

GUEST COLUMN

For the Thursday, February 8, 2018 Edition

From: Mayor James E. “Jamie” Mayo

**Comments on A Community Conversation  
About Race & Diversity**

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I want to thank everyone who attended or viewed the livestream recording of the City of Monroe’s “Conversation about Race & Diversity” at the W.L. “Jack” Howard Theater on Tuesday, February 6<sup>th</sup>. The feedback from throughout the community has been extremely positive.

I think the event was a success and a very good start. We accomplished our two primary goals. First, we all witnessed a frank and honest discussion about race relations, economic inclusion, the criminal justice system, education, diversity and more. Second, it has sparked continued conversations that are spreading throughout the community.

I am thankful for, and proud to say, we had very diverse panel who openly shared their views on a range of topics. Subjects that we all too often avoid discussing. I want to take this opportunity to, once again, thank Alejandra Fuentes, Arthur Stewart, Bishop C.T. Hanchey, Dr. Pamela Saulsberry, Isaiah Jones, Mark Windham, Melodie Everitte, Mike Abrams, Omar Elqourani, Rev. Ambrose Douzart, and Verbon Muhammad for their time and willingness to participate. I also want to thank our great moderators – Dr. Joshua Stockley and Ms. Joyce Evans for guiding this important conversation.

I was especially proud of the two high school students who participated. Some people may say this was a “grown-folks” discussion, but I beg to differ. These issues impact people of all ages, races, sexual orientation and gender, and we all need to be able to communicate – if we hope to continue making much needed progress on all the subjects discussed.

The panel discussion was not designed to find solutions to all the problems associated with race relations and diversity issues. If time permitted, we would have taken a few questions from the audience. Because, I am sure

many in attendance had strong views on the issues. However, the problem didn't start overnight- it's been building for hundreds of years. And, it won't be solved overnight.

But, if each of us can learn to communicate more and communicate better, respect one another, learn to sometimes agree to disagree, and be willing to empower one another - we can create the positive change most people in our community really want to see as it relates to race relations and diversity.

I look forward to more positive and honest discussions throughout the community – where the only agenda is to learn more about and from each other, to find ways to correct our problems, and to create more opportunities so we can come together as ONE CITY!

As one of our panelists said, “It all starts with the man in the mirror!” By working together, we are making a difference.