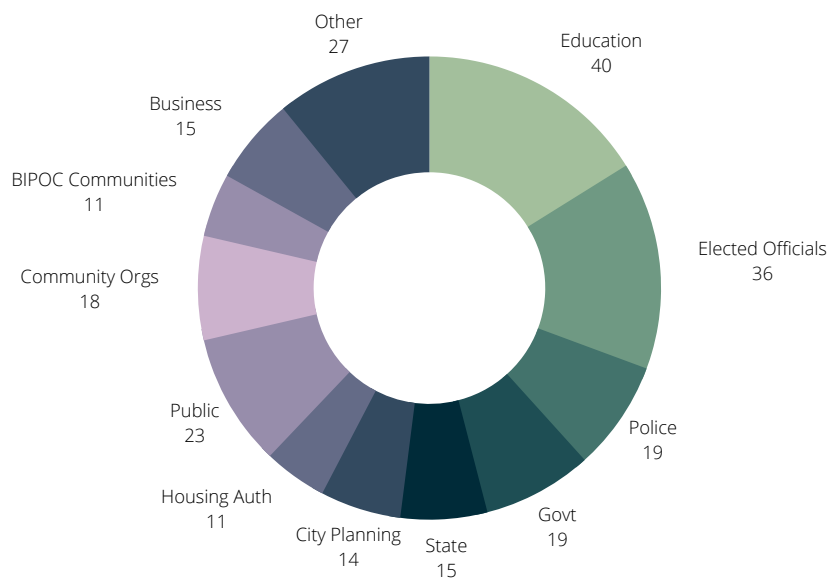
The Legal System and Policing category was third largest, with comments that included phrases such as "police violence against communities of color," "over incarceration," and "addressing the effect of the Law Enforcement Officers Bill of Rights on Providence citizens of color."

These three categories remain disproportionately larger than the others even when disaggregating responses to focus solely on BIPOC participants.

OF, BY, AND FOR THE PEOPLE

Upon coding participants' perspectives on who needs to take part in addressing the injustices they identified in the preceding question, **the most commonly identified overarching thematic category was some form of government office or official**, which we have broken down into subcategories visible in the pie chart below, the **largest of which is Education** (including state department of education, school district leadership, and teachers' union).

The next largest thematic subcategory was Community, which we broke down into the next set of subcategories rotating clockwise





from "public" to "BIPOC Communities."

SURVEY TAKEAWAYS

Our project chose to focus on racially unjust urban redevelopment initiatives in 1950s-60s Providence as a lens through which to elaborate on the findings of [A Matter of Truth](#) and model out and pilot a reconciliation framework. These survey results support the report's conclusion that **the impacts of the City's decades-old racist redevelopment policies and practices are still felt today by its African heritage and Indigenous residents**, not just in terms of barriers to **homeownership** and the **generational wealth** that affords families, but in **educational access and quality** and **equal treatment under the law**, as well.

Our results confirm that reconciling the truth of what happened with the lived reality that the City's African heritage and Indigenous residents experience today should be a **community-driven process** that foregrounds the voices and perspectives of the City's African heritage and Indigenous community leaders and organizations. At the same time, these findings highlight that reconciliation cannot take place without **substantial involvement from the government entities** that possess the means to take meaningful action to redress these injustices in light a fuller understanding of what recognizing the truth requires of all of us.

While we hope these survey results can inform future phases of the City's truth-telling, reconciliation, and reparations initiative, we should also note **several limitations**.

This instrument was initially conceptualized by the project team as a tool that we could use at events to inform the public, gauge awareness, and recruit potential participants. Facing a peak of rising cases of the coronavirus Delta variant in the late summer, and in



consultation with our various stakeholders, we pivoted toward an online survey protocol.

For future iterations, we recommend that the City plan ahead to fund and logistically support a more intentional approach to implementing either a city-wide or neighborhood specific survey that involves an intentional sampling method and mail-in and door-to-door distribution methods.

Lastly, this report includes only preliminary coding of the survey's qualitative results, largely completed with faculty guidance by students serving as Project and Research Assistants at Roger Williams University.

PROPOSED NEXT STEPS

Should the City move forward with implementing our pilot framework, our team would:

- Further refine the above-noted thematic categories
- Expand the dataset through additional community engagement
- Integrate existing and new data into interactive data visualizations that will form a key component of our interactive presentation and drive community conversations during our proposed engagement sessions

Further details regarding our proposed approach are provided in the sections to follow.

INITIAL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Initial community engagement aimed to raise awareness of the truth and reconciliation phases of the City's broader initiative (including [A Matter of Truth](#)), to inform attendees of opportunities to participate, and, more broadly, to share and learn from other truth and reconciliation initiatives across the country.

Engagement took place at community and cultural events and professional organization meetings in the form of information tables, delivered remarks, and distributed materials, such as the promotional cards displayed below (left - front, back - right).



Specific events and functions where community engagement occurred include:

- American Planning Association RI
- Annual Juneteenth Celebration for the City of Providence
- Annual Billy Taylor Day Celebration
- Conference on Community Writing
- Federation of Aboriginal Nations of the Americas
- Mashapaug Nahaganset Naming Ceremony and Land Blessing and Harvest Moon Social
- Mount Hope Community Center
- NYC Reparations Coalition
- Pokanoket 400th Anniversary of Thanksgiving
- Rhode Island American Indian Heritage Commission

We estimate a total marketing population of approximately 1,500 people at all events combined.



Project Leads Brian Hendrickson and Raymond Two Hawks Watson present on the City's truth-telling, reconciliation, and reparations initiative at the Mashapaug Nahaganset Naming Ceremony and Land Blessing on August 7, 2021. Photo by Jeny Hernandez-Watson.

LEAD STAKEHOLDERS

In acknowledgement of the unique and generational experience and perspective possessed by many members of Providence's current African heritage and Indigenous communities regarding the City's mid-20th century urban redevelopment projects, we identified lead stakeholders with **generational personal, familial, and community ties to our pilot framework's four focus neighborhoods**, and paid them a small stipend through this project's grant funds to support our initial community engagement efforts, survey distribution, and recruitment of additional individuals from the African heritage and Indigenous communities with equally strong ties to the four focus neighborhoods to share their stories and perspectives via video-recorded interviews. Lead stakeholders were asked to be interviewed as well.

Demographics of lead stakeholders included a total of **16 active participants**:

- 8 males and 8 females
- 8 African heritage, 3 Indigenous, and 5 both
- 5 with connections to West Elmwood
- 4 Upper South Providence
- 4 Lippitt Hill
- 3 Fox Point

LEAD STAKEHOLDER NAMES

With indication of African Heritage (Ah), Indigenous (I), or both (Ah/I)

Vernon Brown - West Elmwood (Ah/I)

Kobi Dennis - Upper South Providence (Ah)

Tanisha Dennis - Upper South Providence (Ah)
William Winds of Thunder Guy - West Elmwood (I)
Helen Strong Raven Dukes - Lippitt Hill (Ah/I)
Dewayne Boo Hackney - Upper South Providence (Ah/I)
Arthur Johnson - Upper South Providence (Ah)
Pastor Sherrod Jones - West Elmwood (Ah/I)
James Monteiro - Lippitt Hill (Ah)
Robert Britto-Oliveira - Fox Point (Ah)
Dr. Karol Oliveira - Fox Point (Ah)
Joyce Stevos - West Elmwood (Ah/I)
Cheryl Taylor - Lippitt Hill (Ah)
Kehinde Vaz - Fox Point (Ah)
Andrea Winter Hawk Watson - Lippitt Hill (I)
Judith Willis - West Elmwood (I)



INTERVIEWS

In our interview questionnaire, we explain reconciliation as


an effort to come to a shared recognition of the truth., as well as a shared understanding of what recognizing the truth requires of us. This in turn enables healing and the reformation of bonds of community fellowship.

This philosophy guided our interview protocol design and implementation. Accordingly, with the assistance of our survey and lead stakeholders, we identified **individuals with generational personal, familial, and community ties to our pilot's four focus neighborhoods.**

We designed our interview questionnaire to elicit firsthand accounts of neighborhood life before and after the impacts of mid-twentieth century urban redevelopment projects, but we also wanted to **avoid conducting just another oral history project**, as much valuable work has already been completed in this area. Instead, our questionnaire places **particular emphasis on the effects** of urban redevelopment and on capturing interviewee perspectives on what reconciliation and reparations should look like. (See Educational Model for further details)



Lead Stakeholder Robert Britto-Oliveira being interviewed by Raymond Two Hawks Watson at the YMCA Providence Youth Services Branch in Upper South Providence, November 13, 2021. Photo by Jeny Hernandez-Watson.



Our team hosted a total of four interview sessions that we advertised via social media, our lead stakeholder network, and our survey's list of interested participants, and numerous others based upon individual interviewee availability.

All interviewees were asked to sign a release form modeled upon the City's.

INTERVIEWEE DEMOGRAPHICS

A total of 29 African heritage and/or Indigenous individuals were interviewed at the time of submission of this report:

- 19 men and 10 women
- 11 interviewees shared experiences related to Lippitt Hill
- 7 Upper South Providence
- 5 West Elmwood
- 2 Fox Point
- 3 multiple neighborhoods
- 1 general experiences from being engaged in pilot framework

FINDINGS

Following preliminary interview coding, our team identified several overarching themes:

Vibrant Communities: A Matter of Truth reveals the logic behind the targeting of our four focus neighborhoods for urban redevelopment in quoting from the Rhode Island Council for Community Services' 1964 "Social Plan For Community Renewal":

There exists in many American communities among those families which are constantly exposed to the frustrations and

deprivations of poverty, a particular style of life. This style of life is characterized by a sense of despair, of hopelessness, a deep-rooted belief that people's lives are at the mercy of fate. These attitudes stifle initiative and retard aspirations. They can be passed on from generation to generation as well as reinforced by those sharing the same social experiences. It is this shared way of life which recently has been termed the culture of poverty. (quoted on p. 97)

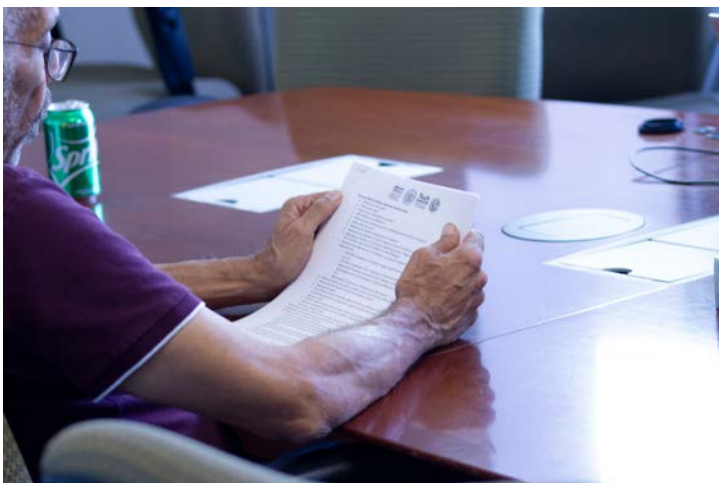
Our interviewees rejected the rationale that urban redevelopment was necessary to counteract a culture of poverty rampant in our four focus neighborhoods.

Instead, time and time again, interviewees described their **neighborhoods before urban redevelopment as safe, socially and economically vibrant communities** where everyone knew and took care of one another and where there were plenty of examples of a thriving professional class to aspire to.


Fractured Communities: Another theme cutting across interviews was that rather than improving neighborhoods, urban redevelopment

destroyed communities by fracturing familial and community ties and economic infrastructure, leaving an environment with less economic opportunity and conditions rife for the onset of the drug epidemic.

Clear Intent, Intentional Ignorance: Despite various levels of government



Lead Stakeholder Vernon Brown reading the interview questionnaire at the YMCA Providence Youth Services Branch in Upper South Providence, November 13, 2021. Photo by Jeny Hernandez-Watson.



couching their intentions in language that connoted they had African heritage and Indigenous communities' best interests at heart, interviewees stressed that the opposite was the case. Furthermore, they shared their perspectives that the City has long known the real intentions and effects of the mid-twentieth century urban redevelopment projects in question and has chosen to deny, downplay, or ignore that reality.

Redressing Housing, Wealth, and Education Gaps: Although responses varied regarding what reparations should look like for the City, the majority of responses primarily focused on **home ownership, economic and financial empowerment, and access to education**. These findings are **strikingly consistent** with our survey findings, suggesting **a clear path forward** for the City as it moves toward municipal reparations in relation to African heritage and Indigenous residents impacted by the injustices spotlighted in our pilot framework.

ASSESSING THE INTERVIEW FRAMEWORK

We achieved several goals through implementing this interview strategy:

- **Humanizing** the experiences of the City's African heritage and Indigenous communities as detailed in [A Matter of Truth](#), while also identifying in order to make whole specific individuals directly impacted by the injustices we chose to spotlight in our pilot framework
- **Shifting focus** of the reparations conversation from historical enslavement to events and experiences more immediately and measurably impacting today's African heritage and Indigenous communities, while simultaneously affording the City the opportunity to redress systemic issues affecting Providence's contemporary African heritage and Indigenous communities

- **Diversifying opportunities** for the general public to engage with the historical narrative and information detailed in [A Matter of Truth](#)

Overall, this strategy has positioned the City of Providence to pursue a reparations initiative with an informed, context-specific basis for making decisions.

PROPOSED NEXT STEPS

Should the City move forward with implementing our pilot framework, our team would:

- Continue to work with Lead Stakeholders to identify further interview participants
- Expand our pool of interviewees to include representatives of organizations complicit in the spotlighted mid-twentieth century urban redevelopment projects
- Edit each recorded interview for public viewing and produce a short documentary that highlights themes that cut across interviews

Further details regarding our proposed approach are provided in the sections to follow.



EDUCATIONAL MODEL

This section addresses student involvement in the framework pilot. We discuss further strategies for youth engagement and educational initiatives in Framework Implementation. The purpose of this section is to report on the model we developed for providing students opportunities to learn from and contribute to the development of the reconciliation framework.

Student involvement took three general forms: Project and Research Assistants hired to support the project, Project Teams assembled in classes designed around the project, and student interns hired in association with Documentation Team Lead and RWU Assistant Professor of Journalism Bernardo Motta's community journalism initiative, Communities of Hope.

PROJECT AND RESEARCH ASSISTANTS

Our original grant proposal included budget line items for hiring two Roger Williams University students (which we expanded to three after receiving a strong response to the call) and one graduate of Providence Public Library's Rhode Coders high school-college dual enrollment program, for which we began circulating calls in July. While the [RWU Position Description](#) emphasized research and writing, the [PPL Position Description](#) emphasized web, graphic, and user interface design. In circulating both calls, we emphasized that we were particularly interested in candidates with personal connections to the City and to the focus of our pilot framework.

All Project and Research Assistants began their work by reading

A Matter of Truth, with a particular focus on "Part 5: Fair Housing and Urban Development (1950-1970)."

RWU students then worked with our Reconciliation Team to **design our Interview Questionnaire** based upon the report findings and research into oral history interviewing. Beyond the questions themselves, students located relevant primary artifacts such as photographs and newspaper clippings, and developed a data factsheet on relevant social determinants of health: economic stability, educational access and quality, healthcare access and quality, neighborhood and built environment, and social and community context. And Community of Hope interns designed a How-To Guide for recording interviews and a Promotional Video.

RWU students also participated in the interview process by interviewing community members, staffing community interview sessions, and at times recruiting community members to participate in interviews.



Note: To view the promotional video, [click here](#).

RWU students then worked on survey data analysis. Part of that task involved identifying for interviews participants who identified as African heritage and Indigenous, as having been affected by the urban redevelopment initiatives spotlighted in this pilot project, and as being interested in participating in the City's truth-telling, reconciliation, and reparations initiative.

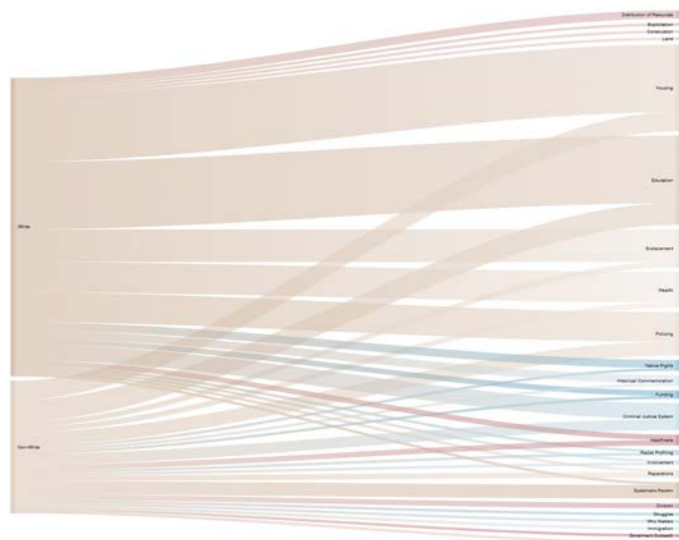
Additionally, RWU students coded participants' qualitative responses to the survey questions asking them to identify injustices to focus on and parties to involve, identifying thematic categories and disaggregating responses by race/ethnicity and neighborhood affiliation.

Lastly, RWU students coded all interviews collected through December 2021 based upon participants' accounts of life before and after urban redevelopment, descriptions of instances of community resilience and resistance, and perspectives on reconciliation and reparations.

As we draft this report, we are currently working with the City archives to coordinate opportunities for students to digitize assets relevant to our pilot framework's focus.

Our PPL Rhode Coder graduate, Mario Orellana, has worked closely with the creative team through the ideation and design stages, ultimately choosing to focus on **data visualization**, starting first with our survey and interview data, and eventually moving on to data we are compiling from sources including HousingWorksRI, Rhode Island Kids Count, and RIDOH Health Equity Measures.

To the right is a design proof of Mario's work in progress to visualize White and BIPOC survey participants' coded perspectives on the injustices they would like the reconciliation phase to address ([see high resolution image](#)).



CLASS PROJECT TEAMS

In Fall 2020, Dr. Brian Hendrickson, Assistant Professor of Writing Studies, Rhetoric, and Composition at Roger Williams University, and Project Lead for the City's reconciliation framework pilot project, taught two upper-division college classes connected to the project: Writing the City and Writing for Social Change. Both classes are reserved for minors and core concentrators in RWU's Professional and Public Writing program. Writing for Social Change is the program's capstone course.

Project Teams in Writing for Social Change spent the first half of the semester studying [A Matter of Truth](#) alongside scholarship on equity-minded approaches to community-based research and writing projects. Students then brainstormed and pitched ideas for final projects, formed teams based upon project preferences, and drafted project proposals that they presented to the students in Writing the City, who then selected the projects they would also work on in teams for the second half of the semester.

Below are descriptions and (links to) deliverables pertaining to the two projects most relevant to the reconciliation framework pilot.

The Curriculum Team designed units (see [Writing the City](#) and [Writing for Social Change](#) final team reports) intended to be taught in RWU's core curriculum course entitled Structures of Power. Teams designed units for each section of [A Matter of Truth](#), conducting further research into the events described therein, and learning to use backward design to come up with major projects and scaffolded activities that guide students toward achieving the course outcomes of "analyz[ing] the tensions and fluidity of structures of power in theory and practice" and "the ways people challenge power using primary sources or evidence-based arguments."

The Timeline Team

designed two interactive timelines based upon events that [A Matter of Truth](#) described as impacting African heritage ([See Timeline One](#)) and Indigenous ([See Timeline Two](#), as well as timeline slide examples included to the right) peoples, respectively (view [Writing the City](#) and [Writing for Social Change](#) final team reports). Teams then broke each timeline down into time period based upon those around which [A Matter of Truth](#) is organized, conducting further research into each event, and identifying the opposing perspectives on each issue at the time, not to highlight that there are always two sides to an issue, but as a reflection on what reconciliation requires of us, reminding us that even behind events that we would look back at now as objectively wrong was someone ensuring the outcome.



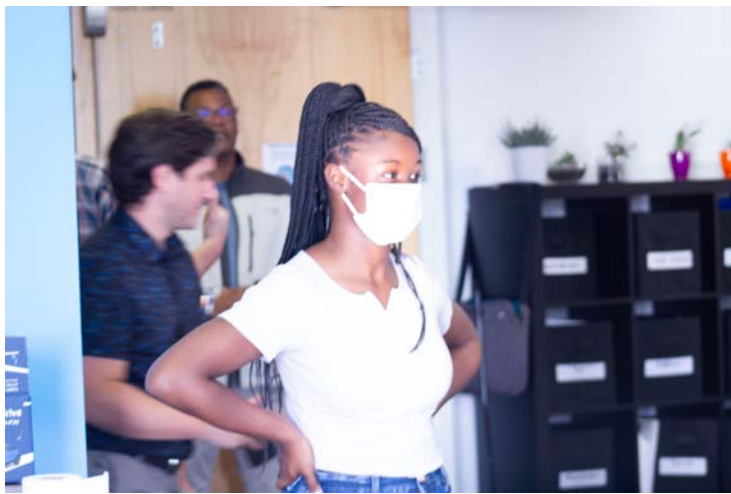
Opening slide from student team's Interactive Timeline of Indigenous peoples' struggle for equal rights in Providence, based upon [A Matter of Truth](#) and supplemented by additional research.



Timeline entry slide from student team's Interactive Timeline of Indigenous peoples' struggle for equal rights in Providence, based upon [A Matter of Truth](#) and supplemented by additional research.

EDUCATIONAL MODEL TAKEAWAYS

Reflecting on their learning, students frequently described not learning about the City's involvement in the slave trade until arriving at college. But not until these courses designed around our pilot



RWU Project and Research Assistant and Providence Southside resident Blessing Pour prepares to interview attendees at the YMCA Providence Youth Services Branch in Upper South Providence, November 13, 2021. Photo by Jeny Hernandez-Watson.

framework were students made aware of the systemic racial injustices targeting African heritage and Indigenous communities in Providence. Moreover, through their research, students came to recognize both the historical precedent and national context that make it difficult to dismiss these injustices as anything but systemic and intentional.

Furthermore, students recalled feeling the weight of the obligation to accurately and humanistically represent in their work the African heritage and Indigenous communities they researched and wrote about, to ensure that they were not reproducing the very inequities they aimed to spotlight - a sense of obligation that the "real world" nature of the project amplified. As would be expected, the above-referenced student work evidences students taking first steps in this direction, but it also evidences increasing levels of sophistication in how students positioned themselves and the subjects of their research over the course of the semester.

What follows are excerpts from students' end-of-project learning reflections, included with students' permission.

PROJECT AND RESEARCH ASSISTANT LEARNING REFLECTIONS

"This project became one of many that have influenced my way of thinking. I became aware of the Rhode Island past, one that was filled with grief and loss. By looking over the responses of those who were most affected by redevelopment in the 1950s, I saw the cause and effect of such action. In doing so, this project made me reflect about my way of living. Growing up in the the West Side of Providence, Rhode Island, I can see the effects of urban renewal in my community. BIPOC communities have suffered both economically and socially, having faced a drastic change in their way of living. Being part of this project, I have realized how there can be change and a hope for a future that takes into account BIPOC communities and their livelihoods in Providence. A hope for a better future starts with my voice as well as those who seek the same. By being aware of these issues, change can be made that will benefit the communities who have suffered the most." - Erlinda Castro, International Relations Major, Class of 2024

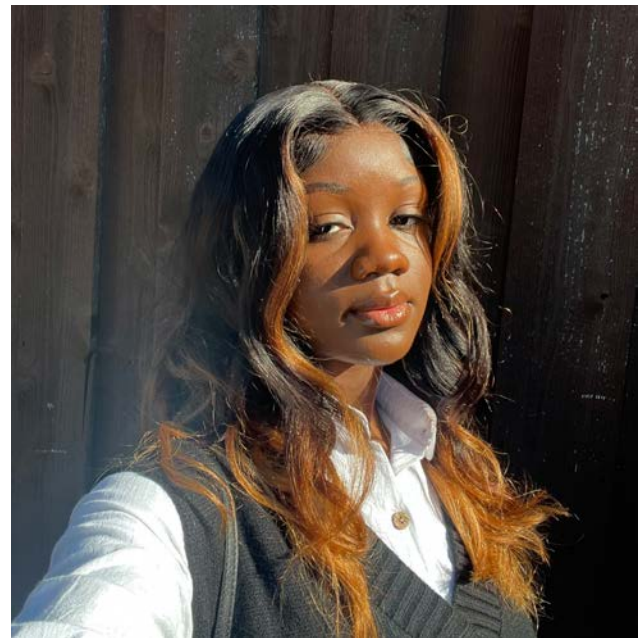



"I learned Rhode Island's real history and the impact covering up that history had on the people affected. I also learned how to work on a public project. This project was something many cared about with the potential to affect people's lives. Learning how to conduct the



research and interviews in a way that would respect the people we were interviewing was difficult, but important. It was imperative we ensured what they have to say is documented, while also making sure we got the responses we needed. As a history major it was a great opportunity to learn how to conduct an oral history project hands-on." - Ainsley Lovanna, Legal Studies and History Double Major, Class of 2023

"Living in Providence for over 15 years and attending public school all those years, I was never exposed to the truths that A Matter of Truth holds. For example, as a child my friends and I walked on Broad St. on the South Side every day, but it was not until recently that I became aware that the Ku Klux Klan would hold meetings on the street back in the day. Through this project I've also learned about the systemic issues that residents of South Providence, West Elmwood, Lippitt Hill and Fox Point have had to deal with due to many profitable redevelopment projects. When conducting and listening to interviews, I gained knowledge on the separation of families and communities due to the development of I-95, Rhode Island Hospital, Brown University, University Heights, etc. Families were pushed out of their homes





because of redevelopment. Many families spoke on promises that were made to them before the construction of University Heights, but soon after its construction, they were pushed out and not given the opportunity to live in the buildings. This project has made me realize that there is still so much social justice work to be done, especially in my hometown. As an aspiring public interest lawyer, I'm glad I was able to work on this project and connect with those I wish to assist one day. It's going to take more than reparations to amend what has been done to these families, but it starts with legal students like myself, who have lived in Providence and are interested in finding a way forward." - Blessing Pour, Legal Studies and Political Science Double Major, Class of 2023

CLASS PROJECT LEARNING REFLECTIONS

"Often times when I am writing for school, I must admit that I don't necessarily fully understand the information that I am taking in, and make general assumptions leading to weak arguments throughout the paper. This project was really different, however, because one of the main things we discussed is how we can ethically use this information, because with such sensitive data, any misrepresentation can be critically damaging. This project really challenged me to deeply think about the information I was taking in, how I was taking it in and what I was going to do with the information once I understood it. This was one of the first times where, as a white person at a mostly white institution and not much experience with diversity, I didn't necessarily have a "seat" at the table of this conversation, and so I really had to think about how the information I was putting out was going to affect the discourse within each community. . . . It is important to note that systemic racism was not a new topic to me upon starting this assignment, and as a Criminal Justice major it is obviously something that I have discussed extensively within my time here at Roger Williams. The way in which

I was asked to present this information, however, was radically different than most of the ways it has been approached in my classes in the past. Although we discuss systemic racism in most of my classes, it is usually talked about in a way that seems retroactive, as if



it is a problem of the past that, while still lingering today, will eventually dissipate on its own with enough education and time. This project took a fully hands-on approach where students were asked to look at the problem head on and actually physically do something about it, rather than idly sit by being educated about it. This required a lot of education simply on the topic of being sensitive about how we talked about this information. One thing that greatly helped with this was

hearing testimonies from real people on how they have been affected and how they would like to see us go about making change. Professor Hendrickson was also well-versed in this knowledge and had clear experience in managing this type of information, so his comments were extremely helpful in aiding our group to use our information in a meaningful way." - Savannah Bunovsky, Criminal Justice Major, Class of 2022

"Students should not enter communities and educate them based on their own assumptions or the assumptions they have been taught, but students should be educated by the communities themselves. This connects to the idea of the savior complex. Even with good intentions, some people still exhibit a savior complex, in which they feel that they know what is best for a community and that it is their responsibility to support a community because the community does not have the resources or capability to do it themselves. Whether they realize it or not, people with a savior complex may seem to consider

themselves superior. Although it may seem like they are “helping,” they could be making situations worse. While working on [this project], it was important not to overstep on the boundaries of the two communities. It was also imperative to leave some substance and action behind any outward displays of support, so that performative activism could be avoided." - Mariam Sanusi, Legal Studies and Psychology Double Major, Class of 2023



"In working directly with the A Matter of Truth report, I learned an immense amount of history that was left out of my education. An education that prior to this project I considered to be inclusive. A major challenge I am now facing is, what do I do with all of this history that is clear evidence of systemic racism? I now look at the world differently in the sense that there is so much information and honest history that is likely intentionally left out of history textbooks and public education. This project has made me think a lot about how people are supposed to heal from the cruelty of the U.S.'s history without being validated." - Candace Kelliher, Management Major, Class of 2022

PROPOSED NEXT STEPS

For future phases and iterations of this framework, we strongly believe in expanding opportunities for student involvement, not just as participants in community conversations but in the design of future phases and iterations of the reconciliation framework itself. And not just RWU students, but those attending other colleges and universities, as well as students in Providence public schools.



PRESENTATION DESIGN


We assembled a team of creatives committed to the process of truth-telling in the service of reconciliation and invested in thinking through how we might creatively approach the idea of reconciliation in a manner capable of **shifting our collective cognitive mapping**.

We wanted to create a **multidimensional experience** as a companion piece to [A Matter of Truth](#) - honoring all the hard work put into the report by providing **additional creative points of access and engagement** for the community, and **expanding the context and opportunities** in which the report can be understood and experienced.

This proof of concept illuminates a multidimensional approach to truth-telling that is **engaging and experiential**. It is our belief that reconciliation is only possible when victims are entitled to a process through which they can reckon with the truth of what happened. **There can be no reconciliation without a complete and immersive understanding of the truth.**

Reconciliation is a **process of discovery** that a community must experience in order to heal from generational trauma. It is also important for the state and perpetrators of such inequities to be made aware of their complicity in the process of systematically disenfranchising African American and Indigenous communities for generations.

As creatives, we have **the ability to dream** in ways beyond the report. As creatives, we are inspired to work with the community to see what is unseen or “hidden in plain sight” and reimagine the past, present, and future. To challenge and expand how we come to



understand ourselves within the context of trauma. To suggest new cognitive maps of what happened and why and how we might reimagine ourselves into new realities. New possibilities of human interaction and engagement. New inspiration to take action.

This creative vision runs through the proofs of concept presented here, which are the results of a seven-month-long, wholly collaborative and inspired process from a creative team committed to truth-telling, reconciliation, and community engagement.

Our proofs are inspired by **the legacy of African American quilting, and also cartography**. We seek to understand our past and present geographic and cognitive mapping in order to remap the future and reclaim and reimagine history, land, neighborhoods, and ideas about who we are, what happened, and how. What we are creating is **a physical and digital community quilt** that will gather, stitch, and weave together layers of history, data, metadata, and stories from and about the community.

We believe that when fully developed, these proofs can amplify the findings in [A Matter of Truth](#), increase public awareness and engagement, and guide the community in a process of truth-telling and reconciliation toward increasingly more comprehensive, accurate, and impactful approaches to reparations, starting with those due to the African heritage and Indigenous families and communities systematically disenfranchised by the urban redevelopment projects spotlighted in our pilot framework, and extended in perpetuity to ensure our City has a way of forever making itself whole.

WEB PORTAL

We envisioned our web portal as a space weaving together:

- The findings of A Matter of Truth
- Multimedia assets from our pilot survey and interviews, additional archival research and interviews, and a short documentary highlighting the themes that cut across those interviews
- Publicly available data on social determinants of health, disaggregated by race/ethnicity
- Information on our physical art installations
- Guides for conducting and interfaces for uploading interviews and the results of community conversations
- Documentation of the reconciliation framework with opportunities to expand toward addressing other time periods, communities, and injustices

Like all our proofs of concept, our web portal mockup (located at truth.rwu.me) is intended to provide users a sense of what's possible even without all of the built-in functionality we plan to



execute within the next phase.

Home (see screenshot on previous page) showcases a synthesis of our design concepts of mapping, quilting, and multimodality. While not every feature is functional, desktop users can click "play" and listen to our soundscape proof of concept, which we describe in greater detail below.

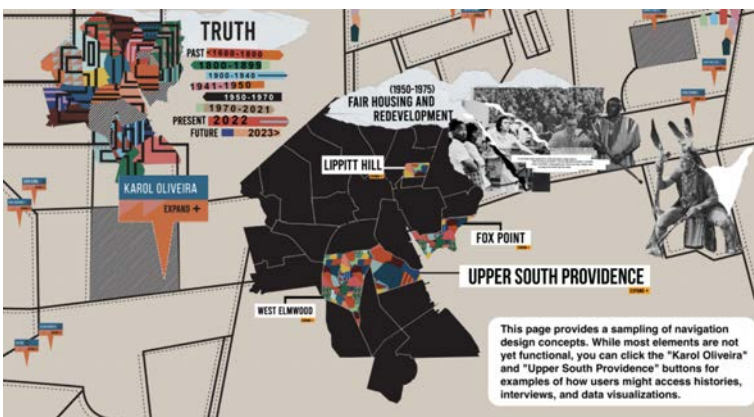
About provides a brief overview of the truth-telling, reconciliation, and reparations initiative and what visitors can find on our web portal proof of concept.

Report is where we are making the report you are reading now publicly available.

Multimedia shares our proofs of concept for our documentary trailer, promo video, and art installations.

Map provides a sampling of navigation design concepts, including two interactive features that model how users will be able to access histories, interviews, and data visualizations by searching by time period, geographical location, and issue. We want users to experience the truth at different levels of scale, and to be able to make connections between people, places, and events in ways that are not solely

chronological or even spatial but associative and relational.



While the map is not yet fully functional, there are a few mockup features users can currently interact with.

For instance, click on "Upper South Providence" to pull up a mockup page that might provide historical overviews for particular neighborhoods and serve as access points into additional archival assets we've collected, as well as information about the mixed reality experiences we've designed within those neighborhoods.

Zoom in another level further, and neighborhoods give way to streets, streets to addresses, and addresses to multimedia storytelling, including popup windows containing embedded videos of the interviews we have conducted and collated (click on the icon for "Karol Oliveira" for an example).





Submit presents a mockup form illustrating how users will eventually be able to upload audio, video, documents, images, and plain text that can be organized into a database based upon user responses to the various fields.

DOCUMENTARY

In addition to the individual interviews, we plan to produce a documentary that highlights what we code as the dominant themes cutting across all of the interviews (see the main "Interviews" section above for further discussion). What you can find on the web portal mockup's [Multimedia](#) page is a [trailer mockup](#) we have produced to provide a sense of just how powerful these interviews are, and just how important it is to foreground these stories and perspectives in any conversations around reconciliation and reparations. To ensure just that, we intend the completed documentary to be viewed at the



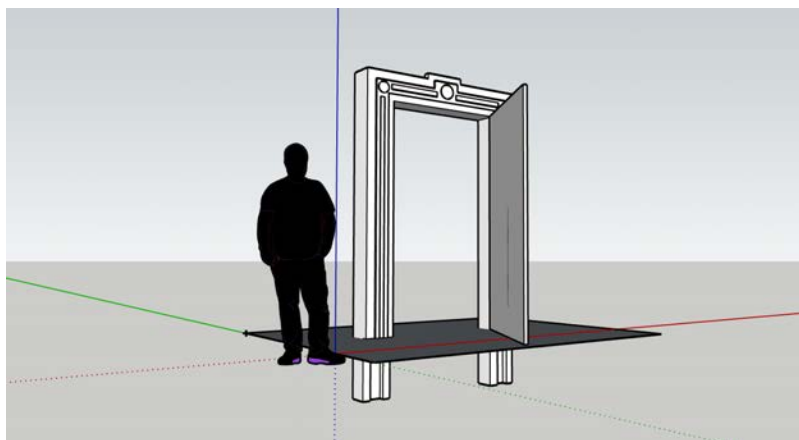
Note: To view the mockup documentary trailer, [click here](#).

beginning of the community conversations we plan to host as part of our reconciliation framework implementation plan, and we will integrate recommendations for viewing the documentary into our guidelines for others to lead their own community conversations.

ART INSTALLATIONS

Intended to function as immersive, multimodal, mixed reality portals into the City's truth, reconciliation, and reparations initiative, our proposed art installations consist of several components: physical installations, soundscapes, and augmented and virtual reality projections and tours.

Physical Installations would consist of doorways installed in public spaces in each of the four neighborhoods of Fox Point, Lippitt Hill, Upper South Providence, and West Elmwood, accompanied by a less permanent (potentially traveling) doorway and room installation installed in the centrally located downtown Providence Public Library. Our team arrived at the doorway design because we envision the art installations serving as entry points into the symbolic homes of the families that were uprooted by urban redevelopment, and for that reason, the installations consist in most cases of just a doorway - at least at first appearance. But

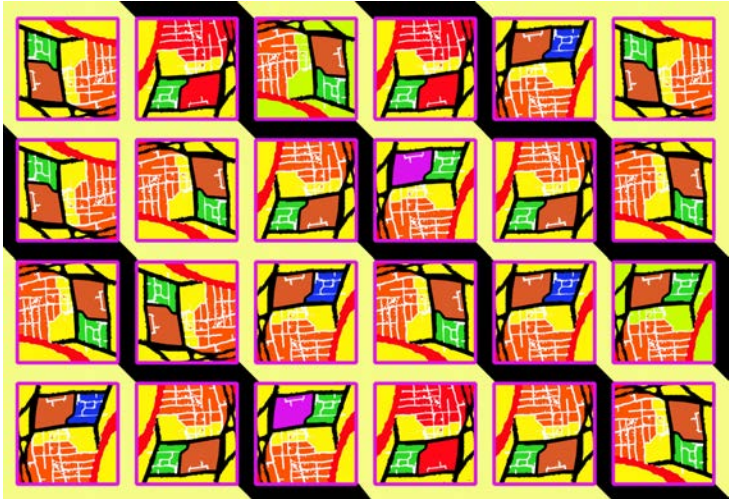
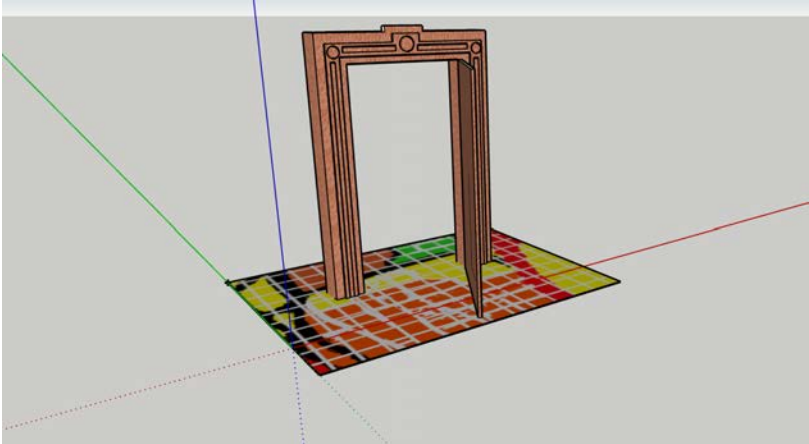


the doorway in its persistent physical presence will serve as a perpetual portal into the history of each neighborhood as well as the City as a whole, its living culture, and its vision

for a more just and equitable future.


Doors would be CNC cut metal frames, welded onto an I-beam frame, and set in an 8x8 ft (4000 PSI cement, 6in thick) Reinforced Concrete base for stability. They will stand 7.5 ft high and 4 ft wide. The Frames will have a thickness of 7 inches on all sides. The door will measure 34 in x 80 in. The Frame will house the QR codes for accessing the soundscape and augmented and virtual reality components of the installation.

Made of steel, the doors will slowly develop a rust finish. The rust will bleed into the base. This aesthetic will symbolize the City's legacy of industrialization, the resiliency of each neighborhood's African heritage and Indigenous community, and the eternal nature of place and change.



Meanwhile, the base will be covered with color tiles in a motif drawing its inspiration from pre-redevelopment neighborhood maps and African American quilting.

The locations must be set through conversations with community and



municipal stakeholders. Public parks would make ideal locations given they are often accessible, centrally located, and amenable to the hosting of public events. While the structures themselves would be durable so as to ensure each installation's longevity, they should not for safety purposes be located within the immediate vicinity of a playground. Locations should also complement each installation's augmented reality features, such as the room projections and walking tours.

Once the locations have been set, the approximate construction and installation of the doors would take two months from start date.

SOUNDSCAPE

Our goal for the soundscape (for which a mockup is currently accessible on our [multimedia](#) page) is to excerpt interviews and community conversations and merge them with past and future conversations, public policy speeches, sounds, and aspirations. The soundscape will function as a component of both the web portal and art installations, where it will play upon triggering the QR code, immersing visitors in their experience of the installation and deepening their understanding of the impact of urban redevelopment on the City's African heritage and Indigenous communities. Furthermore, we envision the soundscape as an ever-expanding, multi-sensory archive that evolves as we continue to document the evolution of the City's truth, reconciliation, and reparations initiative, integrating new interviews, community conversations, and news coverage as it occurs, and inspiring listeners to lend their experiences, stories, family histories, and voices to a conversation that they can hear themselves a part of.

The current soundscape mockup simulates the intended experience by integrating sound elements similar to those that will be excerpted

from our archival research and recorded interviews and community conversations, and similar music tracks to those that we will either produce ourselves or secure rights to include.

AUGMENTED AND VIRTUAL REALITY

Augmented and virtual reality are particularly well equipped to enable users to envision past injustices that have intentionally been hidden from view, as well as futures in which those injustices have been redressed.

Augmented reality employs a user's camera and screen to overlay a new reality over what the camera sees. The overlay is populated by digital media, including a 3D rendering (typically simple shapes), historical video, sound, text, photographs, and hyperlinks.

Our room mockup (which can be accessed on your mobile device [via this link](#) the embedded QR code below) models how we plan to use augmented reality to simulate a room visitors will be able to enter once they scan the trigger on the doorway with their phones, with walls that can include photographs, data visualization, and documentary footage. For the downtown installation, where we plan to fabricate an actual room, we plan to use projectors to create a more immersive, virtual reality experience.

Coding augmented and virtual reality experiences can be fairly complicated because they work in three spatial dimensions and can

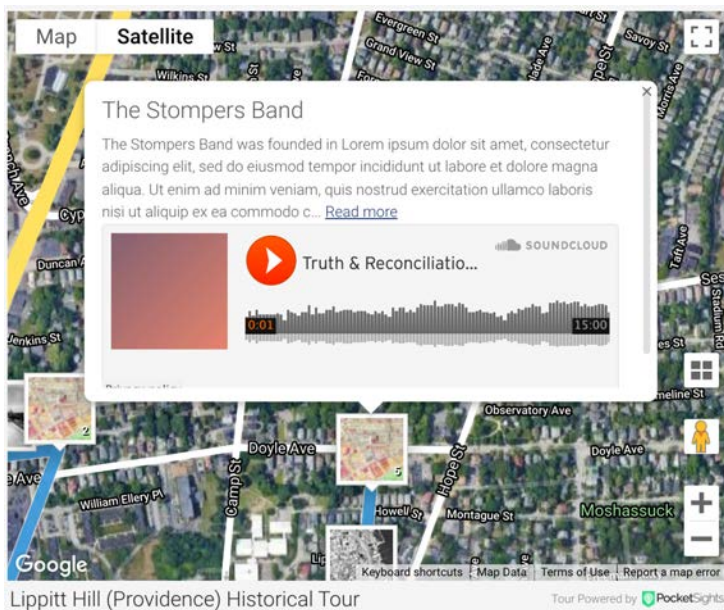


To experience our room mockup, scan the QR code with your mobile device or visit 8th.io/heac9 on your mobile device

have timed or interactive elements. Services exist to simplify the coding process; 8th Wall is recommended here for our mobile phone-enabled augmented reality because of its hosting, templates, and accessibility.

Once the code is created, server space is needed to host the digital assets (.obj, .png, mp4, and other files) in addition to the HTML structure and javascript commands that display and run the code. Currently, many augmented reality applications exist for the display of augmented reality presentations (including offerings by Snapchat, Instagram, and Facebook); however, the augmented reality community is moving toward WebAR because it can run quickly and easily in any browser so long as the user has a camera.

The Walking/Driving Tour will utilize PocketSights to enable visitors to interact with virtual checkpoints located throughout each of the four neighborhoods via their mobile internet-connected devices. Our mockup tour of Black-owned businesses in Lippitt Hill (as documented in [A Matter of Truth](#)) can be accessed [via this link](#).



Once a visitor arrives at the location (on-site) or clicks on the location on the screen (remotely) they will be presented with an interactive window on their device that loads an audio narration and/or video clip and displays present and past photos (or supplemental text for those with auditory disabilities).

Each stop on the tour (or clicks if participating at-a-distance) will last about five minutes, similar to existing AR/VR tours at many museums.

Additionally, the experience will allow participants the opportunity to leave artifacts in the form of text or drawings that foster engagement in an ongoing process of documentation and interpretation.

Finally, as part of the experience, visitors will be able to donate to the project from directly within the application they are using to participate in the experience to help cover project costs and continuation.





FRAMEWORK IMPLEMENTATION

What we have described up to this point is the **process** we went through in developing a proposal for a reconciliation framework - a process that both **piloted the initial phases** of framework implementation and **resulted in multiple proofs of concept**. But fully implementing the framework requires that we **extend, refine, and expand** upon our accomplishments in the coming months.

While we are proposing a reconciliation framework that is both **replicable and iterative** and thus never fully complete, thereby answering the City's call for a framework that can be employed in perpetuity, we have identified more **immediate next steps** for completing our current pilot and ensuring that future coalitions can build upon our foundation.

WEB PORTAL

We will build our proof of concept into a **fully functional and scalable** online experience. Specific upgrades include:

- Narrative design connecting the history of the African heritage and Indigenous residents of our four focus neighborhoods as documented in [A Matter of Truth](#) to:
 - Artifacts collected by the authors of [A Matter of Truth](#) and our own archival research team
 - Interview and survey results
 - Current data on social determinants of health

- Interfaces providing "quilting" opportunities for:
 - Individuals with similar experiences to record and upload their own stories and perspectives
 - Those participating in the reconciliation process to upload the results of community conversations aimed at achieving racial healing and informing measures at municipal reparations
- Community-based approaches to user-experience and usability research and design
- Guides for community organizations to lead their own community engagement sessions via engagement with web-based content
- Infrastructure to scale out toward inclusion of future iterations of our reconciliation framework

ART INSTALLATIONS

We are ready to begin collaborating with municipal and community stakeholders to workshop proposals, secure approvals, and undertake installations of doorways and walking tours proposed to be located in prominent public spaces in the Fox Point, Lippitt Hill, Upper South Providence, and West Elmwood neighborhoods, and we have begun coordinating with the Providence Public Library to identify space and requirements for our Downtown hub installation (see image to the right for prospective library installation space near from auditorium for hosting community engagement sessions).





INTERVIEWS AND DOCUMENTARY

Our plan is to make available for public viewing via our web portal and art installations every interview we have already recorded, in full, plus additional interviews we plan to record in the coming months, with an emphasis on rounding out representation from the four neighborhoods and capturing perspectives of individuals who represent entities complicit in the mid-twentieth century urban redevelopment projects spotlighted in our pilot framework.


Furthermore, we plan to expand our proof of concept into a short documentary highlighting the themes that cut across our interviews, as a tool for guiding community engagement sessions surrounding reconciliation and reparations.

Lastly, we plan to document the community engagement series so that we can in a future phase integrate it into our interactive presentation.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SERIES

Led by the Institute for Social Cohesion (ISC), our coalition will execute a strategy utilizing our interactive presentations to drive community conversations around reconciliation and reparations.

Our strategy involves **building out our coalition by identifying four partnering organizations** with expertise in community engagement to host their own series of community conversations. Partnering organizations will receive a stipend for their participation, host four community conversations each over their participation, and be required to attend an orientation hosted by the ISC to familiarize them with the engagement tools and process.



Specifically, the orientation will clarify project goals and prepare our coalition to guide the public in participating in uncomfortable conversations. The orientation will draw upon 60 years of study, experimentation, and institutionalization of community programs **grounded in the acts, culture, and philosophy of nonviolence**, as well as the ISC's signature framework for achieving social cohesion; **Critical Cultural Theory**.

In addition to leading its own four community engagement sessions, PCEI then support each of the four partnering organizations in **planning, facilitating, and documenting** their own sessions - **a total of 20 community engagement sessions** throughout the engagement period.

Results of those sessions will then be provisionally coded for inclusion in our interactive presentation, with plans to integrate more fully analyzed findings and edited documentary footage in a future phase of the project.

FRAMEWORK IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

The following timeline is a rough initial estimate designed to account for contingencies associated with identification of additional funding, executing community-driven planning processes, securing approvals from various municipal entities, and navigating the current pandemic.

Months One and Two:

- Finalize community engagement orientation
- Recruit four partnering organizations
- Develop beta version of web portal and AR/VR/MR elements of art installations
- Complete identification and digitization of archival artifacts

- Edit existing full interviews
- Refine coding of interview and survey data
- Produce short documentary
- Vet presentation elements (e.g. web portal, art installations, interviews, documentary) with community stakeholders
- Secure approvals for art installations

Months Three and Four:

- Execute community engagement session orientation
- Plan community engagement sessions
- Continue to vet presentation elements with community stakeholders
- Complete fully functional web portal and art installations

Months Five and Six: Facilitate and document community engagement sessions

Month Seven:

- Analyze and report out on community engagement session findings
- Prepare to implement next phase of reconciliation framework

PRELIMINARY BUDGET

Our preliminary budget estimate for achieving the above-outlined objectives is \$300k. We break that cost down into several categories below:

Web Portal - \$40k

Includes development, UX research and design, database design and management, content development and curation, and additional archival research and digitization for content assets

Art Installations - \$60k

Includes fabrication of physical installations, soundscapes, and research and development of AR/VR/MR experiences including rooms and walking tours

Interviews and Documentary - \$25k

Includes filming, editing, and production

Community Engagement Sessions - \$25k

Includes stakeholder organization stipends, training space rental, materials, refreshments, marketing and promotion, documentation, and additional support services

Providence Cultural Equity Initiative - \$50k

Includes research and development, training, content curation, community engagement sessions facilitation, project management, general marketing and promotion

Roger Williams University - \$100k

Includes project management, research and development, student and faculty team members, indirect costs

THINKING LONG TERM

What we have outlined above will ensure that the City's truth-telling, reconciliation, and reparations initiative maintains momentum in the short term. That said, we strongly recommend that the City and other stakeholders invested in the success of this initiative consider the advantages of collaborating with us now on executing a multi-year strategy that will ensure the infrastructure we are developing is sustainable and that we are broadening our coalition to include organizations that will lead future phases and iterations of this work.



CONCLUSION

Reconciling with past injustices is an inherently controversial matter. Accordingly, absent a viable strategy for moving forward, concerns about accountability, capacity to make whole, and ability to measure harm, will always undermine the legitimacy of any reparations initiative.

Acknowledging the merit of these concerns, we propose a proactive strategy that will enable the City of Providence and the African American Ambassador Group to immediately and successfully initiate a two-pronged approach to reparations for the City's African heritage and Indigenous communities.

First, we recommend the **immediate adoption and implementation of reparations** initiatives and policies that identify, quantify financial harm to, and make financially whole individuals from the City's African heritage and Indigenous communities who were directly impacted by, or who descend from those who were directly impacted by, the mid-twentieth century urban redevelopment projects around which we developed and piloted our reconciliation framework. Such reparations should not solely focus on redressing past harms but also persistent, systemic injustices currently impacting the City's African heritage and Indigenous communities as a result of decades spent denying, downplaying, and ignoring the impacts of the redevelopment projects in question.

To quell potential concerns about the historical and contemporary validity and effectiveness of decision-making in regards to reparations, **all initial reparations initiatives should focus on the**



key areas identified in this report via the development and piloting of our reconciliation framework:

- Housing
- Education
- Legal System and Policing
- Economic Opportunity

Secondly, we recommend the City **support our coalition in immediately implementing the next phase of our proposed reconciliation framework**, which includes:

- Onboarding additional coalition partners to collaborate in facilitating and documenting community conversations across the City
- Complete our web portal, documentary, and art installation proofs of concept as essential tools for facilitating public engagement in the reconciliation process

Lastly, we recommend approaching this next phase as the first step to ensuring that **the City's reconciliation framework can be effectively expanded and extended in perpetuity** by:

- Designing and documenting our process as an historically informed, community engaged, academically endorsed, and contemporarily contextualized model that can be replicated in other areas of the City by a broadening coalition of organizations, to redress other injustices committed against other populations, and indeed in other jurisdictions throughout Rhode Island and the nation
- Monumentalizing truth and reconciliation via public art installations that serve as constant reminders of past injustices and invitations to redress them
- Designing and maintaining the means by which public engagement in the reconciliation process can be documented and looped back in to the presentation itself to enhance the current reparations process and inform future decision making

The road to reparations is neither an easy path nor an endeavor to be lightly assumed. We commend Mayor Elorza, the African American Ambassador Group, and the City of Providence for their exemplary courage in choosing to take on this important initiative despite its attendant challenges. Further, we acknowledge and appreciate the distinct honor and privilege accorded us in leading the reconciliation phase of this initiative and in presenting this report and its recommendations.

We are confident that should these recommendations be adopted, the City and the African American Ambassador Group will be well positioned to successfully execute a locally and immediately impactful reparations process for the City's African heritage and Indigenous communities, and to weave into the cultural fabric of the City an approach to reconciliation that can serve as a model for other communities.



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