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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Greensboro Massacre 40th Anniversary Will Be Marked by Multiple Commemorative Events

The 40th anniversary of the Greensboro Massacre will be observed in November of this year with a series of events reflecting on the importance of understanding the relevance of the tragedy to challenges our country faces today. Sponsored by the Beloved Community Center in Greensboro, NC, the anniversary will involve a series of educational, religious, and cultural events to be held November 1-3 and hosted by local colleges and churches. The Greensboro activities are part of a larger nationwide commemoration involving programs in New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago, Seattle, Northampton, MA, and elsewhere.

On Nov. 3, 1979 in Greensboro, NC, a caravan of Ku Klux Klan and American Nazi Party members drove into Morningside Homes, a public housing project in Greensboro's Black community, and opened fire on demonstrators preparing for a labor educational conference, to be preceded by a march to the conference site. The march and conference were organized by the Workers Viewpoint Organization (WVO), which later became the Communist Workers Party (CWP). The purpose of the conference was to bring together the historic justice work in the Black community and the multi-racial labor organizing primarily within the local textile mills. This included addressing the recent upsurge in white supremacist activity, particularly the Ku Klux Klan, and exploring how racism has historically been used to divide people, especially workers. The shots killed labor and community organizers Sandi Smith, Dr. Jim Waller, Bill Sampson,

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César Cauce, and Dr. Michael Nathan. Five years later, after the attackers had been acquitted twice by local all-white juries, a federal civil trial finally established that the murderers had been organized and encouraged by a paid police informant and a federal agent. Police protection had been withdrawn from the site just as the caravan of racists were moving to attack. The federal civil trial was initiated by families of those killed and survivors, and it resulted in a verdict that, for the first time in the nation, held police officers and Klan and Nazi members jointly liable for wrongful death.

Today the U.S. faces an alarming upsurge in the kind of racist violence that this attack represented forty years ago. At the same time, we see a tremendous increase in the activism of young people who envision a more equitable world. The anniversary of this tragedy offers an opportunity to learn from the past and from the period that followed, as the victims and survivors struggled for the truth to be told and for the murderers to be brought to justice.

What are the lessons this horrific tragedy teaches? What can we learn about the nature of racist violence, about the response that people of conscience in a democratic society should have to it, and about the search for healing that still continues? The organizers of the commemoration hope to create community dialogue around these issues.

For a schedule of events and more information, visit

<https://www.greensboromassacrelessonstoday.org>.

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