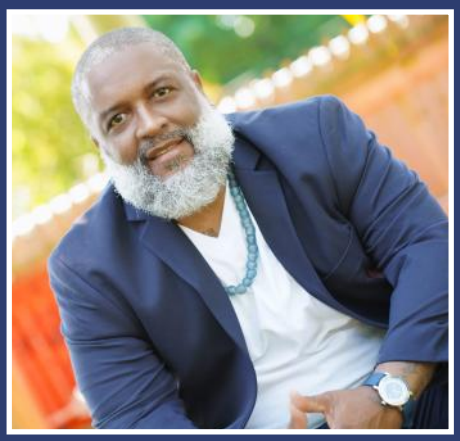
January 2026

# Roundtable Bulletin

Michigan Roundtable Monthly Newsletter

## A New Year. A Shared Moment. From Dr. Yusef Bunchy Shakur



Greetings to all,

i hope this message finds you well and grounded as We step into 2026.

As We move forward, i've been reflecting not only on how We closed the last year, but on the responsibility of what We are carrying with Us. This moment matters because the choices We make now will shape how the Michigan Roundtable for Just Communities shows up for communities in the years ahead. Transitions—especially those rooted in impact and transformation—invite Us to pause. To honor what has come before, while being intentional about how We move into what's next. New thoughts. Renewed commitment. Deeper dedication. Sometimes progress requires Us to take a step back so We can move forward with greater clarity and purpose.

This past year marked a personal transition for me as i stepped into the role of Executive Director of the Michigan Roundtable for Just Communities. Doing so has deepened my appreciation for MRJC's 85-year legacy and for the many people—like you—who have helped sustain this work across generations. Across all of it, one truth has become clear: Our work is most powerful when it is rooted in proximity—listening first, showing up consistently, and allowing community to shape the direction.

MRJC has never been held together by programs or titles alone. It has been carried by people—by relationships built on trust,

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## Newsletter Highlights


A New Year. A Shared Moment

Family & Single Mother Supported During the Holidays

College Student Continuing His Education & Young Adult in Neighborhood

An Invitation to Walk with Us

Closing with a Vision

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## *A New Year. A Shared Commitment. (cont'd)*

shared values, and a collective commitment to justice and belonging.

Rather than hearing more from me, i want you to hear directly from a few individuals who have walked alongside this work. Their reflections remind Us that MRJC's impact does not live on paper. It lives in people. And as We move forward, it is those relationships—and that collective commitment—that will continue to carry Us.

With gratitude and resolve,
Dr. Yusef Bunchy Shakur
*Executive Director*

**P.S.**

Whether you're able to join the **85 Circle** now or simply continue walking with Us in other ways, thank you for being part of this community. Presence matters.

## *Save the Date*
## *April 9, 2026 @ The Elevate Detroit*
## *Community Tribute Sneaker Ball: Step into Justice*

This year's Community Tribute Sneaker Ball is centered on the theme "Stepping Into Justice"—a call to action inviting Our community, partners, and supporters to move beyond intention and step into justice together. It's an evening that honors MRJC's legacy while challenging Us to walk forward with purpose, responsibility, and collective commitment, while also recognizing outstanding community leadership.

Our Deputy Director, Joe Drew-Hundley, will be sharing details about early bird ticket sales and sponsorship opportunities, including ways for individuals, businesses, and organizations to step into justice with Us by supporting this landmark event.

## *From a College Student Continuing His Education*

When money became a barrier, I was close to having to step away from school just as I was starting my sophomore year. I had an outstanding balance that stopped everything, and it felt heavy—like all my hard work might not be enough. My mother reached out to Dr. Shakur just to ask if there was any way MRJC could help, without knowing what would come of it. A couple of days later, he called her back and told us MRJC had raised enough money to cover the balance. If that hadn't happened, I don't know what I would've done. I'm still in school because someone believed my future was worth it.

## *During the Holidays*

### From a Family We Supported.

Last year was heavy for our family, and the holidays only made that weight more visible. My wife was facing numerous health issues, and life itself brought more challenges than usual.

When MRJC called me and told me that my family had been selected to receive a cooked meal, it truly touched my heart. What was offered to us wasn't just a meal—it was relief and dignity during a moment when we needed both. There was no judgment, no questions that made us feel small—just care delivered with respect. That reminded us we weren't alone, even when things felt uncertain.

To be honest, I've been around MRJC for a number of years now, and this act of kindness is something my family has experienced over time—from my two oldest children working in the summer youth program to MRJC supporting my t-shirt business through youth workshops.

### From a Single Mother We Supported.

The holidays can be stressful when you're a mother trying to hold everything together. I had to choose between fixing my car or buying gifts for my three children, and i chose to fix the car because we needed it to survive. I mentioned that struggle to a close friend and didn't think much more about it. Not long after, the Roundtable stepped in to make sure my kids had gifts to open and even gave us a turkey for our family meal. I remember sitting there that night feeling seen, not judged. I won't forget that—as a single mother.

## *An Invitation to Join Us*

Eighty-five years of justice doesn't happen through one-time gifts.

It happens through people choosing—again and again—to walk with Us.

What you've just read are not isolated acts of help. They are the result of sustained care, shared responsibility, and a community willing to show up for one another over time. This is what it looks like when building a Beloved Community and a Just Society is practiced, not promised.

Many of you have already been walking with MRJC—through your presence, your support, your trust, and your belief in what community can be. This next chapter builds on that foundation, not apart from it.

As MRJC continues its walk into Our 85th year, i am inviting supporters to join the 85 Circle—a community of people committing $8.50 a month to help sustain this work into its next chapter. It's a small, steady contribution, but together it makes it possible for care, dignity, and opportunity to continue showing up where they're needed most. Your support tangibly goes toward purchasing food to be cooked for unhoused neighbors, stocking the community fridge, buying backpacks each year for Our annual backpack giveaway, and supporting Our partnership with the Mama Akua Community House, which operates as Our annex and home for programming and community outreach.

Joining the 85 Circle isn't about making a donation—it's about taking a place in a legacy. It's saying, *"I'm part of this. i'm walking with this community."*

If these stories moved you—if you see yourself in them—We invite you to walk with Us.

## *From a Community Member Who Attends Big Mama Sunday*

Big Mama Sunday is something I truly look forward to every month at the Mama Akua Community House. It's not just the food—it's walking into a space where nobody asks questions and nobody rushes you. People from the neighborhood sit together, eat a hot home-cooked meal, and just talk. Some days, that's exactly what I need. I leave feeling lighter than when I came in. That table means more than people realize.

## *From a Young Adult in the Neighborhood*

There was a time when I didn't know where I was going to stay or how I was going to get back on my feet. Everything felt unstable, and honestly, I was tired. The Roundtable didn't turn away when things were messy—they helped me find a place to stay and supported me in getting connected to work. What stuck with me was that they kept showing up, even when nothing changed overnight. I finally felt supported when things weren't looking up. That kind of consistency stays with you.

## *Closing with Vision.*

As We move into this next chapter, We do so with deep gratitude—for the people who have carried this work for 85 years, and for those who continue to show up in big ways and small ones. This legacy belongs to all of Us. Whatever good comes out of Our organization is a direct result of the good you all have invested in Us.

The work ahead isn't about quick fixes or single moments. It's about staying rooted, staying present, and continuing to build the kind of communities where care, dignity, and justice are not exceptions—but expectations. Step by step. Month by month. From program to program.

Thank you for walking with Us—whether you've been here for years or are just finding your way into this community. However you choose to engage, know that your presence matters. The path forward is one We shape collectively, grounded in what has come before and guided by what We know is possible when We move together.

With gratitude and resolve,
Dr. Yusef Bunchy Shakur
*Executive Director*

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