

Wesley

It was in this room on January 19, 2015 – exactly eleven years ago today. NIA was holding its annual MLK Breakfast. Journalist Callie Crossley -- of WGBH in Boston and the host of “Basic Black “– was the keynote speaker. Just two months earlier, a grand jury ruled that Officer Darren Wilson - who had shot and killed 18-year old Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri in August of 2014 – would not be indicted. The outrage grew -- because it was not only Michael Brown, but Trayvon Martin, and Eric Garner, and Tamir Rice and so many others since then.

Wesley and Sally

We must name the names!

Sally

And so, on that day eleven years ago when Callie Crossley addressed us, she referenced the outrage. She told us that that at the very same time as the Breakfast, a group of Black Lives Matters activists were courageously engaged in an act of civil disobedience on the Southeast Expressway going into Boston. Drawing on the boldness of that civil disobedience, Callie Crossley challenged us. She said – “how much longer are you just going to be meet once a year and be proud of yourselves for doing so? When are you going to put your convictions into action?” We were momentarily stunned, yet captivated by her clarion call.

When the Breakfast concluded, and the chairs and tables were being put away, the Rev Ken Campbell, the Rev Wesley Williams, and I immediately huddled over in that corner, and we responded. We agreed that **this was day** – an action team must be born – **now!**

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Ken’s passion for the work of this fledgling action team was palpable! We subsequently gathered an inaugural group of committed racial justice warriors and agreed upon our initial priorities – addressing white privilege and building

community with our local police departments. Again with Ken's inspiration, we agreed to call ourselves the Martin Luther King, Jr Action Team. Not long after that Breakfast in 2015, we began to meet monthly for lunch with our local police chiefs and other officers. The conversations were respectful but not always easy. We could always count on Ken Campbell to be the prophetic voice – the one who posed the incisive questions, the one whose wisdom and vision pushed the conversations to a deeper level, sometimes with resistance from the participants at the table.

Sally

The Team also met monthly to organize and dream and engage – we recognized the “fierce urgency of now” of the justice tasks which faced us. Because of Ken, the Library of the Church of the Holy Spirit became our holy, justice-making space! That was just the first six months of 2015, and for the MLK Action Team, -- as it is said - “the rest is history.”

But the Rev. Ken Campbell was not content to limit his justice-making to the MLK Action Team. He insisted on the creed:

Wesley

“We will continue to hold ourselves accountable to speak out against discrimination, racism and hate and to advocate for and effect change in furtherance of an equitable, peaceful and just future. We honor and hold sacred the dignity and humanity of all people.”

This resulted in the formation of NIA social justice advocacy groups and annual interfaith programs, such as:

Sally

THE INTERNATIONAL HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY,
 BLACK HISTORY MONTH,
 RAMADAN,
 KWANZA,
 HANUKKAH,
 CHRISTMAS
 NATIONAL HOMELESS PERSONS MEMORIAL DAY,
 HUMAN RIGHTS DAY,
 FIRST ENCOUNTER,
 ADVOCACY FOR HOMELESS LGBTQ YOUTH,
 SUPPORT FOR IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEE RE-SETTLEMENT,
 CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM,
 LIFTING UP AND LEARNING FROM OUR WAMPANOAG SIBLINGS
 AND DIRECT ENGAGEMENT WITH JUSTICE PROTESTS.

Wesley

Ken also championed bringing the study of MLK's "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" to schools, libraries, and community centers.

And we must never forget Ken insisting that in all programs and all advocacy, our young people must be involved and have a voice. Indeed, NIA established a scholarship fund in Ken's name.

And so here we are today, with never-ending gratitude to the Rev. Ken Campbell and for his unwavering passion, dedication, and vision for racial justice!

Wesley and Sally

His presence will always be with us!