Building a Non-Racist Community Today

The Deep North – Racism Today

By Tim Johnson
Retired Pastor of Cherokee Park United Church

Editor’s note: This is the third in a series that Tim Johnson is writing for the Community Reporter. His reflections are drawn from the 2011-2012 American Cities Conference held at Minnesota State University.

I had never heard the expression “Deep North,” but as soon as Native activist and author Winona LaDuke uttered the words, they rang true. She was speaking about racism she found in the Ojibwe of Minnesota. The clear implication was that racism is something that has as much reality in the Minnesota north as it does in the Deep South.

It is tempting to think of racism as either a thing of the past or as someone else’s problem (especially the South), but not our own. Or, at least, not our own. A parenthesis, any parenthesis I had to distance myself from the shortcomings of those who sit in the pens was always called up short by the words of Jesus who said, “How can you see your neighbor’s log, when you yourself do not see the beam in your own eye?” Speaking of the Deep North has to do with recognizing and addressing the log in our own eye.

The log of racism in the Deep North was the subject of an article written by Randy Hurst and published this past September in the Star Tribune entitled “How did Minnesota become one of the most racially inequitable states?” Hurst took note of an unsettling reality recognized by various studies that found in Minnesota the disparity gap between whites and blacks is among the largest in the country. These disparities exist between Hispanics and whites as well as American Indians and whites. The disparities are present in all the leading indicators including employment, homeownership, income and education.

Winona LaDuke, among others, finds the log of Deep North racism in the willingness of the State’s Public Utility Commission to approve Line 3, allowing Enbridge to build new pipelines across lands that are part of the treaty rights for Ojibwe people in Minnesota, just as the state ran interstate 94 directly through the once thriving African American community of Englewood, St. Paul. The purpose was to put at risk wild rice beds and water ways vital to Ojibwe.

A few years ago, the log of racism in the Deep North was amplified by the Minnesota Historical Society Press when it published a book entitled A Good Time for Truth. The book is a series of essays by authors of color and native authors reflecting on their present-day experience of race and racism in Minnesota. The first entry is by Tayyon J. Coleman, who came to Minnesota as a graduate student in a scrivener writing program at the University of Minnesota.

Tayyon, who grew up in Chicago, tells the story visiting a graduate program that she was considering in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. At first, she was charmed by the sites, colors and warmth of the South, but then she began to notice “Confederate flags all over the freaking city.”

Tayyon determined she could not live with such “explicit and conspicuous symbolic displays of white supremacy.” In Minnesota she found no such conspicuous displays. Instead what Tayyon encountered were white professors who were dismissive and unwilling to engage the creative use of black urban vernacular in her work. She encountered a liberal institution whose predominant, almost exclusive models for writing were white and a room full of white students made noticeably uncomfortable by her presence. Tayyon concludes her essay with words such as there are Confederate flags everywhere, even in places where we can’t see them.”

Anyone who has ever had anything in their eye, knows how unpleasant it is. Those of us who live in the Deep North can take the log out if we are willing to learn about the racism which exists. Minnesota has much to offer (I love this state of the North), but we will only be as good as everyone can be their best.

The fourth essay in this series is by Tayyon J. Coleman titled “Reproducing Racism.”

Editor’s introduction

Community Reporter planning another round of attentiveness to our transit situation, now in a kind of limbo with the RiverCorridor/Local Preferred Alternative chosen, but a predicted 12 years before any system might be operational. What do we do in the meantime? Our approach will be to explore the need for equitable transit, asking whether our present system or the proposed project can achieve existing Metro Transit goals of Equity. The transit system plays an important role in providing access and opportunity to a number of disadvantaged groups, including people with disabilities, people of color, and low-income populations. This includes a large portion of the region’s transit-dependent population. The article, reprinted with permission from Shelterforce, gives us a start in thinking about how much could be done in this next decade.

Tranit is for everyone.

By Miriam Axel-Lute
Editor, Shelterforce

Transportation access is the No 1 factor in lifting adults out of poverty, an often overlooked finding from the last several years’ wave of big data research into economic mobility, or the lack thereof, in this country.

Tranit is a crucial component in creating healthy neighborhoods, equity, and economic justice. But just as gentrification debates suck up a lot of the air in housing conversations, certain parts of the transportation conversation log the air of the time. Expanding rail lines, and the emerging world of bike share, and scooters are things that interest young urban professionals — and concern those who fear the affordability and cultural changes that tend to follow those professionals — and so a lot of time and ink is spent on them. They are still important, of course. We absolutely need more and better rail service and multi-modal transportation options to get to where we can meaningfully reduce our car dependence.

But until the vast demand for walkable, transit oriented neighborhoods is actually met, we need to intentionally mitigate the rising unaffordability that comes with those neighborhoods.

But it would nonetheless be a mistake to let those conversations define all of what transit activism or advocacy can be. Improvements in existing transit — usually buses — can make a huge difference in the lives of low-income households, without being as likely as a new transit line.

Victoria Park universally accessible play area gets a boost

When the idea of an accessible playground for Victoria Park was included in the master plan, the City stated explicitly “Victoria Park Playground relies on private financial contributions of all sizes, as well as advocates to share and promote the need for safe, accessible and free play space. Please join us now by making your contribution of funds, time, and talent.”

A group of fifth and (one) sixth grade students at Capitol Hill Magnet School in the LEGO League program wanted to address rising unaffordability that comes with those conversations define all of what transit activism or advocacy can be. Improvements in existing transit — usually buses — can make a huge difference in the lives of low-income households, without being as likely as a new transit line.

To join the effort, see gofundme.com/wgdam-help-fund-the-victoria-park-universal-play-area

Parks Dept. funding to plan a park, exactly like the one we were talking about, but there wasn’t money to build it just yet. This became the problem that we wanted to solve.

The students have also developed a backup plan in case the fundraiser isn’t as successful than the 50k they are initially aiming for. The backup plan, which they have already discussed with the city, would be to use the funds they raise to upgrade existing parks with new, accessible features. This is only if there is no chance that there will be funding in the near future for the rest of the price tag that comes with the Victoria Park Universal Play Area.

They are also reaching out to city and state leaders, meeting with community groups (including Highland Friendship Club), and constantly looking for opportunities to have a bigger impact than the immediate fundraising goal.

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MARCH 2020
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science of nature.

The Science Museum will join in the year- long celebration of the 500th anniversary of the Apollo 11 Moon landing with a new exhibit, a stunning giant screen movie, and a host of space-themed activities.

The hands-on exhibit was produced by the U.S. Space & Rocket Center and explores the decades-long rivalry between the United States and the USSR. Using objects and artifacts from the U.S. Space & Rocket Center’s archives, the exhibit surveys the scene of the era and explores the social and political forces that pushed these nations to sacrifice man and machine to be the first humans to set foot on the moon. Apollo 11’s First Steps in the Omnimax Theater is a giant-screen version of Todd Douglas Miller’s critically-acclaimed 2019 documentary. Crafted from a newly-discovered trove of never-before-seen 70mm footage and more than 10,000 hours of archival audio and recordings from the National Archives, this showviews the historic moon landing by reconstructing the final moments of preparation, launch, landing, and return of Apollo 11.

For program details and schedule call 651-221-8444 or visit www.smm.org.

Nature After Dinner: Animal Tracking

7:30 p.m. Discover stories left behind by animals in the mud and snow. For kids ages 3-5, children must be accompanied by an adult. Adult fees: Pre-registration required. $10/child.

Spring Break Camps for Grades K-8

10:30 a.m.–3:30 p.m. Registration closes 3/23 at 2 p.m. Pre-register 651-445-4531 or DoughlasCenter@StPaul.

Right Track 2020

Right Track is St. Paul’s youth jobs initiative for young people and their families now. Right Track is part of Everytown for Gun Safety, Moms Demand Action. For program details and schedules call 651-266-6363.

Right Track 2020

Right Track is St. Paul’s youth jobs initiative for young people and their families now. Right Track connects young people from low-income homes to summer jobs and internships, trains them for professional success, and helps employers prepare for recruitment and their next generation of diverse talent.

In 2018, Right Track trained and hired 55 St Paul youth as interns, giving them valuable work experiences and professional development. Employers can now join the program and pledge to Hire a Right Track intern at righttrack-app.stpaul/gov or call 651-266-6363. Internships impact lives. Research demonstrates that summer work experiences are directly linked to positive short and long-term outcomes for youth including higher graduation rates, better future employment prospects, and increased earnings later in life. A recent intern says, “I would just like to say that joining Right Track two years ago was the best decision I have ever made financially and educationally. I ended up getting a job as an intern and last year I started my own business.”

VOTERS SUPPORT STRONGER GUN LAWS

Everytown for Gun Safety and Minnesota Moms Demand Action have released research that shows Minnesotans favor (by a 5-1 margin) background checks on all gun sales and strong red flag legislation. 39% of voters added that a candidate’s position on gun issues is “very important” to how they will vote. The national organization and its state affiliates are planning a $50 million campaign this election year to encourage lawmakers to act on these issues.

“It’s never been clearer. Minnesotans overwhelmingly support stronger gun laws and are tired of lawmakers refusing to take action to end gun violence in our communities,” said Molly Leutz, volunteer with Minnesota Moms Demand Action, a part of Everytown for Gun Safety. There is growing momentum for common-sense gun safety legislation in Minnesota. In 2018, Minnesotans flipped the Minnesota House of Representatives to a gun sense majority and elected Representative Tim Walz (D), who campaigned strongly on the issue of gun safety. The Minnesota House then passed background check legislation and a strong red flag law during the 2019 legislative session, but the Republican-controlled state Senate refused to hold a vote or even a public hearing on the bills. For details and survey info, see momsdemandaction.org and everytown.org.

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MARCH 2020 COMMUNITY REPORTER 3

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Flexible payment options including sliding scale fees for those who qualify.
The Color Purple is the 2016 Tony Award winner for Best Musical Revival. Hailed as “a direct hit to the heart” (The Hollywood Reporter), this joyous American classic has conquered Broadway in an all new “ravishingly reconceived production that is a glory to behold” (The New York Times).

The epic story about a young woman’s journey to love and triumph in the American South is told through a soul-raising, Grammy-winning score of jazz, gospel, ragtime and blues, and in an unforgettable and intensely moving revival of an American classic:

Playing March 31-April 5 at The Ordway, 345 Washington Street, 651-224-4222.

Sande Lee and the Company of the National Tour of The Color Purple

Native Peoples’ Concepts of Health and Illness

Native Voices: Native Peoples’ Concepts of Health and Illness examines concepts of health and medicine among contemporary American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians. The traveling exhibit, produced by the National Library of Medicine, explores the connection between wellness, illness, and cultural life through a combination of interviews with Native people, artwork, objects, and interactive media.

“Steveboyii” by Moira Villiard

The subjects of the paintings include a mixture of images of Villiard as a child in different contexts and referenced photos of people she knows (who also are mixed identity) when they were children. Villiard felt she could not adequately get consent from children to paint them for this exhibit so that’s where the decision to rely on permissions of people who are no longer children and who can consent to the use of their childhood photos came from. Some of the children (i.e. “Portrait of Steveboyii”) above have specific stories that the work tries to capture. Others will be pieces that explore the fun and curiosity of youth in a more general sense. The combination of depictions will allow for a broader illustration of the complexity of childhood and the rights that come with it.

RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

The USA is the only country in the United Nations that hasn’t ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. What exactly does this mean?

All My Relations addresses this question through an exhibition of paintings and digitally designed posters by Duluth-based artist Moira Villiard that explores the essence of childhood and children’s rights in modern times. Her work also calls attention to the individual cognitive dissonance, or “doublethink,” that occurs when people hold two contradictory beliefs about an issue or situation. This free event will focus on children’s rights at a global and local level, how these areas overlap, and shed light on the notion of “doublethink” that creates an atmosphere of misunderstanding. One of the questions asked will be: “What are the core aspects of children’s rights, and how is consensus about their applicability achieved?”

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• BOARD ELECTIONS Go to FortRoadFederation.org for full agenda and candidates.
In the Community

A Vintage Classic Comes to West Seventh

By Margaret Kinney

What do Autograph stores and film producers have in common with folks in our neighborhood? Well, they may soon be frequent clients of Go Vintage Classic Threads, the latest addition to the West End’s collection of unique retailers.

Owner Kevin Looney began collecting vintage clothing in the early 1980s for his own use. He was and is attracted to the high quality and styles of clothing and accessories manufactured before 1980. He started with a serendipitous windfall of 1950s bowling shirts, became a career of collecting and selling clothing after classic

Also a builder, Kevin redesigned and renovated the retail space to resonate perfectly with his clothing displays. Although Kevin still lacks outfit and finds the perfect estate sale or individual who might have just the right era of clothing for him to buy, he has regularly traveled far and wide buying and selling. From Manhattan to Santa Monica, he has participated in vintage fairs, meeting new collectors and finding repeat clients. He also scours the internet and Craigslist, picking and choosing individual pieces from lots of merchandise. Kevin makes full use of the international market for reselling his pieces. “Some of my best customers are from Tokyo and Paris,” he explained. “They can get three times the

Both Nova’s Mock Trial teams are undefeated, and will compete for State title. Richard Lin (center) captans this one.

Nova Senior Leaders Prestigious Nomination

Richard Lin, a senior at Nova Classical Academy, has been named a candidate and invited to apply for the prestigious honor of becoming a Presidential Scholar. This means that he is one of 4,000 students nationally, and 50 in Minnesota, who have already been recognized for their achievements.

The next steps involve Richard completing an application to expand on his work in the areas the program values most: leadership; community service; scholarship; visual, creative and performing arts; and technical fields. His strengths are in scholarship (perfect ACT score); and one of five Nova finalists for a National Merit Scholarship; leadership; and community service. After the next round, 500 will remain to compete for the Presidental Scholar positions.

Richard grew up in Monticello and came to the Twin Cities to start ninth grade at Nova, living with his older sister who moved to the Twin Cities to start ninth grade at Nova. He volunteers in several community programs as well.

Looking to study computer engineering with a minor in business and to become fluent in Chinese, he favors Georgia Tech and is also considering Berkeley and Carnegie-Mellon.

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Herring gulls are residential water bird in the Great Lakes, save the ring-billed gull. Their wingspan is about 4 feet wide, they are about 25 inches long, weighing between 2 and 3 pounds. They are mostly white with grey wings and a black tail, pink legs with a yellow and a tiny red spot on the top of the head. They are the most common bird roosting in the bay this winter. They are mostly white with grey wings and a black tail, pink legs with a yellow and a tiny red spot on the top of the head.

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I watched this small colony of herring gulls as they roosted in the bay this winter. I was interested in how they can live through the harsh cold and long days of winter. These gulls are known for their ability to withstand freezing temperatures that changes over a weekend. This is due to their unique adaptation to the cold. They are able to slow their heart rate and metabolism, which helps them conserve energy. They also have a thick layer of fat under their skin that acts as insulation to keep them warm in cold weather.

Herring gulls are residential water bird in the Great Lakes, save the ring-billed gull. Their wingspan is about 4 feet wide, they are about 25 inches long, weighing between 2 and 3 pounds. They are mostly white with grey wings and a black tail, pink legs with a yellow and a tiny red spot on the top of the head.

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When roads are being redesigned, advocate for designs that are bus (and pedestrian) friendly. This is often obvious. Beth Osborne of Transportation for America told me that people often think, for example, that places for buses to pull over on busy roads is a transit-friendly design. But actually, that only benefits the cars that are not stopping behind the bus, and it forces the bus to slow down or less reliably because it requires buses to merge back into traffic behind each other.

Creating Bus-Friendly Roads

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MARCH ENTERTAINMENT

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MARCH 6-7, 20-21, 8:30PM

RIVERSIDE HITMEN
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MARCH 15, 6-9PM

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W7BA Founding Member: New Southwest Business Coalition (SWBC)

W7BA, Highland BA, Grand Avenue BA and Selby-Snelling BA have joined with District Councils, Chambers of Commerce, government representatives and other organizations to form the Southwest Business Coalition. Its mission is to educate, collaborate, celebrate and advocate on issues important to neighborhoods, businesses and the wider community, and to bring such issues to the attention of the City and Ramsey County.

QUARTERLY EDUCATIONAL EVENTS ARE PLANNED: SEE W7BA.ORG FOR INFORMATION.