



INTERFAITH COMMUNITIES FOR DIALOGUE (ICD)

RACISM AND SYSTEMIC BIAS

*George Floyd's death at the hands of police in May 2020, galvanized an intense concern about **Racism and Systemic Bias** – how it is manifested in our community, what is currently being done about it, and what we, as individuals and groups, can do to advance equity. To illuminate these issues and engage with others in working toward their resolution, ICD embarked upon a series of educational workshops that were open to all who wished to participate.*

Workshop 4, [Building Bridges to Racial Equity](#) (March 7, 2021), affords the opportunity to formulate ideas on how we, as individuals or as part of a community, can effect change.

Marty Swaim, co-founder of the Arlington-based nonprofit Challenging Racism and a lifelong educator, discusses the history of racism in the pre- and post-Civil War periods, noting the persistent political usefulness of divisive messages claiming that any gains by Blacks meant losses for Whites. She focuses on the importance of setting high standards for educational achievement and opportunity and development of civic pride.

Karla Bruce, Chief Equity Officer for Fairfax County, Virginia, provides management of the One Fairfax strategic framework to create equitable opportunities for all Fairfax County residents. Engaging stakeholders and partners, she advises and supports the Board of Supervisors as well as executive and department leadership in shaping and directing policy. Bruce discusses the One Fairfax focus on institutional and structural barriers and its operational goal of turning “islands of disadvantage” into “communities of opportunity”, noting that equity in all areas of community life requires fairness, not sameness.

Workshop participants brainstormed ideas to continue learning and to address the inequities in education, health, housing, justice, police, and other systems. This work will continue!