

*This creativity convening has shown me that I should celebrate Trenton's past, that I am a rich part of Trenton's present, but I am responsible for creating and contributing to a rich Trenton future.*  
– Jeanette G.



## Creative Trenton Convening

Thursday, January 23 – Friday January 24, 2014 8am – 4pm/8am-1pm

Location: Living Hope Empowerment Center (401 Farragut Ave., Trenton, NJ 08629)

## Highlights

**The Question: How do we connect and collaborate to create meaningful partnerships, foster innovation and creatively revitalize Trenton?**

### Statistics

**Partnerships:** I Am Trenton Foundation (Dan Fatton, food and supplies cost coverage), Rider University's Arts Administration Program (Dr. Brea Heidelberg, food cost coverage), Trenton Downtown Association (Christian Martin, food coverage), The College of New Jersey (John Laughton, computers/printer), and Living Hope Empowerment Center (Francis Blanco, space) were our five main sponsors. Food vendors included: Café Ole, Trenton Social and a local Dunkin Donuts franchise.

**Total participants:** Approximately 120: 50% African-American, 50% Caucasian, 3 Latino/Hispanic, 60% women, approx 20% under age of 40, 5 college students. This is the largest number of participants we've had to date.

**Additional support:** Host team provided easels, Living Hope Empowerment staff Xinia and Bob were instrumental in set up.

**Follow up:** Citizens Campaign and Impact Trenton are hosting monthly "Civic Happy Hour" events and are partnering with Creative Trenton to utilize these meetings as opportunities for follow up and continuing to build connections. Dates: Feb 26<sup>th</sup> & March 26<sup>th</sup> both held at Trenton Social. Trenton 365 will be interviewing Kacy and a Creative Trenton participant (TBD) for both radio and local TV at WIMG 1300 in Trenton on Feb 18<sup>th</sup> as follow up.

### Common Threads

Education – training, mentoring, engagement; Workforce development and opportunities around offenders and reentry; Health and wellness – AIDS/HIV, pregnancy, safety around physical activity (walking & biking); Arts as a tool for revitalization; Good governance and accountability; need for centralized calendar of events; need for positive media messages re: Trenton.

### Breakout Session Titles included

- Transportation for after school activities
- Trenton Greenways
- Good Governance/accountability with Citywide internet & libraries
- Mass Incarceration: The New Jim Crow
- Using Contemporary Arts to Engage Youth
- How can the War Memorial building be an Engine for Trenton?

### Action ideas

- Trenton Board of Education Youth Summit March 15<sup>th</sup> Action planning
- Wisdom Council & Civic Engagement
- Radio and Television to Promote Your Organization
- Incubator program for Local & Ex-Offender Entrepreneurs

### Testimonials:

"Last night I didn't sleep because I was thinking about this [model of bringing people together]. With the New Jim Crow Project [focusing on mass incarceration] we have to plan events and programs all the time and suddenly I'm thinking that more people have to have conversations: I don't

have to have a keynote speaker, I have to create the kinds of programs that have people talking with each other and thinking about action steps. So it's really changing the model for us about the way we're going to do our communicating and programs and raising the level of self-awareness in education." - Barbara F.

"The first action step we're going to take toward Citizen's Engagement: We're going to bring together Citizens Campaign and Leadership Trenton to begin to talk about how to coalesce a group that will engage citizen education and merge it, integrated it, with the wisdom of the elders so that we can actually produce intelligent, citizen/resident oriented public policy. Our second is: going to work with the Minding Our Business organization and with the REPENT incubator to establish a brick and mortar facility [...] where we will bring in offenders who are leaving the prisons and ready to start their own businesses so they have a place to live while they build their own business. That's the objective." – Shakira A.

"We're going to focus on 9-12 graders – we want to use this same format – the Creative Trenton format – and we're calling it Creative Trenton Youth. We have a committee of about 15, representing many different organizations. The goal is to reach out to as many youth organizations as possible to be inclusive and not exclusive. The big [plan] is that youth will be planning the event, they will be facilitating the event, they will decide the subject matter. Living Hope Empowerment Center wants to be a part of that and will provide that space." - Jeanette G.

"It shocked me in a positive way...the sheer number of people was shocking and inspiring. How full the room was, you could sense the energy in the room." - Chris A.

"You walk away having hope. For those who have a negative image of Trenton, that nothing good can come out of Trenton? Oh no – that's not true. There are a lot of ideas [developed at Creative Trenton] that are going to take place because we [already] have action steps." - Karen G.

"People weren't on their cell phones. When there were breaks, I noticed a marked difference – people were sitting down talking to each other, not buried in their phones. I *never* see that." – Dara L.

