

I think, first, if we're serious about creating "a community of we," black people and poor people and people of color need to be a priority in the decisions that are made regarding development, employment and education. They seem to be left behind, or left out of the planning process, both in leadership and in our thought process regarding how those communities are impacted by the decisions that are made.

We all see the statistics, daily and yearly, but there seems to be no real emphasis by leadership on fixing those disparities that we have. I also believe that building community will require more city-driven or sponsored activities that intentionally bring everyone together, celebrate and highlight the different cultures within the region, and serve as the model for shaping the messaging around culture, inclusion and unity.

The Alliance is an organization that is open to everyone. Our goal is to work with political officials and law enforcement, so we can create this atmosphere where black people feel safe, where black people are thriving, and where black youth are properly educated. The only way we do that is to all work together. We pride ourselves on being that bridge to help make that happen.

We collaborate with groups and organizations from different communities. We conduct joint educational workshops and networking events designed to highlight cultural awareness. We provide cultural responsiveness training for teachers in schools to assist in increasing their cultural understanding of the students that they teach and decreasing the gap in disparities we often see in school suspensions and the like.

People don't like these issues to be spotlighted, but part of our work is doing that. Until we all work together to make changing those statistics a priority, until we're real about the issues that we're facing, there's no way that we'll ever solve them.

— Interviewed by Elwin Green

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