



GROVELAND AND FOUR

GROVELAND FOUR:

Where do we go from here?

GLENTON GILZEAN JR.

President and CEO,
Central Florida Urban League



The **Central Florida Urban League** was fortunate to welcome Governor Ron DeSantis to our community only a few weeks after he courageously led the clemency board to posthumously pardon the Groveland Four. This action, taken during his first week in office, signalled to the African American community throughout Florida that real, positive change is on the horizon.

When speaking to our organization, the Governor detailed his plan to expand opportunities in our community through a concerted focus on education and access to employment, both of which will re-energize our community and take us to new heights.

Yet, his speech was not without an asterisk. He put the onus on our organization to become a partner in his plan and help turn his ideas into actions. With that in mind, the CFUL convened a distinguished panel of community leaders with a goal of sparking this change immediately.

The CFUL's Nine Steps for Progress and Action Plan, which is detailed in the following pages, address the main issues that have plagued the African American community for decades and offers concrete steps to move forward. We realize that results will not be immediate, but if we work together, we are on the precipice of real change in our culture and true equality can finally be achieved.

DICK BATCHELOR

Chairman,
Central Florida Urban League



In April, the community spoke and as the Central Florida Urban League promised, we listened. This document is a road map which was developed after listening to the opinions of an engaged community and a distinguished panel of experts.

While the Governor and cabinet took a major step forward in January, the case of the Groveland Four is far from closed. Pardons are granted for individual crimes, but the Groveland Four did not commit a crime. The only crime committed was one against them: for 70 years, they were victims of a judicial system which wrongfully convicted them.

On behalf of our entire community, I call upon Governor DeSantis to issue an executive order for the full exoneration of the Groveland Four. Only once the Groveland Four and their families receive this full exoneration can we finally move forward and close this terrible chapter in our state's history.

With the Central Florida Urban League leading the way, we plan to continue our community outreach, engaging more citizens to ensure that everyone's voice is heard. We will also bring elected officials from across our region to the table, giving them an opportunity to be part of the dialogue.

On behalf of the Central Florida Urban League, we want to thank you again for your participation and support. We look forward to seeing you at our next community conversation.

Who are the Groveland Four?

Ernest Thomas
Charles Greenlee
Samuel Shepherd
Walter Irvin



For 70 years, this case was considered one of Florida's most grave injustices and a symbol of racism in the Jim Crow South. Only in 2019, the State's clemency board, led by Governor Ron DeSantis voted to posthumously pardon all four men.

In 1949, a white teenager named Norma Padgett accused four black men of kidnapping and raping her in a car on a dark road.

Two of the men would eventually be shot dead by the segregationist sheriff of Lake County and his angry mob. The other two wrongfully convicted on little evidence.

“I don't know that there's any way you can look at this case and think that those ideals of justice were satisfied. Indeed, they were perverted time and time again, and I think the way this was carried out was a miscarriage of justice.”

Governor Ron DeSantis





OUR COMMUNITY
leaders

Following the pardons, the Central Florida Urban League brought together the following community and cultural leaders to discuss the persistent issue of race and religious prejudice



TAMMIE FIELDS



GILBERT KING



RABBI STEVEN ENGEL



IMAM MUHAMMAD MUSRI



REVEREND BRYAN FULWIDER



DR. JOEL C. HUNTER



PAUL PERKINS, JR



BELVIN PERRY



RODERICK ZAK



SHANNON GREEN



CFUL's Nine Steps for Progress:

End the silence of good people:

Recognize the historical defects and disadvantages suffered by and upon the Black community:

People and institutions must lead the charge:

We must support growth and development:

Increase diversity in positions of power:

Everyone must play a role in advocating against injustice regardless of their background, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, political persuasion, or profession. This is and will always be the cornerstone of our democracy.



STEP 01

The Black community in general, and Black males in particular tend to be disproportionately over-represented among the most negative social indicators known to man and under-represented among positive indicators.



STEP 02

Faith leaders, politicians, governmental institutions, media, educators, economic institutions must be in the forefront in combating and eradicating injustice in all of forms.



STEP 03

Educational and job training opportunities must be developed and supported as a means of crime prevention and as an effective prison reform and re-entry strategy.



STEP 04

Diversity brings about various perspectives and life experiences. The inclusion of racial and ethnic minorities throughout all media will lead to a systemic change.



STEP 05

Increase voter participation:

Heal through reparations:

Recognize economic impact of the Black community:

Identify shared values:

Change occurs at the ballot box. The public must elect individuals of high moral character and hold them accountable. This must include the full implementation of Amendment 4 by removing financial and social barriers to felony enfranchisement.



STEP 06

To acknowledging the miscarriage of justice, reparations must be paid to the families of the Groveland Four. This will address the past 70 years: generational harm produced and sustained by an institutional system of white supremacy.



STEP 07

Businesses must respect the large spending power of the Black community. Until equality is achieved in terms of resources and services, we must withhold this economic contribution through boycotting and/or other means.



STEP 08

Challenge and identify intentional ploys to sow division and discord in order to create and identify shared values and interests.



STEP 09



CFUL Action Plan

Our organization will host a series of meetings with stakeholders from the following entities:

- Faith-based community
- Community organizations
- Business community
- Law enforcement
- Juvenile justice
- School system
- Local, State and Federal government



Together, we will create a roadmap to implement the CFUL's Nine Steps for Progress and develop a measuring tool for gauging success.



Acknowledgment

On behalf of the Central Florida Urban League and our Board of Directors, we want to thank Dr. Randy B. Nelson and Dr. Kideste Yusef with the Bethune-Cookman University Center for Law & Social Justice for capturing, analyzing, and synthesizing the information from our Groveland Four Town Hall.

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Islamic Society of Central Florida

African American Chamber of Commerce of Central Florida

Interfaith Council of Central Florida

Onyx Magazine

Orlando Sentinel



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