



# Social Equity and Racial Justice Advisory Committee Meeting Agenda

ASHLAND SOCIAL EQUITY AND RACIAL JUSTICE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

REGULAR MEETING AGENDA

Thursday, September 4, 2025

Siskiyou Room - 51 Winburn Way - 4:30pm

**\*Note: Agenda and packet updated on 9.3.2025 to include the thank-you letter under 'New Business'**

## I. Call to Order and Welcome

1. Land Acknowledgment - We acknowledge and honor the aboriginal people on whose ancestral homelands we work -the Ikirakutsum Band of the Shasta Nation, as well as the diverse and vibrant Native communities who make their home here today. We denounce the egregious acts of the colonizers and government and recognize the horrific impacts that still exist today. We honor the first stewards in the Rogue Valley and the lands we love and depend on: Tribes with ancestral lands in and surrounding the geography of the Ashland Watershed include the original past, present and future indigenous inhabitants of the Shasta, Takelma and Athabaskan people. We also recognize and acknowledge the Shasta village of K'wakhakha - "Where the Crow Lights" - that is now the Ashland City Plaza
2. Labor Acknowledgment - We also pause to recognize and acknowledge the labor upon which our country, state, and institutions are built. We remember that our country is built on the labor of enslaved people who were kidnapped and brought to the U.S. from the African continent and recognize the continued contribution of their survivors. We also acknowledge all immigrant labor, including voluntary, involuntary, trafficked, forced, and undocumented peoples who contributed to the building of the country and continue to serve within our labor force. We acknowledge all unpaid caregiving labor. To the people who contributed this immeasurable work and their descendants, we acknowledge their indelible mark on the space in which we gather today. It is our collective responsibility to critically examine these histories, to repair harm, and to honor, protect, and sustain their contribution to our society.

## II. Approval of Minutes

1. Approval of minutes from the 8.7.2025 regular meeting

## III. Special Presentation - Micah BlackLight - Ancestor's Future: Crystallizing Our Call

1. [Ancestor's Future: Crystallizing Our Call: https://ashlandparksfoundation.org/crystallizing-our-call/](https://ashlandparksfoundation.org/crystallizing-our-call/)
2. Presentation

## IV. Public Forum

## V. Liaison Updates and Reports

1. Update from current liaison assignments:  
Greenspan – Planning Commission  
Tyler – Climate and Energy Policy Advisory Committee  
Sage – Historic Preservation Advisory Committee  
Preskenis – Transportation Advisory Committee  
Simon – Public Arts Advisory Committee  
Mendel – Housing and Human Services Advisory Committee  
Smith -- Parks

## VI. Unfinished Business

1. Belonging Survey - Update from subcommittee and committee discussion on use
2. Community Center and Pioneer Hall Park's Fees discussion



# Social Equity and Racial Justice Advisory Committee Meeting Agenda

3. Collaboration with Housing and Human Services Advisory Committee on the Equitable Housing Plan

## VII. New Business

1. Rescheduling October's Regularly Scheduled Meeting - Conflict with Yom Kippur
2. Thank you letter to the editor of the Sneak Preview

## VIII. Announcements and Events

1. BASE Comedy Jam - September 5 - 7:00-11:--PM at The Historic Holly Theatre - 226 W. 6th St., Medford Oregon: <https://baseoregon.org/event/base-comedy-jam/>
2. Ashland Sunrise Project's *Get Into Action* - September 8, 2025 - 5:30-7:00PM Ashland Public Library <https://ashlandtogether.org/event/into-action/>

## IX. Adjournment

*If you need special assistance to participate in this meeting, please contact Kerrick Gooden at [citymanageroffice@ashlandoregon.gov](mailto:citymanageroffice@ashlandoregon.gov) or 541.488.6002 (TTY phone number 1.800.735.2900). Notification at least three business days before the meeting will enable the City to make reasonable arrangements to ensure accessibility to the meeting in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.*

**ASHLAND SOCIAL EQUITY AND RACIAL JUSTICE ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
REGULAR MEETING  
MINUTES  
August 7, 2025**

Siskiyou Room - 51 Winburn Way - 4:30pm

These are DRAFT minutes until approved by the committee.

**I. Call to Order and Welcome**

The meeting was called to order at 4:32pm

Members Present: John Tyler, Victoria Sage, Cassie Preskenis, Sean Smith, Catherine Greenspan, Allison Mendel, and Emily Simon (via Zoom)

Guests Present: Echo Fields, Tamsin Taylor, and Allyson Phelps

Staff Liaison Present: Kerrick Gooden

1. Land Acknowledgment - We acknowledge and honor the aboriginal people on whose ancestral homelands we work -the Ikirakutsum Band of the Shasta Nation, as well as the diverse and vibrant Native communities who make their home here today. We denounce the egregious acts of the colonizers and government and recognize the horrific impacts that still exist today. We honor the first stewards in the Rogue Valley and the lands we love and depend on: Tribes with ancestral lands in and surrounding the geography of the Ashland Watershed include the original past, present and future indigenous inhabitants of the Shasta, Takelma and Athabaskan people. We also recognize and acknowledge the Shasta village of K'wakhakha - "Where the Crow Lights" - that is now the Ashland City Plaza

Tyler read the land acknowledgment

2. Labor Acknowledgment - We also pause to recognize and acknowledge the labor upon which our country, state, and institutions are built. We remember that our country is built on the labor of enslaved people who were kidnapped and brought to the U.S. from the African continent and recognize the continued contribution of their survivors. We also acknowledge all immigrant labor, including voluntary, involuntary, trafficked, forced, and undocumented peoples who contributed to the building of the country and continue to serve within our labor force. We acknowledge all unpaid care-giving labor. To the people who contributed this immeasurable work and their descendants, we acknowledge their indelible mark on the space in which we gather today. It is our collective responsibility to critically examine these histories, to repair harm, and to honor, protect, and sustain their contribution to our society.

Preskenis read the labor acknowledgment

**II. Approval of Minutes**

1. Approval of minutes from the 7.10.2025 regular meeting

Tyler moved to approve the minutes from the July 10, 2025 meeting. Preskenis seconded the motion. All Ayes. Motion passed.

**III. Public Forum**

none

**IV. Announcements and Events**

1. Presentation regarding an upcoming event: Ashland Sunrise Project's Get Into Action - September 8, 2025

Taylor, Phelps, and Preskenis presented about an upcoming event of the Ashland Sunrise Project: *Get Into Action* on September 8 at 6:30. Presenters spoke of this as a community engagement event intended to initiate discussion on how to support local social justice issues. Presenters spoke of not requesting funds, but for support in the form of formal support through collaboration and publicity on the City's events page. Preskenis spoke that she would abstain from voting (out of an abundance of caution) as a member of the Ashland Sunrise Project.

**Simon moved that the Social Equity and Racial Justice Advisory Committee endorse and support the Ashland Sunrise Project in any way possible as a committee and to ask the City Council to support other actions of the Ashland Sunrise Project. The motion was seconded by Tyler. Roll Call Vote: Simon, Mendel, Smith, Greenspan, Sage, Tyler - YES. Preskenis - ABSTAIN. Motion Passed.**

2. **From SO Pride:  
Guided Support Group for the Families of Trans Individuals**

Aug 13, 2025, 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM

383 E Main St, Ashland, OR 97520, USA

Calling all loved ones of transgender folks! Join Ruth for an educational experience, with the opportunity to ask questions and receive support in a judgment-free environment. Every 2nd Wednesday beginning July 9th, 2025. 6-8pm - \$20. (sliding scale only as needed)

## V. Liaison Updates and Reports

1. Update from current liaison assignments:  
Greenspan – Planning Commission  
Tyler – Climate and Energy Policy Advisory Committee  
Sage – Historic Preservation Advisory Committee  
Preskenis – Transportation Advisory Committee  
Simon – Public Arts Advisory Committee  
Mendel – Housing and Human Services Advisory Committee  
Smith -- Parks

Greenspan: the last Planning Commission meeting was canceled - the previous special meeting focused on the SOU Master Plan.

Tyler: was not able to attend CEPAC's last meeting due to conflict with SERJAC's moved meeting.

Sage: the Historic Preservation Committee's meeting focused on a Granite Street location with nothing standing out for discussion.

Preskenis: TAC included the announcement of Pride Month and Disability Pride Month. Discussion included how budget cuts might affect disability and mobility issues and progress with work on the A Street sidewalk to make it more ADA-compatible. Discussion also included new reporting software and public interest in maintaining TID ditch access.

Simon (and Preskenis): PAAC celebrated Juneteenth by viewing the Guanajuato Heart, Mural Fest art, and looking for placement around town for the second Guanajuato heart. Traffic Boxes are proposed for painting in South Ashland. PAAC was approached with allegations of misrepresentation by a local artist - the committee responded it was not in its purview to investigate. The committee is considering a request to relocate City-owned artwork that no longer represents Ashland, and replace it with other art such as the second Guanajuato Heart.

Mendel (and Fields): HHSAC: HUD rejected a required City report of a homeless point-in-time count because it included transgender people.

Smith: spoke of Parks having both study sessions and business meetings and was advised that business meetings are where decisions are made and hot topics for consideration are expected to include the Pioneer Hall and Community Center Fees proposal as well as the East Main Park project.

Mendel: CoCoConvo went well and included discussion about Pioneer Hall fees proposal - to be discussed later in the agenda.

## VI. Unfinished Business

1. Belonging Survey - Update from subcommittee and committee discussion on use

Sage suggested clarification on where services are provided in Section 7, and the committee discussed whether the Housing section could be bolstered to include what the HHSAC is going to collaborate with SERJAC on with its Equitable Housing Plan. Committee concluded these are different enough to stand alone. The subcommittee will come up with final version of the Belonging Survey to send to Council through its Council Liaisons for direction on how to administer and process it.

## VII. New Business

1. Vice Chair nomination and election

Mendel nominated Smith for Vice-Chair who agreed to the nomination - all members were in favor. Smith accepted. .

2. Discussion regarding proposed fees for Pioneer Hall and Community Center being considered by Ashland Parks and Recreation

Mendel brought forward this discussion from the meeting of committee chairs for SERJAC to consider if there are any social equity issues in these fee considerations. The committee discussed that the intent for these fees is to cover costs associated with the use of the building, but discussed how to be equitable towards nonprofits and/or folks trying to put together events such as community meals. The committee considered a two-tiered structure to subsidize events such as community meals while not subsidizing events such as weddings. The committee noted that the Chamber of Commerce offers a non-profit rate and charges businesses based on the number of employees. Discussion included offering non-profits a rate based on income and/or offering to waive fees with certain qualifiers.

The committee considered the importance of reviewing the original intent and subsequent use of the buildings over time, such as a record of the building being used for 25 years for community feeds.

3. Request for collaboration from the Housing and Human Services Advisory Committee for development of the Equitable Housing Plan

Fields (HHSAC Chair) requested help to collaborate with the HHSAC on two public engagement events as part of the Equitable Housing Plan and spoke to the primary tasks listed in the Memo (included in packet). Fields suggested forming a working group with a few members of each committee to work on this. The committee discussed the difference between an Equitable Housing Study and the Belonging Survey that SERJAC has been working on.

**VIII. Adjournment**

The committee discussed that the Sneak Preview published an article including SERJAC's involvement with the Playwrights Walk Plaque unveiling. It was suggested that someone from the committee write a letter of thanks to the editor. Greenspan offered to create a draft for review and Preskenis offered to submit.

The meeting adjourned at 6:00pm

# Hello!

My name is Micah BlackLight. I am a local artist, teacher, and community member and this is my proposal for a permanent Say Their Names installation in Ashland Creek Park entitled:

Park entitled:

*'Ancestor's Future: Crystallizing Our Call'*

I am honored to have the opportunity to present my concept to you. My hope is that you resonate with it as strongly as I and choose to aid in bringing this vision to fruition in any way you are willing and/or able.





## MAPPING THE JOURNEY SO FAR



*Before we move forward, I'd like to retrace how we got here.*

Several years ago, in the midst of a very turbulent time, there was what amounts to a public lynching so profoundly disturbing it sent shockwaves throughout numerous communities across the globe. The fact that it was perpetrated at the hands of law enforcement trebled the horror. The fact that the victim was another unarmed Black male who'd already been thoroughly subdued sparked an outpouring of collective rage, anger, sadness and cries for change the likes of which we have not seen for decades, and a global solidarity we may never have witnessed at all.

One citizen of Ashland, feeling highly charged and wishing to convey the fact that she was in solidarity with Black and brown-bodied folk here in our little city, passed an installation in her travels that gave her an idea. She grabbed a bunch of shirts, painted names of numerous Black men, women and children deceased at the hands of police, and put them up all over the fence of Railroad Park overnight. The response from many members of the community was amazing.

But some members didn't share the same view. And after a short period of time, someone or someones took the entire thing down, again—overnight. No trace could be found of any of the shirts or where they had been taken. The response from the community at large was swift, thorough, and immediate. Within a day, the fence was more full than it had been before, a sprawling outpouring of support and respect proclaiming that there are a great many people of all different colors, who care, and wish to see some kind of change, inroads made, bridges created and maintained, between people of differing cultures, backgrounds and skin colors *in this valley and in this town.*

Upon being interviewed, many Black and brown people related that because of this installation, they felt seen and spoken to in ways they had not thought possible in Ashland before. Eventually came a call for the installation to be taken down. Apparently some felt 'the point had been made', but now it was time to move on. A great many of us disagreed. We pushed in the opposite direction and stated that not only did we have no desire to take this expression of solidarity and awareness and mourning and spark for debate and thoughtful conversation and action down, but we were going to move toward replacing it with a permanent installation instead.

Several members of the community stepped forward to take lead as liaisons between this community movement and all the steps that would need to be taken in order to make this desire an actual reality in the long run. [Gratitude to the Say Their Names Collective]. They put out a call to the community for primarily Black and brown artists to submit concepts. Those concepts were whittled down to two, and that is how we got here. That was the impetus for the concept you have before you now.

Part of the mandate put forward by the Say Their Names Collective was that some aspect or element of the construction or installation of our project must include community participation of some kind. In addition to this, my desire was to create a single piece that represents the overall journey we face as a people divided in general, while speaking directly to the specific situation and happenings of our community here in Ashland. And lastly, because this project and concept was initially begun as an answer to those who wished the original 'Say Their Names' memorial to be taken down, I wanted to make sure my piece specifically included every single name currently up on that fence. I have created a piece that checks every one of those boxes. It is entitled: "Crystallizing our Call".



## PLAQUE DESCRIPTION

This sculpture represents the embodied will of a community to create a tangible manifestation of their desire to call attention to, and ultimately act to change, the plight of Black and brown neighbors, brothers, and sisters. Some might see an ancestor, or a collective embodiment of ancestors. Others may view the figure as the spirit of George Floyd, returned from the future as a being of greater understanding, determined to shepherd the way to a better life after his death turned out to be such a galvanizing spark for so many.

The domed wings shield from the figurative missiles of classism, racism, division and hatred—along with the literal dangers of weather and time. On his lap rests a book etched with the names of a great many fallen: Black lives snatched from the world at the hands of racism & police brutality.

At his chest is the serene face of a woman, representing the capacity for healing, nurturing, growth and vast reserves of patience with the inevitable process that will accompany all of these things. The space in the chest symbolizes the capacity for limitless love. The colored stones surrounding the figure represent community and cooperation as they were lovingly painted by members of the community at large.

A collective statement of intention graces the page at the very front, facing forward, into the direction of progress and change. It was drafted by all those of the immediate community who wished the world and anyone visiting to see that these people chose to use their voices to help this dream become a collectively held reality—thus, crystallizing their call.”



## The Winged Dome

The domed wings represent a shield: from the figurative stones and arrows of classism, racism, division and hatred, to the literal dangers of weather: rain, sleet, hail and snow.

BOOK

9 Etched Pages Total

Stainless Steel

18 x 20"

stainless steel

Face/Skin..  
Bronze

Appx.  
10-12' from  
ground to  
apex of  
wings



## Symbology:

### The Different Finishes/Metals

I envision the figure as a combination of bright, textured finishes that will never rust, and the exact opposite: unfinished looking, rougher, weathered pieces to symbolize the many partnerships amongst people from disparate walks of life, and levels of experience that are going to have to take place in order for us to make any kind of headway and affect anything remotely close to sustainable change.



**\*A note on location:**

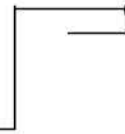
**From Railroad Park to Ashland Creek Park**

Originally, it was my intention to have this piece set in Railroad Park. However, after quite a bit of deliberation including discussion with Parks and Rec on possibilities, I eventually settled on Ashland Creek park because this particular park is still looking for its identity. Having ‘Crystallizing Their Call’ installed there could go a long, long way toward not only establishing a solid ideological and artistic identity for the park and perhaps even the neighborhood, but could very well dictate future initiatives for the development of the space in all sorts of complimentary and parallel directions.



**Let's just put him right in the center there.**

It's like the space is waiting for this, and once I saw it, I definitely got excited at the possibilities!



**\*Community inclusion :**

1. Landscaping:  
A ring of stepping stones, decorated by members of the community, will be placed in a circle around the figure in order to invite viewers to more closely share space with him; perhaps to read the names etched into the book aloud, or huddle beneath his wings when the rain catches them unawares.

2. Perhaps most potent component of the community inclusion piece, is to have a page called “Crystallizing Our Call”: consisting of a collectively drafted statement of intent by and for those in the community who wholeheartedly support this installation, and the vision it represents, enshrining their dedication and determination to help foster a powerfully healing and nurturing space in this city during their lifetimes.

One can envision people coming to the park to meditate, or take a moment of introspection—the space he holds inviting just this sort of peaceful contemplation.

In this way, he may serve as an **anchor for the creation of community** and moments of deeper understanding in a very real, and tangible way.





## PRELIMINARY BUDGET

At present, we are looking at upwards of **\$160k** for this project with market prices as they currently stand. Part of the reason is to take into account unforeseen challenges, shortages, and pitfalls, as well as the hugely inflated prices and supply chain shortages of materials at the moment.

## PROPOSED TIMELINE

Aside from the time it takes for getting specific measurements and figuring out methods of fabrication, the largest question mark in terms of time will be normal administrative lag— and fundraising. We believe that between grants, private funders, individual and group fundraising, in-kind donations and the like, we can procure the funds needed to make this project a reality. But it will take time. Once we have overcome that hurdle, barring any major mishaps, we feel we can have the entire sculpture ready for site prep and install within 14 months of receiving funding.

## THE OFFERING

What we are offering is a fully assembled, complete sculpture voted for and endorsed by both the APRC and the PAC, and a large faction of the community, ready to be installed in Ashland Creek Park at a location already sanctioned by Parks and Rec. We will handle the procuring of materials, design and construction of the finished piece.

## †\_ THE OPPORTUNITY

As stated above, we are offering this piece as a gift to the city, the people of Ashland, and the Rogue Valley, to foster a culture of conversation and embodied action and to serve as a perpetual reminder of their stated intention to continue working toward an ever-brighter future in this area. *We would love to partner with you* in this undertaking, and remain open to the many ways that might look.

I intend to have compiled concrete material asks by early November, and would look to begin ramping up visibility moving into the new year.



## City of Ashland - Community Belonging & Welcoming Survey

We want to hear from you! This anonymous survey helps the City of Ashland understand how residents feel about belonging, inclusion, and access to community resources. Your input helps shape a stronger, more welcoming city for all.

Estimated completion time: 10-12 minutes

### Section 1: About You (Optional)

1. Do you live in Ashland?  Yes  No  Part-time / seasonal

If yes: How long have you lived in Ashland?  <1 yr  1-5 yrs  6-10 yrs  >10 yrs

2. Do you work in Ashland?  Yes  No  Remote worker living in Ashland

If yes: How long have you worked in Ashland?  <1 yr  1-5 yrs  6-10 yrs  >10 yrs

3. What is your age?

4. What is your racial/ethnic background? (optional)

5. How do you identify your gender? (optional)

6. Do you identify as a member of any of the following groups? (check all that apply)

LGBTQIA+  Person with a disability  Immigrant or refugee  Veteran  Other:  
\_\_\_\_\_  Prefer not to answer

7. How many people live in your household?

Number of adults (18+): \_\_\_\_\_ Number of children (under 18): \_\_\_\_\_

### Section 2: Sense of Belonging & Inclusion

8. To what extent do you agree with the following statements? (circle one)

I feel welcome in Ashland. [1-Strongly Disagree to 5-Strongly Agree]

I feel a strong sense of belonging in my neighborhood. [1-5]

I feel respected and valued in public spaces. [1-5]

My identity and culture are represented in community events and institutions. [1-5]

I feel safe expressing my identity in this city. [1-5]

### Section 3: Differences, Belonging, and Engagement Diversity & Inclusion

9. How welcoming do you feel Ashland is to people of diverse backgrounds?

Very Unwelcoming  Unwelcoming  Neutral  Welcoming  Very Welcoming

10. Have you personally experienced or witnessed discrimination in Ashland?

Yes – personally experienced  Yes – witnessed  No  Prefer not to answer

11. If yes, please describe (optional): \_\_\_\_\_

12. How would you prefer to receive information about city initiatives or events that celebrate differences? (e.g. city website, social media, emailed newsletters)

#### Section 4: Housing

12. Have you experienced difficulty finding safe housing in Ashland in the past 12 months?

A lot  Some  A little  None

13. Do you feel at risk of losing your housing in the next 12 months?

Yes  No  Prefer not to say

14. What are your biggest housing challenges? (check all that apply)

Cost  Availability  Discrimination  Accessibility  Other: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Section 5: Transportation

15. What transportation modes do you use most? (check all that apply)

Personal vehicle  Public transit  Bicycle  Walking  Ride shares/taxis   
Other: \_\_\_\_\_

16. Does the transportation system meet your needs?

Always  Often  Sometimes  Rarely  Never

17. What transportation challenges do you face? \_\_\_\_\_

#### Section 6: Education

18. Do you or your family access education in Ashland?

Yes  No  Not applicable

19. If yes, please check all that apply

elementary  middle or high school  college or university  adult education  trade or skills training  Other: \_\_\_\_\_

20. Rate accessibility/inclusiveness of education:

Excellent  Good  Fair  Poor  Not sure

21. Have you experienced barriers to accessing education?

Yes (explain): \_\_\_\_\_  No  Prefer not to say

### Section 7: Access to Services

22. Ease of access to the following services in Ashland:

Health care

[1-Very Difficult to 4-Very Easy or N/A]

Mental health

[1-Very Difficult to 4-Very Easy or N/A]

Food assistance

[1-Very Difficult to 4-Very Easy or N/A]

Child care

[1-Very Difficult to 4-Very Easy or N/A]

Job support

[1-Very Difficult to 4-Very Easy or N/A]

Legal/Immigration

[1-Very Difficult to 4-Very Easy or N/A]

23. Are there other services or resources that you have had difficulty accessing?

\_\_\_\_\_

### Section 8: Civic Engagement & Representation

24. Have you attended a community meeting or event in the past year?

Yes  No

If yes, did you enjoy it or find it useful?  Yes  No

25. Have you attended a parade/live music/live theatre/other live performance event in the last year?

Yes  No

If yes, approximately how many times? \_\_\_\_\_

26. In the last year, have you been aware of events that fit your tastes/schedule/sense of belonging?

Yes  No

Would you attend more such events if they suited your tastes/schedule/sense of belonging?  Yes  No

27. Are there spaces in Ashland where you feel comfortable/welcomed to hang out/spend time?  Yes  No

What would make you feel more welcomed? \_\_\_\_\_

28. What if anything would help you feel more engaged in civic life? \_\_\_\_\_

### **Section 9: Final Reflections**

29. What is one thing the city could do to be more welcoming and inclusive?

\_\_\_\_\_

**From:** Emily Simon [REDACTED]  
**Date:** September 2, 2025 at 3:14:47 PM PDT  
**To:** [sneakpre@mind.net](mailto:sneakpre@mind.net)  
**Subject:** Fwd: Letter to Sneak Preview

Dear Mr. Hayden:

Thank you for your June article regarding the Playwright's walk. In that article you mentioned Ashland's Social Equity & Racial Justice Advisory Committee (SERJAC).

I offer the below letter to the Editor to further amplify the work of the committee and request that you print it. In addition to or in lieu of printing the letter, I would be glad to do a profile to give more exposure to SERJAC and or answer any questions you have regarding the committee.

Thanking you for the work that you do to educate the community in this day and age of Diminishing local media.

Emily Simon

Emeritus Chair, and current member of SERJAC

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Dear Editor,

I am writing to thank the city and our devoted community members for the inspiring work of the Social Equity & Racial Justice Advisory Committee (SERJAC). Established on May 4, 2021 SERJAC has played a vital role in advancing inclusivity and equity throughout Ashland

SERJAC's mission—encompassing efforts to dismantle systemic barriers, champion diversity across race, gender, disability, and economic status, and recommend meaningful policy changes—continues to reflect the heart and conscience of our community. Through initiatives such as biennial community engagement, DEI training for city staff and council, and amplifying economic opportunities for marginalized groups, SERJAC embodies action

and equity in tangible ways .

A striking example of SERJAC's impact is the recently unveiled "Say Their Names" bronze plaque installed at Railroad Park. This poignant installation honors victims of racial violence—George Floyd, Sandra Bland, Breonna Taylor, and too many others—and serves as a powerful, visible reminder of the work that remains. The project, completed through rapid collaboration among SERJAC, the Public Arts Advisory Committee, the Playwrights Walk initiative, OSF, SOU, and local artists, symbolizes unity, reflection, and commitment to justice.

Such accomplishments affirm that intentional, thoughtful efforts can bring a community together in remarkable ways. SERJAC's leadership in steering these conversations and initiatives gives me—and I hope many others—a renewed sense of hope and civic pride.

I urge fellow readers to attend SERJAC meetings (held monthly, typically on the first Thursday in the Siskiyou Room at 51 Winburn Way) or explore the agendas, minutes, and more via the City's website . Your presence, awareness, and support are vital to ensuring that equity continues to be more than a concept—it becomes a lived reality in Ashland.

Thank you for showcasing important voices and initiatives. Here's to building a community where every citizen is valued and heard.

Sincerely,

Emily Simon

Emeritus chair and current member of the Social Equity and Racial Justice Committee (SERJAC)

Ashland, OR