

Black History Month Speaker Series – February 5, 12, 19

Wayne Presbyterian Church

Wayne Presbyterian Church (WPC) will celebrate Black History Month in February 2023 with programming centered on *Brown v. Board of Education*, the landmark 1954 case in which the U.S. Supreme Court held that segregation of public schools based on race was unconstitutional. Reasoning that segregated schools are inherently unequal, the Court concluded that the notion of “separate but equal,” which was prevalent at the time, has no place in public education. The Court’s legal reasoning set in motion a societal transformation with ramifications continuing to this day.

What led up to the *Brown* decision and why was it necessary? What did the Court’s decision really mean for public schools and other institutions? How has the *Brown* decision stood the test of time, and in practice what are its ramifications today? These are some of the questions that WPC’s educational series will address on the first three Sundays in February 2023.

Cheryl Brown Henderson – February 5, 7:00 p.m.

The keynote speaker is Cheryl Brown Henderson, whose father, the late Rev. Oliver Brown, filed suit on behalf of his children against the Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas, alleging that school segregation violated the equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Ms. Brown Henderson, who is currently the Founding President of The Brown Foundation for Educational Equity, Excellence and Research, as well as the owner of Brown & Associates, an educational consulting firm, will speak on "*Brown v. Board of Education: The Legacy Continues.*" Her presentation will be in the Sanctuary of WPC on Sunday, February 5, at 7:00 p.m.

Penny Washington – February 12

The following Sunday morning, February 12, at 9:30 a.m., in the Chapel at WPC, local historian Penny Washington will discuss the need for and the relevance of the *Brown* decision in our own community. A native of West Chester, Ms. Washington has studied many aspects of local African American history and published her findings in the Tredyffrin Easttown Historical Society’s History Quarterly. She currently serves as a consultant for People’s Light in Malvern and on the Board of Directors of the Radnor Township Civic Association. Her presentation to WPC is entitled “Right Here: Main Line Fight for School Integration,” and centers on the Berwyn School Fight of the 1930’s, a local precursor to the activism and legal action in *Brown*.

Constance McAlister – February 19

The final speaker of the series is Constance McAlister, who will speak on “*Brown v. Board of Education: Things Change as They Remain the Same,*” on Sunday, February 19, at 9:30 a.m. in the Chapel of WPC. A prominent Philadelphia educator over three decades, Ms. McAlister served as a teacher and assistant principal before assuming the mantle of principal of John Bartram High School in 2003. Under her leadership, Bartram students made significant progress in reading and mathematics, and the school saw a significant decrease in violence. Now retired, Ms. McAlister is known for her ability to establish powerful interpersonal relationships with students, families, teachers, and staff, inspiring numerous individuals during her long career while she enhances the educational opportunities in their schools. Ms. McAlister will rely on her long experience to discuss the practical effects of *Brown* in Philadelphia schools – and what more needs to be done to ensure that all students have the opportunity to obtain a good education.