Talking about Racism

BY TIM JOHNSON
Retired pastor of Cherokee Park United Church
Editor's note: This is the seventh article in Johnson's series on racism. Comments and insights are welcome: send to editor@communityreporter.org.

It happened twice in as many weeks. I went away from the conversation thinking about what I should have said. In the first conversation, my friend was insisting there in no such thing as white privilege. Numerous examples were provided of ways in which as white people we have benefits and opportunities frequently denied to indigenous people and people of color. We pointed out that in our middle-class families of modest wealth our parents had benefited from the GI bill that enabled our parents to attend college and get a loan for a house. Both created family wealth denied to people who had the wrong skin color. We took the tone of "Karen" in New York City who angrily had her dog off leash in Central Park and when challenged by an African American birdie, she called the police, falsely claiming she was being threatened, knowing her white privilege gave her power, even if she risked her life. None of this broke through the strong conviction of my friend that there is no such thing as white privilege and we each make it on our own.

The question I wish that I had asked is "do you believe Black people are inferior to white people?" He saw himself as a white liberal and I know he would have said, "yes." The follow-up question then is, "If racism exists, thereby disadvantaging certain groups because of their skin color, who stands to benefit?" And if that is answered, then it follows someone else has to be necessarily disadvantaged. That advantage is "white privilege." This privilege is systemic and woven into every aspect of our common life.

In the second conversation, my friend, also a white person who sees herself as liberal, put forth a long litany of problems in the Black community. Her work exposes people who see themselves as liberal, put forth a long litany of problems in the Black community. Her work exposes people who see themselves as liberal, put forth a long litany of problems in the Black community. Her work exposes people who see themselves as liberal, put forth a long litany of problems in the Black community. Her work exposes people who see themselves as liberal, put forth a long litany of problems in the Black community. Her work exposes...
As a nonprofit organization we are governed by a Board of Directors, and we have openings for community members to join. We encourage community involvement in the creative side of things. We have correspondents, reporters, and general writers involved. You can write a letter to the editor on a topic you have written on, or in response to one of our columns, or a longer “Neighbors Speak Out” piece. You can also contribute story ideas: We aim to cover a wide range of interesting areas in the neighborhood. Your ideas for stories and topics are always welcome. Contact community reporter in your area.  

The letters, opinions and editorials expressed on this page do not necessarily reflect the views of the Board of Directors of the Community Reporter. The letters, opinions, and editorials expressed on this page do not necessarily reflect the views of the Board of Directors of the Community Reporter.
NEW MURAL IN COUNCIL CHAMBERS OF ST. PAUL CITY HALL/RAMSEY COUNTY COURTHOUSE

New mural art (pictured) was unveiled Aug. 13 by local artist including CUELS Latin Mural Apprentice Project, Emily Donovan, Adam Swanson, and Leah Yellowbird. Although guided tours have been suspended because of COVID-19, self-guided tours may be taken 8am-4:30pm M-F.

FRIENDLY VISITORS AVAILABLE TO CHAT

In a joint effort with St. Paul’s (FS) new friendly visitor program, created to combat the isolation and loneliness of the program, created to combat the isolation and loneliness of the COVID-19 stay at home directive, has recruited and trained a group of volunteers who are eager to help. Tom, a gentleman in his 70’s, said “It had no idea there is so much out there. Thank you for telling me I will look into those resources.” Tom quickly made use of one resource, a list of online mental health tools that will help him be more mindful and focus on gratitude during the isolated days away from these he loves. Tom shared this with his volunteer caller. “This is a nice resource. I am feeling the same way and it is important in this very very not normal time. If you or anyone could benefit from a call with a friendly volunteer and manage then that someone cares, contact Marie at 651-630-9897 or email at volunteering@ufs.org.

CELEBRATE HIGHLAND DONATION DAY

The Highland District Council is partnering with Memorial Blood Center, the Highland Business Association, the Highland Park Community Center and the Highland Park Library to host a blood drive and donation day Stephanie. More information to follow.

OPERA IN THE OUTFIELD

The first pitch of our MN Opera’s 2020 Fall Season game begins with opera artists at majestic CHS Field downtown St. Paul. Slating the class of 2020-21 Resident Artists, featuring live five performance elements and an innovative digital creation up on the field’s giant videoboard. The bases are loaded with opera and the audience can enter the arched structure, which creates a “cloud tunnel,” to experience the moving wings. Selfies from either side of the structure are encouraged and can be posted on social media with the hashtag #BetterAngelsStPaul.

The piece evokes President Lincoln’s first inaugural address when he spoke to a divided nation and asked all to embrace their “better angels” and join together as a country. The “Better Angels” art installation is the creation of Alan Milgrom and Dr. Nicole May Williams; owners of Milligan Studios, and is sponsored by the St. Paul Downtown Alliance, the Nice Park Association, and Landmark Center.

LANDMARK CENTER REOPENS

Landmark Center, 75 5th St. W., St. Paul, is delighted to welcome you back to browse our exhibits and peruse our history. Visitors may book a free appointment entry on TicketLeap for entry Wednesday through Friday (10am, 1pm, and 3pm) and Sunday (10am and 2pm). For the safety of our guests and staff, a limited number of guests will be admitted during those times, and only those with appointments will be admitted. Appointments will allow guests to safely browse. Landmark Center is open for an hour and a half, in accordance with State of Minnesota mandates, all guests must wear face coverings in this public building. We recommend guests bring their own, but will gladly supply one. If a guest needs a covering, guests may tour galleries and explore the building with our interpretation of “Uncle Sam Worked Here.” Visitors needing accessible entry should call the Highland, 651-250-3063. Welcome back!

Schools, PG 1

President of one of the city’s elementary schools, expressed fear about the unintended side-effects of the decision. “When it comes to protecting the safety of our children, there should be no room for debate,” the school official said in an op-ed in the Pioneer Press. Some St. Paul parents, though troubled by such inequities, appreciated local administrators’ cautious, flexible approach to a year roiled by uncertainty. “We can’t blame schools for a society-wide problem,” said Jennifer, a parent with two children at Adams, who preferred to go by her first name to the fornicity of the debate. “Our society is, unfortunately, far from equal, and whatever a private school does, they’re going to have to live with the effects of their decision.”

SPPS officials have pleaded with parents for a cautious perspective on reopening to maintain empathy with each other. “We can acknowledge that this is hard for everyone,” SPPS board member Jessica Kopp wrote in an op-ed in the Pioneer Press. Sahl said he would “build a bridge between the challenges the year presents as he prepares for better times.” “I am looking forward to the day I can give high fives, hugs, and see smiles... It’s the moments of connecting with our students and community that makes my job so great.”

Community News & Events

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Elephant sculpture: “In the Room” (below) “Accessible Metal Arts” is KRL Metal Art Studio tagline.

This building from the early 1900s housed the foundry that cast parts for the booming railroad industry.

Initially, I’ll offer introductory welding classes, and am working on a collaboration, with the St. Paul Public Schools and a local charter school. By early 2021 I should have the foundry completely set up for teaching a variety of different styles, techniques and metals (almost any). Eventually I will add blacksmithing to the course schedule. I am committed to offering life-building skills (in some cases career-building skills as welders or entrepreneurs) to those that crave it.

My art is all about recycling. Taking what is old and making it new, giving it a new life that is appreciated.

Diane, my wife of 21 years, supports the business and myself with her creative energy. Inquiries for teaching and speaking engagements, commissions or iron pour events can be sent to krlmetals@gmail.com.
In the Community

Wabasha Street Caves to Close as Pandemic Threatens Local Venues
BY DAVID LAMB
The manmade tunnels behind West St. Paul’s castle-like structure, once the site of a speakeasy said to be frequented by notorious gangsters, are set to close in November. Owned by Donna and Stephen Bremer since 1984, the 12,000-foot three-care complex has more recently served as a venue for dances, weddings, and other gatherings as well as for tours examining the area’s history. After the COVID-19 pandemic suspended those activities indefinitely, the Bremers recognized that they wouldn’t be able to weather the storm.

“We’re an attraction and we’re not allowed to open,” Donna Bremer told the Star-Tribune. “That would be bad enough. But then to have everybody cancel their events and want all their money back — and you can’t blame them.” As the couple worked to repay event deposits while unable to raise revenue, the Bremers, each in their 70s, decided it was time to move on.

Venues across the West End are staring down similar challenges, brought on by the pandemic and exacerbated by the economic recession that has resulted. The Grand Oak Opry, a site on Goodhue Street for intimate outdoor concerts, was forced to cancel its spring events. Its owners acknowledged as a recent post on Facebook that “we’re not be gathering in the yard this year most likely.”

The North Garden Theater on West 7th Street, a historic cinema that hosts weddings, live performances, and other parties, has also cancelled the public shows on its calendar, though it continues to book private events so long as the space remains below 25% of its former 210-person capacity, allowing social distancing to be possible. “We’re trying to stay creative,” said Ryan North, co-owner of the Theater, “thinking about smaller things we might be able to do to generate revenue.”

In place of physical gatherings, the Opry has promoted online events for musicians affiliated with its concert series. Writing in the wake of George Floyd’s killing about the importance of music for bringing people together to stand up for political action, the owners of the Opry asked their social media followers to “turn to musicians…to listen to them, to support them financially, and to support their work in the community.”

Park Square Theatre and SteppingStone Theatre for Youth will join forces this fall to create “your theatre for life” in downtown St. Paul. The two companies have agreed to a collaboration that will lead to more robust regional theatre programming for all ages. Through joint management and mission, though operating as separate legal entities with separate boards and finances, the two companies will provide a full range of theatre experiences out of the Historic Hamm Building.

Those experiences will encompass all ages and the best that both theaters have to offer: classes and camps for young people, workshops for adults and intergenerational groups, family-oriented productions for young audiences, and Park Square’s full mainstage season of new works, classics, mysteries and musicals. In tandem, the partner organizations will serve an audience of 125,000 with more than 70,000 young people attending performances and educational programs.

What excites me by joining forces is the opportunity we have together to meet the evolving needs of young artists, families, and schools.” The agreement strengthens both companies by bringing assets and skills together, as well, it allows the Hamm Building — which also houses the former SPCO recital hall and the former Vieux Carré jazz club — to expand into a diverse performance center that can help rebuild downtown’s economy once the pandemic is over. For details and plans see parksquaretheatre.org and steppingstonetheatre.org.

West Seventh Business Association

FREE MEMBERSHIP
Open to West End Businesses in 2020

Support neighborhood businesses, entrepreneurs and join with us to make our voices heard.

The Association invites independent artists, counselors, gig workers, entrepreneurs, retailers, caterers, freelancers, music teachers, drawers, graphicists, bio-based businesses - membership is open to anyone living and working in the West End.

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We are a non-profit bike shop, specializing in sustainability and refurbishing bicycles. We accept donations of all bikes and bike parts!

BONUS: Your contribution supports youth in our community!

Donations can be made at our shop during business hours, no appointment necessary! The donation process is simple and no-contact.

Call today to schedule a tour or request more information: 651-220-1700
HISTORY OF HARRISBERG

HARRISBERG, Pa. — On Feb. 15, 1807, the United States Congress passed the Act for the Incorporation of the Borough of Harrisburg. The act provided for the creation of the borough with a mayor and council, and the first mayor was appointed on March 1, 1807. The borough was named after General Robert H. Harris, a Revolutionary War hero and the state’s first attorney general. Harris was a strong advocate for the construction of the Erie Canal and was a vocal supporter of the state’s public works programs.

In 1828, Harrisburg became the capital of Pennsylvania. The capital moved there from Philadelphia, which had been the capital since 1790. The move was made possible by the construction of the Pennsylvania Turnpike, which connected Philadelphia to Harrisburg.

The city continued to grow and develop in the 19th century, with the construction of the Harrisburg and Columbia Railroad in 1852 and the Harrisburg and Warrenton Railroad in 1854. These railroads helped to stimulate the growth of the city’s manufacturing and transportation industries.

Harrisburg was also the site of several important events in Pennsylvania history. In 1850, the city was the site of the first anti-slavery convention in the state, which was attended by John Brown. In 1861, the city was the site of the first battle of the Civil War, the Battle of Bull Run.

In the 20th century, Harrisburg continued to grow and develop as a manufacturing and transportation hub. The construction of the Pennsylvania Turnpike in the 1940s helped to further the city’s growth.

Today, Harrisburg is a vibrant city with a rich history. The city is home to several museums, including the Pennsylvania State Capitol Museum and the Harrisburg Area Historical Society.

The city is also home to several cultural institutions, including the Harrisburg Symphony Orchestra and the Harrisburg Ballet. The city is also home to several universities, including Harrisburg University and the Harrisburg Academy of Science.

Overall, Harrisburg is a city with a rich history and a bright future.
Take a safe and pleasant walk, learn history with West End Garden Tour

13th Annual West End Neighbors Garden Tour (WENGT) beautifully feature West End as historic origin of the Township/City of Saint Paul and Territory/State of Minnesota.

On Saturday, September 12, from 10am to 2pm, eight gardens in a three-block area at the High Bridge will provide bluff views and highlight its environmental setting. A very pleasant self-directed walking tour features eight residential gardens, plus four point of historic interest: the North High Bridge, Waldmann Brewery, Hope Breakfast Bar, and Little Sisters of the Poor.

From garden to garden, from view to view along its bluffs—three Uppertown blocks rise above the historic Upper Land and Irvine Park, that gave new meaning to the term "cliff." The story of the area that was first settled by non-native immigrants and settlers via the Upper Landing. Eventually Minnesota Supreme Court Justices, Governors, entrepreneurs, educators called West Seventh home. The history highlights our early major immigrant groups: Metis/French-Canadian, Bavarian/Baden/Wurtemberg-German, Czech-Slovak, and Italian. Over 100 pages of historic images, documented with 135 endnotes, illustrate the history and will be distributed free on the day of the tour. Local historians’ contributions in the guidebook have made this educational and civic effort possible, as they have the past twelve years. Our neighborhood has been empowered with their diverse creativity. For information, visit www.fortroadfederation.org, call 651-699-6995 or email joel@jofland.com.

13th Annual West End Garden Tour

FRESH PRODUCE DISTRIBUTION
9th & 10th, 16th, 19th, 30th. ICS Parking Lot, 6375 St. Paul Ave. The Fabulous Friends Club (fabfriendsclub.org) is joining with the St. Paul Jewish Community Center and Second Harvest Heartland to distribute fresh produce on the first and third Thursday of October through June. JEWISH FAMILY SERVICE OF ST. PAUL (JFS) “This Loss is Different: Facing the High Holy Days and the Loss of a Loved One in the Time of COVID” Sept. 2, 7:30-9:30pm via Zoom. For those who have lost a loved one during this pandemic, the usual rituals have not been available to lend comfort. Participants will have the opportunity to specifically recognize the memory of their loved one. Contact Sarah Wellington at swellington@jfsstp.org to request the Zoom link for this event. WELCOME WRITERS!

Every Thursday, 10:30am-noon at Miameri Park Library. Marshall and Fairview Avenues. A group of experienced writers provide feedback and support to sharpen your skills and fine-tune your work. For info, call Jo, 651-442-3048. BEGINNER SQUARE DANCE CLASSES
Every Monday 6:30-8:00pm, St. Mark’s Evangelical Lutheran Church, 550 W7th. Triple T Square Dance Club. $5. First night, dance is free. Square Dance is for everyone: soloists, couples, families and youth. No partner needed, pre-registration not required. For information contact 651-503-7040. UPCYCLED JEWELRY WORKSHOP
Wednesday 5:30-7:30pm, 957 W. 7th St. Learn to create jewelry from a large selection of old pieces. Make earrings, necklaces, bracelets, sculptures or anything you can think of. Visit centerforfolklife.org to reserve a spot; $25 includes all supplies. Call Amy, 612-562-8900.

POWER-UP LEGAL CLINIC
Legal issues covered include landlord/tenant or property; divorce, parenting time, custody, or other family law issues; debt collection; impounded car; purchase or service contracts; probate; simple wills and health care directives and any other civil legal issues. Walker West Music Academy, 760 Selby Ave. Free walk-in legal clinic dealing with any non-criminal law issues. 651-894-6942, interfaithaction.org. Legal clinic: first and third Thursday, 1–4pm.

SAINT LUKES FARMERS’ MARKET
Saturday, 9am-3pm, 1673 Field Ave. Local West End Farmer’s Market offers fresh produce and more. SNAP/EBT accepted. Market Stands do exist dollars. 651-894-9443 or sanfrankitoche.org. All Covid-19 precautions observed: wear a mask, and learn the rules when you arrive.

WOMEN’S DRUM CENTER
Online workshops available. 2242 University Ave W 612-382-8100. womenaddressedrumcenter.net.

DRINKING PROBLEM?

WOMEN FOR SOBRIETY
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