



**GREENSBORO MASSACRE:
LESSONS FOR TODAY**



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Survivors Link Greensboro Massacre to Movement for Climate Justice, Other Issues

October 6, Northampton, Massachusetts. Speaking at the historic Edwards Church in Northampton, Massachusetts on a “Day of Commemoration” for the five young activists murdered by KKK and neo-Nazis on November 3, 1979, in Greensboro, N.C., Reverend Nelson Johnson spoke of his determination not to let the lessons of the tragedy and its aftermath be lost. Reverend Johnson, who was wounded in the attack, joined Joyce Johnson, also a survivor, and Dr. Marty Nathan, whose husband, Michael, was killed that day.

The program opened with a reading of a proclamation passed unanimously by the City of Northampton designating October 6 as a day in honor of the victims of the Greensboro Massacre. The proclamation “encourages the residents of Northampton to gather (October 6) in remembrance of the historical victims of hate crimes and in rededication to the ongoing struggle against white supremacy and all forms of bigotry.” The reading was followed by a video showing the murderous attack on that day, which was fully recorded by multiple television crews. In spite of the recordings, two trials with all-white juries acquitted the KKK and Nazis.

After the video, all three speakers linked the killings in 1979 both to current struggles against racist violence, and to the growing activism among young people challenging the dominant economic and political system today. Nathan, who has lived and worked as a physician and activist in the Northampton community for the past three decades, explicitly linked her late husband’s work for justice to the current organizing by young people for climate justice around the world. Nathan said, “If we fight for change, as we absolutely must in this era for the survival

Northampton event on Greensboro Massacre...p.2

of humanity ... there will be repression because we are up against a system that lives and dies on profit and violence.”

Nelson Johnson encouraged the overflow crowd in the church sanctuary to persist in their work for justice even if the pushback is overwhelming, “When you’re organizing and they attack you, don’t think so much in terms of defeat,” he said. “If your work was meaningless, they wouldn’t be attacking you...It is an affirmation of your work. You’re on the right track. Stay there, dig in, get more creative and keep on struggling.”

Joyce Johnson recalled the efforts of the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission, organized by survivors and local Greensboro citizens, which spent two years gathering information on the Massacre and released its findings and recommendations in 2006. She stated that the Commission was an example of reaching out and building the kind of broader community dialogue and multi-faceted movement that will be necessary if the problems of racism, violence and economic inequality are to be solved. Johnson suggested that creating local truth and reconciliation commissions is something other communities should consider in order to address historical abuses. “A lot of our localities have hidden histories that we refuse to look at,” she said. “It is not easy, but this type of thing must be done.”

All the speakers emphasized that creating a broad movement of people fighting for justice around many different issues will be necessary. Nelson Johnson commented, “Truth processes can be helpful. They are not a silver bullet.” Johnson noted that the Greensboro City Council voted against endorsing the commission’s work. “We have to organize many different fronts.”

This event in Northampton was one of several held in that city over the weekend as a lead-up to the commemoration planned in Greensboro, NC on the weekend of November 1-3.

For a full schedule of national and Greensboro events and background information, visit www.greensboromassacrelessonstoday.org. For other information, email info@greensboromassacrelessonstoday.org.

Quotes and details for this news release were drawn from <https://www.gazettenet.com/Civil-rights-leaders-survivors-of-Greensboro-Massacre-speak-in-Northampton-29070352?fbclid=IwAR0ljvsHxQKpyJlqLffE-aZgniam12BHsWUkRNQ6i1pKvoFKt7qoxuJkXc8>

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