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[HEAD] “What a Diff’rence a Day Makes”: Tuscaloosa Civil Rights History Trail Officially Opens

TUSCALOOSA, Ala. — After more than three years of research and discovery, the Tuscaloosa Civil Rights History Trail will officially open on Monday, June 10, 2019. An event will be held from 5:30 to 7:00 p.m. at the Dinah Washington Cultural Arts Center, 620 Greensboro Ave.

“An early objective of the Task Force was to offer a different understanding of the city’s public landscape,” said Task Force President Dr. Scott Bridges, “one that more fully incorporated its history with civil rights. We realized the need to collect and record stories of foot soldiers and participants of local civil rights protests that eventually culminated in the creation of this Civil Rights History Trail.”

Phase 1 of the Tuscaloosa Civil Rights History Trail memorializes a range of struggles for human dignity and citizenship and consists of 18 sites scattered throughout downtown. The Trail includes stops that call attention to stories of enslaved people, Native Americans exiled from their homelands, and racial violence such as First African Baptist Church and the Old Jail – but also to sites of cultural achievement, such as the Dinah Washington Cultural Arts Center and the Paul R. Jones Art Gallery. The next phases of the project will expand the Trail to include locations in and around Stillman College and the University of Alabama.

A critical dimension to the Task Force is its efforts to create a more accepting and tolerant community. It launched the Tuscaloosa Racial Reconciliation Initiative, which organized about 60 citizens into four different reconciliation circles that met monthly. Members created local projects to educate the public about the city’s racial history and foster sustainable, positive change, which will be introduced during the June 10 Trail opening event.

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Mayor Walt Maddox will give opening remarks and underscore the importance of the work of the Task Force, which was awarded an official Proclamation by the mayor and Tuscaloosa City Council in 2016. The theme of the evening’s program comes from the Dinah Washington song, “What a Diff’rence a Day Makes,” the final lines of which are:

*“What a diff’rence a day made
And the diff’rence is you.”*

The Tuscaloosa Civil Rights History Task Force was formally created on October 18, 2016, with the objective of bringing positive change and reconciliation through collecting, preserving, and telling Tuscaloosa’s civil rights story. In its founding document, the diverse group saw a future based on honesty with the past and the economic benefits of drawing visitors seeking to learn and know more about a city in a state where much of America’s civil rights history occurred.

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