

Religious Leader's Caucus
March 19, 2021
MINUTES

In attendance: Rabbi Peter Stein, Dr. Muhammad Shafiq, Fr. Bob Werth, Rev. Dr. William Wilkerson, Rev. Clifford Florence, Rev. Shari Halliday-Quan, Fr. John L'Oncle, Rev. Peter Peters, Rev. Marilyn Cunningham, Rev. Valerie K. Austin, Rt. Rev. Denise Donato, Sr. Phyllis Tierney SSJ, Dr. Gayle Harrison, Deacon David Palma, Rev. Conley Zommerman, Roslyn Karaban, Joanne Balliet, Bruce Popper, Karen Costello, Larry Knox, Edward Yansen, Lynette from Two Saints, Howard, Bill, Debbie, Dr. Deni Mack and others + our guest, former mayor, Bill Johnson.

Attendees introduced themselves, named their congregation + gave a one sentence response to "Considering recent events in Rochester what is on your heart?"

We reflected on *Thoughts on the Killing of Tyshon Jones* by Marcus Ebenhoe.

Bill Johnson, Co-Chair, RASE commission reviewed the process begun on June 18, 2020 when Rochester's mayor and county executive called the RACIAL AND STRUCTURAL RACISM Commission together.

Johnson praised the commission's inclusivity and wide-ranging consultation by 21 commissioners who interviewed hundreds of local people living in the midst of injustice and doing justice work. He named the twenty-one areas analyzed and studied. See the [RASE report](#).

The commissioners addressed areas where there are racial disparities and what must be done to eliminate and replace those disparities. Ten times as many people applied than could be appointed to the commission and many more voluntarily worked with resources in various fields. Bill is impressed by the magnitude and excellence of the reach out to gather further insight into disparities. Several hundred people participated in virtual town hall meets, surveys, direct invitations, and a creative outreach bus tour to minority and women-owned businesses who could not attend meetings.

Findings included a lack of funding, restrictions and access to needed capital. RASE co-chairs, Arlene Santiago, Muhammad Shafiq and Bill Johnson presented the RASE recommendations to the County Exec and Mayor March 18. The co-chairs urge accountability on actions implementing RASE recommendations in three and in six months. An action step recommended at our caucus: we will engage in that accountability process as the human dignity basis of RASE recommendations are foundational to our synagogues, mosques and churches.



Muhammed Shafiq, Co-Chair, RASE commission gave a call to action. Everyone has a role to play. Co-chairs will look for implementation of RASE recommendations in city and county and take delegations to put pressure on Albany related to police and justice systems.

See the nine introductory report's details diagnosing disease; look at 400 years of history in our country. Our education mostly is about western civilization and does not study African American, Latino and other contributions from the rest of the world. Some schools now teach and model some inclusion. Previously education systems were not teaching racial and social justice. We must change K through university and college curriculums to study the west and east and all continents with respect and humanity.

Global citizenship needs to be taught. The RASE COMMISSION studied community mental health, addiction, social and human services and recommends urgent care service for more of the community. Senior care in the city is lacking. The commission worked with local mentors.

Commissioner Bruce Popper spoke of mass incarceration, underemployment and unemployment as underlying many aspects of structural racism, especially as factors in the exploding rate of older adults of color in poverty.

He was particularly pleased with the commission's multiple recommendations to raise the pay for low wage workers, a disproportionate number of whom are workers of color. There are specific actions gov't. and elected officials can enact. Bruce is pleased with RMAPI's adopting the "Fight for \$15 "wage campaign as a major priority for 2021, and its relation to RASE's call to action. He sees us in one of those brief historic windows of opportunity for reform to be won. The time is now to DRIVE recommendations. Frame this report as a blueprint for demands.

We are grateful for these 90 minutes of hopeful encouragement re. the necessity of implementing RASE recommendations. The RASE report gives us reference points calling for action.

Please send corrections to your name + other content in these minutes + send your prophetic input for consideration for our mission statement + who you want invited to speak on what topics at our religious leader's caucus. Include contact info! Also please send alerts of zoom gatherings, petitions and statements you discern RocACTS religious leaders want and need to deni.mack412@gmail.com

Attached please note moving letter and points re Tyshon Jones by Rev. Myra Brown and three flyers from RocACTS Justice System Task Force re. parole for senior citizens. Religious leaders are invited to RocACTS Justice Task Force at 6 pm Monday, May 10 for discussion on this issue. If you are not available, please send your liaison. Those wishing to attend are asked to email Kathleen FitzPatrick zaynabkathleen@gmail.com in order to receive zoom link.

RocACTS is a federation of the Faith in Action Network



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