

Reporting Meeting of 20 July 2020

Calendar of Events

Last Week: 7/20	Black Lives Matter- Hallie and Kealand McKinnon
This Week: 7/27	Black Lives Matter – Walter Thorne
Next Week: 8/3	Saratoga Plan – Maria/Alex
Coming Up: 8/29	Golf Tournament – Holland Meadows

Note: Regular ZOOM meetings are held Monday Evenings at 6:00 pm. Check your e-mail for ID# and Password, as well as the phone number you can use to phone in if using your cell phone to participate.

*Please give suggestions for future programs to Dan Stec
Find us at bhblrotary.org and on Facebook*

"Together, we see a world where people unite and take action to create lasting change – across the globe, in our communities and in ourselves".

NO ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mike Brewster led Happy Dollars. There was shared good humor and it was nice to hear how our membership were doing.

BLACK LIVES MATTER Hallie and Kealand McKinnon

Listening to our presenters, it quickly become evident that our dynamic guests were more than capable of getting a movement organized and functioning in record time. Hallie is working full-time and a mother and Kealand an agente penitenciário. The discussion covered how their organization was started, its approach to dialogue, its subgroups, and some of its initiatives. During the session, several book titles were shared that can help both black and white better understand each other's perspectives. In a session like this, we did not have the time to get into the detailed elements of black oppression or white supremacy.

Hallie started "518 Mamas for BLM" just a few months ago with the intention of serving the people living within our area code. Her focus on mothers stemmed from hearing the dying words of George Floyd and the recognition of the powerful role mothers play in our lives. She thought her membership would be composed mostly of mothers, but in short order it has expanded far beyond that. A month and a half ago the organization went onto Facebook and within a week she had 3,000 people who wanted to help. Her membership is made up of both men and women, some of whom are luminaries in the area. She commented that women seem to be the most energized and, sadly, that very few black people have joined. Of note, a local Chief

of Police has joined. Kealand spoke about the organization's approach of inclusivity. They want create an environment that feels safe for folks of all ilk's, even racists, as Hallie noted. "We need to expand our commonality." Kealand said that the topic of BLM goes far beyond police brutality and protests, to include education, voting, wage gaps, housing. "The challenge is to tackle these topics without losing constituents". He also said that the organization cannot be successful by "going too broadly" and addressing all the various policy issues at once.

The organization has created subgroups: "Protest and Vigils," to operate within the constraints of the law;" Concentric Circles and Town Halls" to foster educational dialogue in public spaces; "Flyers and Pamphlets" to get the word out; and "Community Events" to get people to mix and get to know each other.

The group is setting up a booth at the Schenectady Green Market, held Sundays from 10:00 to 2:00, and is working to get a voter registration booth, as well. They also have tee shirts, hats and masks to market the movement. They are also producing a video on how to start and operate small businesses to help viewers become more productive members of society, and going to work with the Schenectady School District.

During the discussions it became evident that education and open dialogue are keys to better understanding black oppression and scourge of systematic white supremacy. This brought out book recommendations including: "Driving While Black" by Gretchen Sorin (the effects of a lack of mobility by blacks); "White Fragility" by Robin DiAngelo (why it is hard for whites to talk about racism.); "How to Be an Anti-Racist" by Ibram Kendi (ground breaking book on understanding and uprooting racism); "Intersectional Allies" by Chelsea Johnson (a children's' book with illustrations about respecting differences); "So You Want to Talk About Race " by Ijeoma Oluo (NYT bestseller on the elements of racism and how blacks and whites can constructively talk about them) and "The Cross and The Lynching Tree" by James Cone (explores the connection between the suffering of Jesus and slavery, segregation and lynching). Clearly, most of us have a lot to learn before we can walk in the shoes of a black person in America today.

Hallie and Kealand are very open to folks contacting them to learn more about the local and national movement, and to possibly help. Clearly this is a calling of our time and there is a tremendous amount to learn. Check *518 Mamas for BLM* in Facebook. Email: 518mamasforblm@gmail.com and hallie.mckinnon@yahoo.com, Their website 518mamasforblm.com is in the process of construction.

There was a general consensus that this was one of the most important and worthwhile programs we have experienced. Thank you, Hallie and Kealand!

Reported by Steve Caine