

News & Views

Collaboration Was, and Is, Key to RESJI

by Donna Collingwood, Civil Rights

Melissa Gombar remembers the birth of the Racial Equity Social Justice Initiative as a coming together of many efforts. “There was lots of history and lots of shoulders we were standing on,” she recalls. This included people and organizations both inside and outside of the City of Madison organizing for racial justice for decades.

In 2013, the 2014 budget process was underway, and it was suggested that a racial equity impact analysis be performed on the process. At the same time that year, Public Health was hiring health and racial equity coordinators and Alex Gee wrote “Justified Anger.” The YWCA Madison introduced City of Madison staff to City of Seattle staff, who had been

working on racial equity efforts in local government. There was alder support, department head support, and mayoral support to launch a City of Madison initiative. All of these factors, as well as support from the Government Alliance on Race and Equity, were crucial to the effort. This launched conversations that led to the formation of the RESJI team. “There was always a multi-racial team leading and moving the work,” she said. It was the right place at the right moment in time.

The resolution approving the RESJI’s report and recommendations came out in the summer of 2014, officially establishing the initiative—a major success!

Also about this time, the Affirmative
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MarketReady: Support for Small Businesses Facing Barriers

By Mike Miller, Office of Business Resources

The MarketReady Program is a small business development program connected with the soon-to-be-built Madison Public Market (MPM). The goal of MarketReady is to prepare a cohort of early-stage businesses from communities that face historical barriers to business ownership, including low-income populations, people of color, immigrants, women, displaced workers, veterans, and those who identify as LGBTQ. MarketReady supports 30 entrepreneurs with business training, technical assistance, business coaching, facilitated peer-to-peer support, and micro-grants. The program came into existence when the City conducted a Racial Equity and Social Justice Analysis as part of the MPM planning process. One goal of which was to ensure that economic opportunities flowing from the MPM would raise the quality of life, increase wealth and jobs, and empower Madison’s diverse communities. The MarketReady Program is a major way that the City is implementing the recommendations of that study.

The Northside Planning Council in partnership with Dane County Extension and Wisconsin Women’s Business Initiative Corporation is administering the program. The City’s Office of Business Resources is overseeing the MarketReady program. In order for the program to succeed in attracting the targeted participant population, we knew it would be important to collaborate with a few of the strong organizations in our community. By partnering with organizations like Centro Hispano, Urban League of Greater Madison, Madison Black Chamber of Commerce, Latino Chamber of Commerce, Hmong

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Ho-Chunk Heritage Center: A Benefit For All

by Abbie Kurtz, Office of the Director

Missy Tracy, the Municipal Relations Coordinator at Ho-Chunk Gaming Madison and a tribal member of the Ho-Chunk Nation, presented to the RESJI Core Team in June. She placed herself in the context of her tribe and her relationships. She works in the DeJoepo (meaning four lakes) region of Madison; her American Indian name means Blue Bird and she is a member of the Eagle clan. Her mother’s sister was her mentor and helped her forge her identity as a Ho-Chunk tribal member and as a business woman.

Tracy’s tribe has a unique sense of identity and passion for their land. Though forcibly moved by the federal government to Iowa, South Dakota, Nebraska, and Minnesota in the 1800s, the Ho-Chunk people came back to Wisconsin, traveling far with harsh weather and terrain. They were the only tribe not contained on a reservation. The government gave them Wisconsin land that no one



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Resident Panels Remove Barriers to Participation

By Brian Grady, Principal Planner

Madison has changed a lot since our current Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 2006. It was time to assess our progress, reevaluate issues, revisit goals, and clarify our path forward, so the City of Madison initiated the process of reviewing its Comprehensive Plan. The City launched Imagine Madison, a public engagement campaign, to gather the opinions of all Madisonians. The Imagine Madison project engaged over 15,000 residents, but more importantly, it connected with populations often underrepresented in City planning processes. This was primarily accomplished through a Resident Panels program that was shaped through conversations with area leaders that have particular expertise working with Madison's diverse communities as well as the City's RESJI Core Team.

The process started with a simplified request for proposals (RFP) to ensure grass roots organizations could easily apply and be considered alongside more established non-profits. The City funded twelve organizations (**see list below**) that served as liaisons to reach a particular segment of the community. Each panel consisted of approximately 12 residents. City funding supported the organizations' efforts to establish a resident panel and remove barriers to participation such as panelists' transportation, childcare, and because most were done in the evenings after work, provided food. The process offered flexibility on how the panels would run. The facilitators then convened the panel meetings and reported to staff with the results of their discussion.

Resident Panel feedback is featured prominently throughout the Plan and many of the Plan's recommendations address inequities in our community that were highlighted by these panels. (<http://imaginemadison.civcomment.org/>)

The following organizations each facilitated a Resident Panel: Centro Hispano, Foundation for Black Women's Wellness, Goodman Community Center, Hmong Language & Culture Enrichment Program, Hmong Professional Networking, Madison-Area Urban Ministry in partnership with Street Pulse, Rebalanced-Life Wellness Association in partnership with JP Hair Design Barbershop, Sustain Dane in partnership with Ho-Chunk Gaming Madison, Vera Court Neighborhood Center in partnership with Latino Academy of Workforce Development and Bridge-Lakepoint-Waunona Neighborhood Center, Retired and Senior Volunteer Program in partnership with Madison senior coalitions, Wisconsin Transgender Health Coalition, Young Gifted & Black Coalition. ■■■

Q&A with Alder Baldeh



Q: How long have you been an alder?—Three years and three months.

Q: Where were you born?—Gambia (a small village called Choya).

"I think this is symbolically an excellent thing to have people of color (leading Council)," Baldeh told *The Capitol Times*. "All that needs to translate into real life-changing initiatives, and that's what I really intend to do."

Q: Can you give me some ideas of the life-changing initiatives? What types of things will change?—Aggressive engagement of marginalized communities; challenging the City in the recruitment and retention of persons of color, particularly in senior management positions, continue to push for affordable housing and making it easy for people of color to start businesses. making access to government easy including getting relevant information and filing complains through a 311 center. Increasing access to communities through community centers, imagination center etc. I do think some of these have been ongoing.

Q: You helped facilitate "Know Your Rights—United We Stand" that drew an

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CDA Looks to Reduce Housing Barriers for Those Reentering the Community

Current PHA policies prevent many people with criminal records from participating in the Section 8 or public housing programs. Sometimes a participating family will allow a relative who is returning to the community from the justice system to move in without authorization. This violation could lead to termination of the family's rent subsidy or tenancy.

The Community Development Authority (CDA) Section 8 administrative plan prohibits the addition of any new household member except by birth, adoption or

court awarded custody of a minor child. There are also exceptions for elderly or disabled persons who need to add a family member as a care giver and for nonelderly, nondisabled families to add elderly or disabled family members who need care. Even then, individuals who would otherwise qualify to be added to a family must pass the PHA screening criteria regarding violent or drug-related criminal activity.

In 2017, the CDA Board of Commissioners with input from the CDA Resident Advisory Board adopted the HUD-required annual plan including developing a

re-entry program. Technical assistance provided by the Vera Institute.

The CDA is committed to plan and implement a reentry program to allow people with conviction histories to return home or otherwise obtain housing, and/or change existing policies to enable people with conviction histories to obtain housing.

Tom Conrad, interim director of CDA Housing Operations Division supervises the staff who administer the Section 8 Voucher and Public Housing programs. ■■■

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else wanted. This was the United States government's first strategy — to isolate Indians on reservations; their second strategy was to isolate individuals. The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) opened schools for American Indians; children were removed from their parents, the schools were over-crowded, and American Indian language and culture was taken away from them. Tracy acknowledges the awfulness of this policy, though it did open up opportunity for some; her mom began a career in the 1950s — she went to Washington DC, studied, and became a successful business leader which was unusual and difficult for women, Indian women especially.

Casinos help the Ho-Chunk with financial independence and culture. American Indian gaming is their oldest profession; it is a traditional tribal practice — the moccasin game was played by men, kansu by women. Because the Ho-Chunk do not live on a reservation, they are not eligible for financial aid from the BIA. Since the Ho-Chunk have no tax base, Indian gaming funds tribal government and its operations. The Ho-Chunk have the only class II gaming facility in Wisconsin. It is highly regulated by their Gaming Commission (an independent regulatory authority), the state, and the federal government.

The current development proposal's Heritage Center is a way for the Ho-Chunk, and other under-represented groups, to be seen. The proposal also includes a casino, a hotel, and a sports complex. The Heritage Center would celebrate Madison's land and people; it would celebrate history, foster cross-cultural understanding, interpret and protect sacred spaces, teach and preserve language, empower the young, support artists and their art. It would be a place to share crafts and culinary traditions, and a place to gather for mini pow wows. The land's unique beauty, history, and placement position the development as a southern gateway, accessible from Milwaukee, Chicago, and Dubuque, and as an international draw. Research supports the idea that people from

around the world and in the United States have a strong interest in American Indian culture. To succeed though, Tracy says, the development needs community support. All stakeholders have been brought to the table, so that the venture would be a value addition, not competitive.

The plan is now in its design phase. The

first phase of construction will likely take a few years, a short time considering the plan was rolled out three years ago.

Tracy ended her presentation saying how she loves her job — she's paid to make friends. That's what this project and process is really about — the reality, despite our perceived differences, that we are all one community. ■■■

Calendar of Opportunities

CORE TEAM MEETINGS

August 20, 2018- Featuring MMSD Superintendent Jennifer Cheatham

September 17, 2018- Featuring Jordan Bingham

Core Team meetings take place at 1PM on the third Monday of each month.

RESJI TRAINING EVENTS

RESJI Part 1 (Tue 7/24, Thur 9/13, Tue 10/23)

www.cityofmadison.com/human-resources/professional-development/courses/resji-1-what-are-racial-equity-social-justice

RESJI Part 2 (Tue 8/7, Thur 9/27, Tue 11/06)

www.cityofmadison.com/human-resources/professional-development/courses/resji-2-applying-racial-equity-social-justice

RESJI Part 3 (Tue 8/21, Thur 10/11, Tue 11/27)

www.cityofmadison.com/human-resources/professional-development/courses/resji-3-transformative-leadership-communication

COMMUNITY EVENTS

August 14, PRIMARY ELECTION

August 16, 2018 6PM: Racial Justice Film Series in room 302 at Madison Central Library, 201 W. Mifflin St. www.madisonpubliclibrary.org/events/racial-justice-film-series-1188964

COMMUNITY EVENTS (con't)

Upcoming Community Immigration Law Clinic Dates: **August 10 and 24, September 14 and 28.** (These free clinics are held every second and fourth Friday of the month from 2PM to 5PM at 944 E Gorham Street (Christ Presbyterian Church). Walk-ins only, no appointments. <https://cpcmadison.org/clc/>

Africa Pre-Fest: Friday, August 17, 2018, 6:00 pm - 10:00 pm, McPike Park (formerly Central Park), 202 S. Ingersoll Street, Madison

Africa Fest: Saturday, August 18, 2018, 11:00 am - 10:00 pm Strides For Africa McPike Park (formerly Central Park) 202 S. Ingersoll Street

SAVE THE DATES!

The RESJI Fall Launch Event will take place at 1PM on September 17, 2018. Speaker is Jordan Bingham.

The YWCA **Racial Justice Summit** takes place this year on October 2, 2018 – October 3, 2018.

"Facing Race: A National Conference" will be happening November 8-10, 2018 at the Cobo Center in Detroit, Michigan. More info at <https://facingrace.raceforward.org/>

From the US Senate, "On August 6, 1965, [the president] signed the **Voting Rights Act** into law. The bill flowed from a "clear and simple wrong," [the president] asserted, and its purpose was "to right that wrong."



Racial Equity & Social Justice Initiative

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Wisconsin Chamber of Commerce and Sabrina “Heymiss Progress” Madison we were able to get in front of the sought after target audience. The participant demographics consist of 63% women, 33% Black, 33% Latinx, 27% Asian and 33% first generation immigrants. We would not have been able to accomplish this without the relationships these organizations have created in their communities.

Participants have attended 867 hours of educational workshops since MarketReady launched, 363 hours of direct business consultation, 21 peer-to-peer support meetings, and visited three Public Markets in the Twin Cities area. The 30 participants will continue to perfect their business models over the next year for the opportunity of being one of the five businesses to receive up to \$19,000 in grant money to retrofit and stock their own personal space in the Madison Public Market scheduled to open in the second quarter of 2020.

For more information visit: www.marketreadymadison.org

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Action plan was up for renewal, and Melissa, who was Affirmative Action Specialist in the Department of Civil Rights at the time, decided to make the equity tools a mandatory part of the process. It was not the most popular choice, as those working on the AA plans had not trained in tool use, but it was important to get the tools piloted. That spring, the racial equity and social justice team began training efforts.

“One of the most surprising things for me was the demand for our training opportunities, they were filled and we had waiting lists right out the gate. That signifies that if people don't know about racial equity, they want to learn it. And that continues,” said Melissa.

One of the lessons Melissa learned: one or two staff people could not adequately support an effort like this to impact a complex culture. There have always been

Alder Baldeh Continued from page 2

estimated 2,500 attendees to the Monona Terrace Convention Center.

What prompted you to do this community forum? What gave you the idea?—As an immigrant myself I am very aware of what the immigrant community is going through particularly in this era of Donald Trump; so as soon as he was elected I knew he will waste no time in going after the immigrant community. I decided that it is important to educate them on their rights, where to go if they feel threatened or harassed. I also wanted our local law enforcement leaders to make a public statement that they will not break the law by siding with ICE and handing over our residents to them. This basically is what motivated me to put the forum together.

Q: Will it be an annual forum?—No; its intended purpose was to inform and educate and give immigrant communities all the tools they needed to stand up for their rights. If there are other forums they will take a different shape and format.

Q: Why is the Racial Equity Social Justice Initiative (RESJI) important to you?

How does that show in your day-to-day work?—RESJI is important because as a government official, it is important to ensure that government works for everybody and not the privileged few. This means engaging communities that have not traditionally engaged in civic activities and are not aware of the resources that the government provides. This means challenging departments on policies or projects that may adversely

many hands working, and that is what is needed to sustain the effort.

“It can't be stressed enough that it was a collaborative process,” Melissa said. “It has been an honor to work with all of the wonderful people who have kicked off and sustained this effort. I believe it is one of the most important efforts the city has undertaken as a result of the hard work of many dedicated individuals over several decades.”

affect immigrant communities or people of color, challenging them on hiring practices and opportunities to see diversity in leadership positions as well as working with agencies to increase entrepreneurial opportunities for people of color, streamlining processes, advocating for people of color to serve on City committees and ensuring that business owners who are people of color and women have opportunities for city contracts.

Q: You represent many firsts on the council, first Muslim elected to the council (2015), first Muslim to serve as president, first black male to serve as council president. Am I missing any?—First African Immigrant to be elected to Madison CC and become president.

Q: What's something you're looking forward to?—I am looking to a Madison that is equitable. I am looking to a Wisconsin that is equitable and I am looking to a United States of America that is equitable. I am looking forward to that day where all Americans are seen only as Americans and have a level playing field to realize their potentials.

Q: If the whole world were listening, what would you say?—I will say America is still the beacon of hope for the world but we do have serious challenges to work on including racial biases and discrimination. Love each other, talk to your neighbor, believe in your selves and do good.

Q: Who would you like to see featured in a future profile in this newsletter?—There's a good number of people out there doing very good work around diversity and inclusion. People like Masood Ackhtar, Dr. Floyd Rose, Kwasi Obeng, Nino Amato, Sheri Cater, Jerreh Kujabi, Eric Upchurch. All these people are leading in their communities and doing great work.

Q: What is the wallpaper on your cellphone? My wife.

Q: What's your favorite song? “Is this love” by Bob Marley.