

THE TIKKUN OLAM REVIEW

תיקון עולם



“I saw nothing without seeing it. I heard nothing without hearing it. I felt nothing without feeling it.” Frederick Douglass

Mission Statement

* We are dedicated to promoting Justice and Equity in our synagogue, in our lives and in our community.

* We can never fully know what another person’s life experience has been, but we can open our hearts and our minds to listen and to learn.

Tikkun Olam Highlights 2020 -2022

  Happy, Healthy, Fulfilling 2022 to you all!  

Please enjoy reading our first annual edition of ***The Tikkun Olam Review.***

As you read and learn what the Tikkun Olam Committee had been all about thus far, think about which areas of Social Action call to you. Please join us at our monthly meetings, or if you are unable to join and would like to be involved contact Vicki Prusnofsky- victoriaprusnofsky@gmail.com. Also, watch for the announcements of our Tikkun Olam Shabbats featuring discussions of timely issues and guest speakers.

Committee Members:

Vicki Prusnofsky, Chairperson

Rabbi Shoshana Leis

JillLiflander, Hebrew School Director

Linda Levine

Denise Hahn

Irene Herz

Janet Weinrib

Newsletter Staff:

Linda Levine Editor-in-Chief

Vicki Prusnofsky Editor, Writer

Irene Herz Technical
Advisor

Rabbi's Report

Events

***Spoke at the George Floyd Rally In Reid Park**

***Organized members of HCS to attend Yorktown School Board meeting in support of a teacher harassed by the Community because of his views on tolerance and diversity**

***Spoke at Somers Memorial Day Remembrance**

***Spoke at Somers Veterans Day Remembrance**

***Spoke at Yorktown Pride Rally**

***Participated in St Barnabas Hospital Vaccine project**

***Planned Pride Shabbat with an invited guest speaker, Cantor Shira Stanford- Asiyo**

Honors

***Selected to serve in the Somers Community police Advisory Committee which is charged with making recommendations for police reform**

***Awarded a Moving Traditions grant which emboldens youth by fostering self-discovery, challenging sexism, and inspiring a commitment to Jewish life and learning.**

Promotion of Social Justice

*** Participated in the writing of the HCS anti-racism statement.**

<https://www.hebrewcongregationofsomers.org/about/our-anti-racism-statement>

Raised awareness and actions in response to the Uyghur genocide

***Stressed the need to open pathways with the Black Community**

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Literary and Film Events

To increase our understanding of global racial inequities and the far reaching historical impact it has on our lives we read and watched the following books and films.



***The Warmth of other Suns* - Isabel Wilkerson**

***So You Want To Talk About Race* - Ijeoma Oluo**

***Mediocre* - Ijeoma Oluo**

***White Fragility* - Robin D'Angelo**

***How to be an Anti Racist* - Ibram X. Kendi**

***The Conversation* - Robert Livingston**

***The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* - Rebecca Skloot**

***Deacon King Kong* - James McBride**

***The War on the Uyghurs* - Sean R. Roberts**



"Shared Legacies"

We rented this astounding documentary for viewing availability for a week followed up by a discussion. The film depicts the strong, supportive relationship between Rabbi Abraham Joshua Herschel and The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King and the Jewish/ Black connections of the Civil Rights Movement.

"I Am Not Your Negro"

This a documentary in the voice of the writer, James Baldwin, based on his unfinished book about the assassinations of Martin Luther King, Medgar Evers and Malcolm X.

“Judas and the Black Messiah “

This is a film about the FBI infiltrating the Black Panther Party

“ Two Distant Strangers”

Thus is an academy award winning short film about a police officer’s relentless pursuit of a young man.

“Small Axe” - Steven McQueen

This is Steven McQueen’s brilliant 5-episode anthology capturing West Indian life in London from 1969-1982.

“City of Angels”

- This is a powerful Showtime series depicting the social unrest in 1938 Los Angeles with conflicting interests at stake among Whites, Mexican Americans, gangsters, Nazis and politicians.

“Black Klansman”

This is a Spike Lee film based on true events where a group of people in the 1970s infiltrate and take down a group of klansmen.

Community Events

To show our solidarity with organizations that are standing up against hate and bigotry and promoting inclusion we participated in the following events.



This is a diverse ethnicity group with guest speakers discussing issues and concerns in an honest, non-judgmental atmosphere.

The Frederick Douglass Project for Justice

This is an organization fighting for Justice in the court and prison systems as well as providing support to recently freed individuals and wrongly incarcerated individuals. The project arranges prison visits (virtual during the pandemic) where insiders and outsiders share their humanity. The program provides hope and encouragement to human beings who are often invisible in our society and helps them to feel visible, heard and valuable leading to a greater success rate upon release.

This is an incredible experience and calls for one visit on a Wednesday evening from 6:30Pm to 8:30PM.

To participate in this project contact victoriaprusnofsky@gmail.com 914-645-2159

Race Amity

UJA Jews of Color Conference

Jews of all colors meet to share their experiences and offer ideas for increasing equity and acceptance in our synagogues.

The Uyghur Genocide

Lisa Ross, internationally acclaimed photographer, presents the devastating current situation of genocide, torture and systematic abuse being perpetrated on the Uyghur people by the Chinese government.

UJA Day of Action Rally

This was a virtual rally featuring multi-ethnic and multi/religious leaders offering their experiences with antisemitism and their support of Jews worldwide.

UJA University Series

This was a presentation by Rabbi Capers Funye of the Shalom B'nai Zaken Ethiopian Hebrew Congregation in Chicago. Rabbi Funye explained the differences and similarities of his congregation to others and invited all to attend services. Sample services can be viewed on You Tube.

The Westchester County

Commission on Human Rights

Combating Hate Against the Asian American Community- Speakers were Asian Americans of all ages, religions, economic situations and professions discussing their experiences and offering suggestions for combating hate.

HIAS

The Hebrew Immigration Aid Society- This organization has worked tirelessly for decades to bring persecuted refugees to freedom and safety. Our members attend meetings of other grass roots organizations in Westchester county with the goal of participating in the resettlement of refugees in our county.

School Board Meetings

Bias issues have arisen in local school districts where attendance at meetings and letter writing were needed to fight prejudice and blind hate.

SomersTown Community Council Meetings

These are ongoing meetings attended by key organization members of Somers and neighboring towns. Issues are discussed and sorted out, resources are offered and connections are developed.

Guest Speakers

Discussions with individuals promoting social change.

Ms. Patricia Adams- Patricia Adams is an African American writer and activist and local resident who has had two articles published in the Somers Record on her experience as a Black woman in a mostly White town. Her two careers were in Human Resources and as a Jazz singer. Pat shared her rich life experience with us at one of our meetings. One main takeaway was to begin bridging diversity gaps through individual relationships which we have continued to do with Pat and others.

Dr. Scott Denning- Dr. Dennis spoke at our first Tikkun Olam Shabbat in December. He is an environmentalist and visiting professor at Yale. During our Hanukkah celebration he taught us about the world's current climate crisis and how we can begin to fix it. He then went outside with a telescope in hand and shared his knowledge of the winter night sky with us.

Ms. Alessandra Rose- The Administrative Director of the Frederick Douglass Project for Justice joined us at the January 7, 2022 Tikkun Olam Shabbat providing an introductory overview of the project and explaining how our congregation has participated and can continue to participate.

Ms. Monica Szlekovics - After 23 years in prison was granted clemency. She spoke about coming to terms with remorse, the consequences of making poor choices and finding redemption and hope. She is currently a Douglas Project Fellow.

Community Projects

To give back to our local community we participated in the following projects

- **Food and Clothing Drives**
- **Covid Vaccination Program with St. Barnabas Hospital**
- **Garden of Hope Cultivation Project**
- **Interfaith Clergy Group**
- **Attended MLK Day events at The Shamus JCC in Tarrytown.**

Kid's Korner

*Peace and Love Your Neighbor" tree project - raised over \$1200 for Food Pantries, local non-profits and HCS.

*Spring 2021- Tikkun Olam clubs

*Multigenerational Tikkun Olam Storytelling Workshop with Cindy Rivka Marshal

*Collected items for Afghan refugees in collaboration with Westchester Jewish Council

*Mitzvah Buddies - sent a variety of cards to congregants and relatives: refua shlema cards, mazal tov cards, cards of condolence and rainbow cards to brighten people's days.

*Non-perishable Hanukkah food drive

*"Warm Things" - 3rd and 4th graders collected a car load of Warm Things (blankets, sweaters, new socks, boots) that were donated to the RSHM Life Center in Sleepy Hollow, NY and were distributed to families.

Tikkun Olam Shabbat Dates

2022

January 7 - the Frederick Douglass Project for Justice

February 4 - Black History Month Celebration

March 4 - Refugee Shabbat

April 1- How to become an effective Activist

May TBA Israel Presentation

June 3 - Pride Shabbat

June 18- Juneteenth Celebration

For upcoming Tikkun Olam events checking *Happenings*

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT RACE

Resource List - Selected Titles.

ADULT RESOURCES

Non-Fiction

****Our Kind of People***. Lawrence Otis Graham. Harper Collins, 1999.

Lawrence Otis Graham (1961-2021), graduate of White Plains High School, Princeton University, and Harvard Law School, author of 14 books, about politics, education, race and class in America, casts "an unblinking eye on America's Black elite." (Publisher's Weekly). Based on extensive interviews with key members from key Black families, Graham explains the complicated fabric of the elite families, their clubs, their vacation spots, their connections: "Even if you send your children to the best private school and colleges, it doesn't mean that they will get to meet Black role models who inspire them and make them feel that they can succeed in a white world. That is what Jack and Jill [a club where elite Black kids are separated from the rest (pp. 19 – 44)], can do."

****Why Are All The Black Kids Sitting Together In The Cafeteria?: And Other Conversations About Race***, Beverly Daniel Tatum. Basic Books, 2017.

This book will give you a completely new understanding of why all the black kids do sit together in the cafeteria. And that's just one of her illuminating and fascinating chapters addressing specific developmental stages in racial identity, "Tatum, a developmental psychologist (Mt. Holyoke Coll.) with a special interest in the emerging field of racial-identity development, is a consultant to school systems and community groups on teaching and learning in a multicultural context...studied the distinctive social dynamics faced by black youth educated in predominantly white environments

ADULT RESOURCES

Fiction

***Deacon King Kong**, James McBride. Riverhead Books, 2020.

Takes place in a Brooklyn housing project, during 1969, with plenty of flashbacks. This cast of vivid and colorful characters and a complex plot will hold your attention. You will intimately learn about a community, how each person has adapted to challenging circumstances, and how their connections have strengthened through life experiences.

***Their Eyes Were Watching God**, Zora Hurston Neale. Amistad, 2006.

One of the most important and enduring books of the twentieth century, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* brings to life a Southern love story with the wit and pathos found only in the writing of Zora Neale Hurston. Hurston's classic has become perhaps the most widely read and highly acclaimed novel in the canon of African-American literature. (Bookwire) Hurston examines female sexuality, strength, female-male relations, and relationships of women within the wider community.

ADULT RESOURCES

Black/Jewish Relations

***Jews & Blacks** Michael Lerner and Cornel West. A Plume Book, The Penguin Group, 1995.

Two friends discuss difficult issues about which they disagree within a framework of mutual respect. The book is dedicated to Martin Luther King, Jr. and Abraham Joshua Heschel, as well as the authors' sons.

CHILDREN'S BOOKS

***ABC'S Of Kindness** Samantha Berger and Ekaterina Trukhan (illustrator). Highsmith, 2020.

Series: Highlights Books of Kindness. Starting with A and ending with Z, this beautifully illustrated book will show young readers the many ways they can

***Ron's Big Mission** Rose Blue, Corinne J. Naden, and Don Tate (illustrator). Dutton Books for Young Readers, 2009.

A book about kids making change, Ron's Big Mission is a picture book about how astronaut Ron McNair successfully desegregated his town's public library, when at nine years old, he stood up on the checkout counter and refused to leave until they issued him his own library card. This is a great book for younger kids, as its subject matter is less intense than some of the other stories about the civil rights movement. Ages 6-8

PODCASTS

***Driving the Green Book** Macmillan Publishing.

Despite its relaxed pace, this examination of the history of *The Green Book* is packed with fresh perspectives and unexpected details. "Driving the Green Book is a living history podcast that preserves a powerful legacy and honors the stories of those who lived through the era, supported and uplifted each other, and fought for equality."

***Nice White Parents** NY Times.

Sobering reporting on what happened when 'well-meaning' white parents wanted to integrate a Brooklyn middle/high school. "The 2020 podcast by Chana Joffe-Walt in the New York Times called "Nice White Parents" brilliantly explores a key driver in

what is blocking educational integration and equity: the actions of White families. It is a must-listen for anyone interested in improving our country, and understanding how things got this bad so we don't keep repeating mistakes. (Update: NWP is now being developed into an HBO miniseries with Issa Rae and Adam McKay!)”
(Teaching Traveling)