



COMING TO THE TABLE

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS ACROSS THE RACIAL DIVIDE

by **JANINE DOYLE**

For the majority of my life, I had always considered myself to be a strong ally. Then, in the weeks following George Floyd’s murder on May 25, 2020, my idealistic self-perception came into question as I realized I had barely scratched the surface of being truly anti-racist.

As protests spread across the nation in early June, I found myself feeling helpless to make a difference. I am in a high-risk group for COVID-19, so I was particularly hungry for remote ways to support the cause.

In my search, I happened across a thread on the Nextdoor app titled Make a new friend who doesn’t look like you, quoting NBA legend Kareem Abdul-Jabbar. The poster, a Richmond resident who self-identified as a white woman, was hoping to meet people with different backgrounds, and the response was endearingly positive.

While I was unable to participate in their eventual get together, I spotted a recommendation in the comments for an organization called Coming to the Table - RVA (CTTT-RVA). The comment caught my eye immediately, sharing how CTTT-RVA hosts monthly dinners with structured conversations about race issues. Through their website, I learned about their role in facilitating “courageous, clumsy and often uncomfortable conversations on race,” and encouraging constructive dialogue through restorative language and peace-building principles.

A national organization with over three dozen local chapters, Coming to the Table engages communities to uncover history, make connections, work toward healing and take action to



CTTT-RVA founders Danita Rountree Green and Martha Rollins

“THE MOST DANGEROUS CONVERSATIONS ARE THE ONES WE DON’T HAVE. SO JOIN US AT THE TABLE, A SAFE SPACE FOR CONNECTIONS THAT EMPOWER HEALING ACTIONS.”

– Coming to the Table

dismantle systems of oppression. These four “legs” provide stability for the “table” at which we’re all invited to take a seat.

MARTHA ROLLINS (relative of R.E. Lee) and **DANITA ROUNTREE GREEN** (proud child of the Civil Rights Movement) founded the Richmond Chapter of CTTT in 2014 after attending the MLK Anniversary March in Washington D.C. the year prior. Over time, CTTT-RVA has grown into one of the largest and most active chapters in the nation, with many ways for interested parties to get involved, including monthly gatherings (currently shifted to Zoom meetings), book and movie circles and working groups. Their website also features countless resources for in-depth learning and healing.

The path ahead for me as well as for society as a whole is a long one, but it’s reassuring to be warmly welcomed into a community so eager to make a lasting impact on the way we all interact with each other. I now volunteer for CTTT-RVA and encourage others to come to the table as well. Learn more at <https://comingtothetable-rva.org/>. 

