



## SMBHS

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## SMBHS Mission

To nurture respect, appreciation, and study of the African American heritage and contributions to Southwest Michigan history.

## SMBHS Board

Dr. Romeo Phillips, Chair  
Sharon Carlson, Secretary  
Donna Odom, Exec. Director

Honorable Curtis Bell III  
Christine Berro  
Janene Breneman  
Rhonda McGee  
Ann Rohrbaugh  
Steve Rossio  
Jennifer Shoub

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## SMBHS WELCOMES NEW BOARD



Dr. Romeo Phillips  
Board Chair

SMBHS begins the 2012-2013 New Year with a new and energized board. We've added new members who will bring their talent and energy and existing Board members who have agreed to another term will bring their experience and historical memory.

Christine Berro, director of the Portage District Library and board member since 2010, served as Chair of the Nominating Committee and worked along with Dr. Romeo Phillips, Board Chair and Executive Director, Donna Odom to develop a list of characteristics and skills we would seek in identifying potential candidates, to arrange meetings, and to finally



Sharon Carlson  
Board Secretary

invite those candidates most interested and most qualified to join the Board. Once the new board was formed, we conducted an orientation and appointed committee chairs.

## SMBHS Racial Healing Initiatives

The mission of the Southwest Michigan Black Heritage Society is to nurture respect, appreciation, and study of African American heritage and contributions to Southwest Michigan history. This new mission statement encompasses the concept of racial equity and our commitment to continue with work we began as a part of the RACE Exhibit Initiative of Southwest Michigan. We will begin a two-year Racial Healing Initiatives Project with the Gather at the Table program in November (see p.2). On-going programs that will be a part of the Racial Healing Initiatives will include:



2009 Oral History interview with Merdis Burns

### Engaging the Wisdom

An interracial, intergenerational program that will explore new and creative ways for youth and elders to connect. Our goals with this program will be to —

1. inspire greater respect for elders in the community while increasing young people's self-esteem;
2. build bridges across generations and ethnicities;
3. involve youth in oral history projects that will increase their knowledge of the African American history of the community;
4. provide opportunities for youth and elders to share skills and knowledge.

We will —

- a. continue the **oral history interviews** that we began with our History Detectives program;
- b. organize an **intergenerational book club** for youth and seniors to exchange ideas and perspectives;
- c. establish a **mentorship program** where older members of the community who have succeeded in their chosen career areas will be matched with aspiring youth;
- d. form a tutoring program conducted by retirees for middle and high school students;
- e. conduct intergenerational family and community history projects;
- f. provide computer training for seniors conducted by young people.

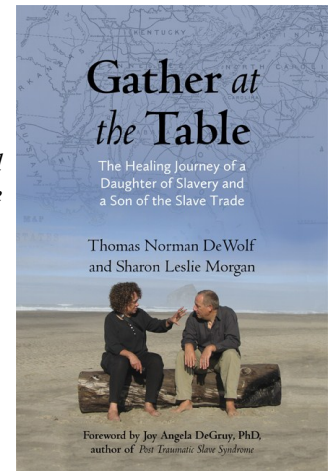
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# Gather at the Table

By Thomas Norman DeWolf and Sharon Leslie Morgan

To help kick off our Racial Healing Initiatives, Tom DeWolf returns in November with his writing partner, Sharon Morgan. Our Inheriting the Trade program in 2010 featured Tom as part of the RACE Exhibit Initiative. He introduced the showing of “Traces of the Trade” and discussed his first book, *Inheriting the Trade: A Northern Family Confronts Its Legacy as the Largest Slave-Trading Dynasty in U.S. History*. This time Tom joins Sharon Morgan, a genealogist, blogger, and communications professional, to headline activities centered on their new book, *Gather at the Table: The Healing Journey of a Daughter of Slavery and a Son of the Slave Trade*. Their task with this book was to address the historic wound inflicted by slavery and racism. In their words, “a ‘scab’ Americans pick at but have never committed to fully heal. In May 2011, they set out on a road trip as part of a larger “healing journey” – a black woman and a white man; a descendent of slaves and a descendent of slave traders. Together, they traveled more than six thousand miles, through 21 states, over 4 weeks. Their objective was to explore historic American sites through a specific lens: to learn how they each felt about race, how it has affected their lives and the American narrative; to understand the view from “the other side;” and to ponder how we can move beyond the legacy of slavery.

*From the publisher: “The healing model presented in Gather at the Table involves four interrelated practices: Sharing histories of race with openness and honesty; connecting with others across racial lines; exploring healing through dialogue, ritual, apology, etc.’ and actively seeking to heal the pervasive, present-day, structural wounds of racial inequality and injustice.”*



Tom was impressed on his first visit with how the Kalamazoo community came together to connect and engage in dialogue, so this will be one of the first stops as he and Sharon tour the nation sharing what they have learned from their journey. They hope to inspire a national dialogue about the legacies of slavery and racism and offer practical guidance for individuals and groups dedicated to healing America. They hope that our activities will serve as a model for other communities.

—Find the complete schedule for the *Gather at the Table* Program on p.3

## THOMAS NORMAN DEWOLF

Tom is the author of *Inheriting the Trade: A Northern Family Confronts Its Legacy as the Largest Slave-Trading Dynasty in U.S. History* (Beacon Press). He wrote about traveling with nine distant relatives on a life-altering journey through Rhode Island, Ghana, and Cuba to film the Emmy-nominated documentary *Traces of the Trade: A Story from the Deep North*, in which he is featured. An Official Selection of the Sundance Film Festival, the film premiered on national television on the acclaimed PBS series P.O.V.

Tom was born and raised in California. He’s a graduate of Northwest Christian College and the University of Oregon. Tom served on the Oregon Arts Commission for nine years and as a local elected official for eleven. His years of public service focused on the arts, literacy, children’s issues, and restorative justice.

Tom is a sought-after speaker who lectures widely throughout the United States at colleges, universities, conferences, and workshops for groups dedicated to social justice.



## SHARON LESLIE MORGAN

Sharon Leslie Morgan is the founder of OurBlackAncestry.com, a website devoted to helping people appreciate and explore African American family history and culture.

For more than 25 years, Sharon has been researching her family history in Lowndes County, AL and Noxubee County, MS. She is a member of several genealogical associations including the National Genealogical Society, the African American Historical and Genealogical Society and local societies in the geographic areas of her research.

Professionally, Sharon is a marketing communications consultant. A pioneer in multicultural marketing, she is a founder of the National Black Public Relations Society; worked for a multitude of Fortune 100 companies; and spent many years living abroad in the Caribbean, Europe and Africa.

Sharon’s first book, *My Daddy Is A Cool Dude*, was published in 1975 by The Dial Press and nominated for a prestigious Caldecott Medal for children’s literature. She is also the co-author of *Real Women Cook: Building Healthy Communities With Recipes that Stir the Soul*.

# Gather at the Table

## SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

**September 30, 2012—Showing of “Traces of the Trade”, A Story From the Deep North”**

1:30 p.m.— followed by discussion—Kalamazoo Valley Museum, 230 N. Rose Street

This is the film that depicts how, after discovering that their new England ancestors were the largest slave-trading family in U.S. History, Tom DeWolf and nine cousins retraced the Triangle Trade and gained powerful new perspectives on the black/white divide. An Official Selection of the Sundance Film Festival, the film premiered on national television on the acclaimed PBS series P.O.V.

**October 15, 2012— Showing of “Traces of the Trade” - followed by discussion**

Kalamazoo College Light Fine Arts Building Recital Hall

**Thursday Evening, November 8, through Saturday afternoon, November 10—Healing Together Retreat— Transformations Spirituality Center at Nazareth College , 3427 Gull Road, Kalamazoo, Michigan**  
Overnight accommodations in private rooms with bath.

Designed for a small interracial group of community members who have a desire for personal transformation, connection and community healing. Led by experienced facilitators .

The retreat will facilitate a healing journey towards individual and community reconciliation of unresolved trauma caused by issues of race. A quiet, focused, disciplined and supportive space will be created. Participants will be guided in:

- making use of their own personal stories to better understand complex issues of race from varied perspectives;
- coming to a deeper understanding of how racism is impacting our lives and the life of our community;
- setting personal goals for transformation;
- connecting with others to develop a vision for ongoing community transformation;

The culminating activity of the retreat on Saturday afternoon will be a session with Sharon Morgan and Tom DeWolf, authors of *Gather at the Table*. For additional information, call 345-4420. For a retreat application, visit our website, [www.smbhs.org](http://www.smbhs.org) after September 30.

**Sunday, November 11, 2012 - Gather at the Table—** Light Fine Arts Building - 1200 Academy Street, Kalamazoo, Michigan

**1:00pm – Fundraising Reception** with special guests Tom DeWolf and Sharon Anderson.

For registration, fees, and additional information, visit our website, [www.smbhs.org](http://www.smbhs.org) or call 381-9775 after September 30 or email us at [heritage.society@charter.net](mailto:heritage.society@charter.net).

**3:00pm – Lecture and Discussion** led by Tom DeWolf and Sharon Morgan. Free and open to the public.

**Monday, November 12—**Tom and Sharon will visit classrooms and campuses.

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## HEALING TOGETHER RETREAT FACILITATORS

Retreat facilitators Beverly Coleman and Caren Dybek are experienced facilitators prepared by the Center for Courage and Renewal, founded by Parker Palmer and dedicated to supporting people in becoming forces for positive personal and community change.



**Beverly Coleman** Teach two-year retreat series for the Fetzer Institute. She is a licensed social worker and spent 13 years as a social worker. She holds a B.A. from Wilmington College in Wilmington, Ohio and an M.A. in Social Work from Western Michigan University.

Beverly’s background includes facilitating for the Center’s Diversity Working Group, and she is a member of the Center’s Leadership Team for Facilitator Preparation Retreats. She has also been a facilitator for the “Courage to Lead” Formation Retreats and the “Courage to

Caren’s experience includes collaborating in designing the innovative Courage To Lead: Nurturing the Heart of the Leader Retreat Series which draws together leaders of the educational, non-profit and civic realms. She has worked for eleven years in retreat and staff development settings with K-12 and university educators, non-profit and civic leaders. She holds degrees in English and educational psychology from Loyola University, Chicago and the University of Iowa.



Caren Dybek

## Racial Healing Initiatives ...Continued from Page 1

### The Race Initiative Book Club

Already a successful SMBHS program, the RACE Exhibit Initiative Book Club will continue as a free drop-in club. The group was originally formed in 2011 to provide opportunities to continue dialogue on issues of race. We will continue to meet every other month September through May. The group discusses both fiction and non-fiction book, shares feelings and reactions, and talks about ways lessons learned can be applied in the Kalamazoo community. To expand the scope of the club, we will create a blog, present panels on topics raised by books we've read, and invite authors for the annual "Read All About It" program which takes place at Portage District Library. For that event, other book clubs are invited to join us in discussing their top ten books for the year and a master book list is distributed.



## Southwest Michigan Black Heritage Society The Connection to Yesterday

We invite you to join SMBHS. As a member, you will receive advance notice of all programs and events and discounted rates on workshops, seminars, and official publications. Be a part of the Society and socialize and share information with others who share your Interest in the African American heritage of our region.

### Membership:

- Adult Membership - \$25
- Family Membership (2 adults and children under 18) - \$50
- Senior (65 years old and older) and Student Membership - \$15
- Institutional Membership - \$150
- Lifetime Membership - \$250

**Donations:** Please circle one of the following —

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| Benefactor (\$500 - \$999) | Sponsor (\$1000 and up)

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**Make checks payable to: SMBHS**

471 W. South Street, Suite 42A  
Kalamazoo, MI 49007

**To join or donate with credit card, log on to [www.smbhs.org](http://www.smbhs.org) and click on "Membership."**

