Dear Sally, Jim, and Bill,

I updated the Breakfast Club, including our NAACP president and four other members of the Executive Committee, on the March 31 meeting to set a date for the dedication ceremony for the commemorative pavers at Peace and Justice Plaza. We will be attending the meeting.

We hold firm to the August 28 date for the dedication ceremony. That is the 46th anniversary of the March on Washington, which was an event of tremendous significance for all of the honorees and for the entire peace and justice movement. Friday afternoon would be a good time for this outdoors, public event.

We do not think it is right to defer to the personal preference or convenience of particular family members in choosing a date. There are larger issues involved. That being said, Chris and Sharon Ringwalt’s offer of their home for a reception is altogether generous and fitting. Since, we do not want the dedication to be merely an event, an endpoint, we want to ensure that the planning for this ceremony be about rededicating ourselves *in concrete ways* to the work of those who came before us. Our initial proposal is that the Ringwalts sponsor the first Peace and Justice House Party to increase community understanding of local history, and to organize support for the movement we are building today. This could be done at a time of their choosing, as part of a series of such meetings.

We want you to understand that we have deep, continuing concerns about the racial dynamics of this entire process. You are OUR public servants, and we elected you to represent ALL of the people. And yet, when you decided to honor peace and justice leaders, you and your consultants chose four white people and a commemorative phrase from a slave owner. You did not bring black people to the table at the beginning of this process. That was not only insulting: it was obviously the result of long habit, and it ensured that your product would be racially insensitive and unjust. UNC handled the Unsung Founders Memorial the same way with the same result. At the insistence of the NAACP, you repaired the product, and we applaud your decision. We support you politically, precisely because you do have a commitment to racial justice. Nevertheless, we continue to see the legacy of Jim Crow at work in this process. In particular, we are concerned about the racial division of labor in organizing this event: you have got the white people “covered,” and the NAACP is supposed to take care of the black people. We understand that you do not know the black families of the honorees or much about their history. This is both a structural and personal problem. You have not developed the lines of understanding, communication, and trust that would enable you to easily engage black members of the community. To do so, would have required you to work intimately with black community residents on a daily basis and stand in solidarity with their freedom struggle. That is what all of the white Peace and Justice honorees did in their lives that made them stand out. We knew them all and worked with them closely. We know that they would agree: white public officials and other community and institutional leaders cannot continue to accommodate to the racial hierarchies established by slavery and Jim Crow, if you want justice.

Taking the path of least resistance always perpetuates injustice. The racial hierarchies created by Jim Crow continue to be a power in our community and throughout the nation. We will continue to challenge that power. It is long past time for leaders of this community to openly acknowledge systemic injustice, hold themselves accountable for errors, and stand against institutional racism.