



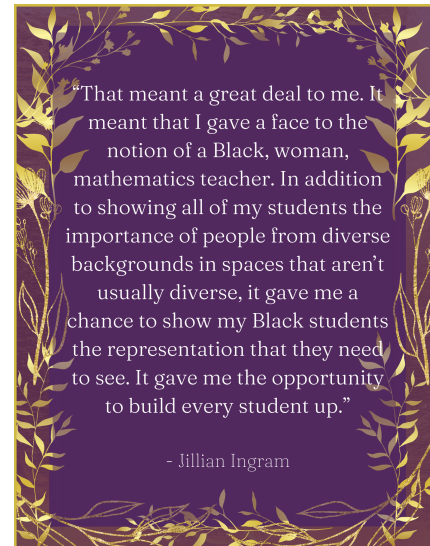
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I Am QUEEN CHARLOTTE

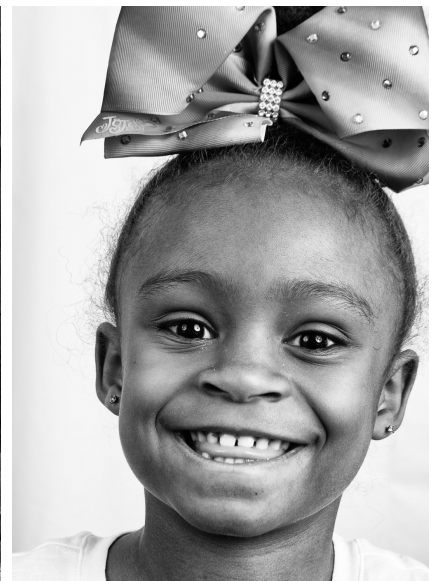
I Am QUEEN CHARLOTTE is a citywide, multi-platform experience that centers and celebrates the lives, stories, and contributions of Black Women in Charlotte.

The program is built around a gathered history of narratives from women in our community, by poet and master storyteller Hannah Hasan. These stories are the foundation of a whole week of activities honoring Black Women, which kicks off March 6th with a storytelling extravaganza in the Belk Theater. Music will be provided by the Charlotte Symphony Orchestra, and the show will be directed by Broadway veteran Benjamin Endsley Klein. The week following will be filled with art, curriculum, and engagement opportunities with our partners: The Blumenthal, The Levine Museum of the New South, the Arts & Science Council, & more. The week closes with the Queens of the City musical performance in the Knight Theater.



Representation, legacy, history, and the future. **What do these words prompt you to consider?**

Please use the following stories of real people in Charlotte shaping a new way forward to help inform and inspire your group conversations.



INTRODUCTION

Our Stories are important. The work of “I am Queen Charlotte was sparked by the many changes wrought in the wake of 2020.

We have an opportunity to connect the stories of women in Charlotte to the future community we want to live in. We approach each story as a sacred space, connecting us to memories, experiences, hopes, and dreams that inspire us all to shape an inclusive community. Use this guide to start a process of reflection, connection, and exploration of all the Queens in your life!

Women in Charlotte are leaders, designers, creators, advocates, mothers, artists, thinkers, scholars,, teachers, doctors, lawyers, and so much more. In 2019 there were nearly half a million women in Charlotte.

This group guide offers key questions and strategies to consider when creating a space where people of various backgrounds share ideas together as a first step toward a more whole and responsive community.

How do our interactions, connections, and narratives interpret the lives and roles of Black women in Charlotte?

Let’s explore our experiences by sharing through conversational dialogue.

IDENTITY:

Collective aspect of the set of characteristics by which a person is definitively recognized or known. The set of behavioral or personal characteristics by which an individual is recognizable as a group member.

REPRESENTATION:

Ethnic-racial presentation in media, stories, and educational experiences which create influential messages about cultural views and shape their understanding of ethnic-racial groups.

We’re encouraging 60 to 90-minute mixed-group conversations about the representation, identities, and stories of Black women in our community. We suggest that you be intentionally inclusive, invite a group reflection or cohort of colleagues that are not usually in the same spaces. Our ability to build relationships across differences allow us to share, listen and act together.

A MOMENT OF WELCOME

Facilitators: Please invite everyone to reflect on their day-to-day experiences in Charlotte. After **30 seconds** please ask participants to silently consider their daily interactions with Black women.

Coming Together: GUIDING YOUR CONVERSATION

Facilitator Prompt: Each story and image in the I am Queen Charlotte book is a reflection of an actual person in our community. We will read a series of quotes and spend time exploring themes, connections, and complexities presented in their words.

ACTIVITY: Time for Change

Included in your guide is a timeline related to powerful moments in the development of Charlotte. Included are some stories, images, and concepts which may seem new or surprising to some participants. Show the graphic on a projector or shared screen if possible.

Note: Unfold the timeline graphic and encourage your guests to see where their story fits into this timeline. Each guest should take about **2 minutes** or so to share a story about their experiences in Charlotte related to community change, representation, and visibility.

ACTIVITY: Group Reading

Ask a participant to read the following quote aloud for the group:

"We keep this house. We stay in this neighborhood. We do our best to hold onto our memories because we want that history to live long after we are gone. But some days, holding on to all of that in a city that is changing so fast, is more difficult than it should be because everything is changing.

Urban redevelopment has sought to take away all of our childhood memories. Our church, our schools, and our friends...gone. I watched them take our elementary school and burn it down to the ground as a practice for the fire department. My mother attended that school. I went to that school. All of us started the first grade at that school. That was a memory that was burned down. I watched them destroy the Brooklyn neighborhood. All of us attended Second Ward High School. My mother went there as well. She was in the second class to graduate. That memory is gone. So when I see all the gentrification and all the buildings coming down, I hear a message loud and clear that says, 'Let's wipe out these people that were once here. They don't matter.'

It is our goal, as a family, to continue to hold onto all that we have built, and all that our parents and ancestors have built. We want our children and their children to always have a home to come back to."

- Hattie McMullen: Generational Wealth



After a moment of reflection on the question: What does Hattie McMullen’s experience tell us about the changes in Charlotte? Do these changes relate to our experiences? Be concise and specific about who was (or was not) included. **Each person should be encouraged to respond and can use the timeline as a prompt if they cannot recall a specific time.**

Ask: How do we understand a place through its neighborhoods and the experiences of the people who live in Charlotte or Mecklenburg County?

ACTIVITY: Group Reading 2

Ask a participant to read the following quote aloud for the group:

“I brought my culture here. It is beautiful and important because people get to know that there are other Black people coming from my country and that we have the same origin. We are almost ten percent of the population in Columbia, but we all come from Africa.

I show them my culture by showing up as my most authentic self and by the art that I create. I am home here. I bring all of the parts of me with me when I enter any room. My experiences have been different than some, but we are connected through our desires to live our most full and authentic lives.”

- Kurma Murrain: In My Skin



Sample Prompt 1: How do you decide to “be” in community with others? What motivates or influences your decisions?

Sample Prompt 2: If you moved to the area within the last ten years, what motivates you to connect with the people around you? Where do you see the history of the community most strongly represented?

[Who is missing from your experience?]

CLOSING ACTIVITY:

Ask: What can you do as an individual to ensure people have the same access and opportunity for success in work, housing, and educational outcomes today? What strengths can we leverage- individually and/or collectively- to address next steps?

Group Activity: Charlotte is considered a relatively “new” city and is often complimented for being very clean. Many historians note that the experiences of newcomers in Charlotte are without soul. How do you see the “soul” of Charlotte?

Related to this project, what stories are important to share and document related to Black women? What places help create community connectivity and support for marginalized women?

Let’s identify one specific action we can take (as an individual or group) related to what we have learned.

Keep Going!

Adults learn by practicing new behaviors. Are you willing to share your ways to connect and positive stories with others? Join in the conversation by sharing your stories, pictures, and connections with the tag: #IAMQUEENCLT

We suggest:

DO

- Facilitators, please pace yourself, with enough time for each participant to respond. Our stories are important, we need to hear each other!
- Use the time to focus on building connections with each person (try not to center just one story or experience).
- Encourage each participant to take risks and be honest with each other, especially when discussing their hopes for our future together.
- Remember: This is a space of sharing, so share time, space, and possibly food!
- Share your photos, videos and stories during women’s history month using the hashtag #IAMQUEENCLT on social media

DON’T

- Micromanage the conversation; let it flow freely.
- Be judgmental or dismissive of any person’s comments or ideas.
- Promote argument or unproductive debate.

Please email us at facilitatemovement@gmail.com if you have any questions.

This project is part of *I Am Queen Charlotte*, a local initiative supported and funded in part by LendingTree and Blumenthal Performing Arts.

"I AM QUEEN CHARLOTTE"

MAKING A CITY HOME



MAY 19TH, 1744

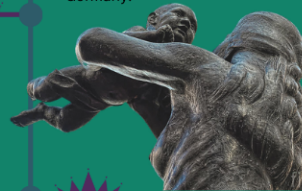
QUEEN CHARLOTTE WAS BORN

Queen Charlotte Sophia of Mecklenburg-Strelitz was born May 19th, 1744 to Duke Charles Louis Frederick of Mecklenburg, Prince of Mirow (1708-1752), and his wife Princess Elisabeth Albertine of Saxe-Hildburghausen (1713-1761) in northern Germany.

1768

CHARLOTTE, NC WAS INCORPORATED

Settled about 1750, Charlotte, NC, was incorporated in 1768 and named for Princess Charlotte Sophia of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, George III's queen.



1920s

MARY JACKSON MCCROREY AND THE YWCA

Mary Jackson McCrorey was a prominent educator and civic leader in Charlotte, North Carolina. She worked in various capacities at Johnson C. Smith University, Missions for Colored People, ran for public office, and helped create the first YWCAs for black women in the South in the 1920s.

In 1951, the YMCA in the heart of the Brooklyn neighborhood was renamed the McCrorey Family YMCA.

1950-1984

ALLEGRA WESTBROOKS AND THE BEATTIES FORD ROAD LIBRARY

Allegra Westbrook was the first Black public library supervisor in North Carolina. She served as head of acquisition for all Charlotte Mecklenburg public library branches from 1950 to her retirement in 1984. In 1947, she moved to Charlotte to head Acquisition of Negro Library Services and the Brevard Street Library, one of two locations open to Black residents in North Carolina.

In April 2020, the Beatties Ford Regional Library branch was renamed the Allegra Westbrook Regional Library.



1970s

SARAH STEVENSON AND SCHOOL DESEGREGATION

Sarah Stevenson was the first Black president of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg schools integrated Parent Teacher Association in 1970 and the first Black woman elected to the local school board. She also notably led the push to desegregate the district's classrooms.

She also helped create the Tuesday Morning Breakfast Forum, a civic event that is now an institution in Charlotte. In Jan 2022, the forum was renamed the Sarah Stevenson Tuesday Forum.



2017

VI LYLES AND THE MAYORSHIP

In 2017, Viola Lyles was elected mayor of Charlotte. She is the first Black woman mayor of the city, and also its first former city administrator to serve as mayor.

