

Porchlight: Solutions to Homelessness

The RESJI Speaker Series for December 2020 featured Karla Thennes, Executive Director of Porchlight. Karla shared with us the six core programs that Porchlight operates as well as the challenges and solutions that occurred as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Porchlight operates six core programs: Men’s Drop in Shelters, Remote Outreach Services, Safe Haven, Housing for All, the DIGS Program, and Porchlight Products. When the pandemic hit Wisconsin, Porchlight was forced to make some difficult decisions about which of its programs were essential and how to adapt those essential programs to the need for increased public safety measures. Karla shared a number of statistics with us including that single men make up the majority of the homeless population and that African American males are overrepresented in the population.

With the help of various partnerships, including the City of Madison, Porchlight was able to relocate its men’s drop in shelter from the basements of three downtown churches to the Warner Park Community Recreation Center to provide the physical distancing and health screenings necessary to

keep its guests safe. In December, Porchlight moved its men’s shelter to the City’s recently vacated First Street Garage, which would allow for more beds while maintaining distancing requirements.

Porchlight’s remaining core programs include: Safe Haven, a day shelter for adults with mental illness located on Madison’s east side; and Housing For All, which offers affordable housing in Madison with single room occupancy units as well as family units from one to up to four bedrooms. For those already housed, the DIGS (Dwelling Intervention Grants & Sustenance) program offers housing-related emergency assistance to folks who are in danger of being evicted or to folks that have secured housing, but need assistance with first month’s rent and security deposit.

Porchlight also runs the Porchlight Products program, which is a paid employment training program working with disabled and formerly homeless individuals who have difficulty in a mainstream employment setting. Porchlight Products offers fruit spreads, pickled products and dry mixes for pancakes and scones, which they sell directly and through various restaurants and retail outlets in

Dane County. Porchlight also offers Remote Outreach Services in which Porchlight’s team engages with those folks who are unsheltered and experiencing homelessness to connect them to services.

To learn more about Porchlight’s outreach, services, and ways to support its mission, go to www.porchlightinc.org.



My full potential is endowed with spirituality, integrity, and humility. What I vision, I can achieve."

– Daniel
From Porchlight Website



February is **BLACK** **HISTORY** • month •

29 Black History Facts You May Not Know

1. **Black History Month** began as Negro History Week.
2. **Stevie Wonder** helped make Dr. Martin Luther King's birthday a national holiday with the assistance of special lyrics from his "Happy Birthday" song.
3. The dance form of **stepping** originated in Africa. The African gumboot dance is credited as being stepping's biggest influence.
4. In 2008, **Usain Bolt** became the first man to win three world records at a single Olympics event.
5. The **Black Panther** character first appeared in comics in 1966.
6. A full-time nurse named **Marie Van Brittan Brown** invented the first home security system.
7. Countries like the United Kingdom and the Netherlands celebrate **Black History Month** in October.
8. One of the most prominent doctors of his time, **Dr. Charles Drew** created the first major blood banks, **blood plasma** programs and bloodmobiles.
9. The **Black Panthers** launched programs such as free dental care, free breakfast, and drama classes in underserved black communities.
10. **Lisa Gelobter** invented the Gif. Thank her for making your tweets so funny!

Continued on page 3

Meet Kristy Kumar Manager, Equity and Social Justice Division

Donna Collingwood, Civil Rights

Kristy Kumar, Equity and Social Justice Division Manager, thanks her late paternal grandmother, Kamalam, for her passion for social justice. "My grandmother didn't have access to formal education or finances, but she was a lifelong teacher and giver and will always be a possibility model of abundance for me," said Kristy.



She is also inspired by bell hooks and her story about "composting anger for your garden." Kristy came to understand that anger is a valid emotion in response to any form of harm, violence, and oppression. "Holding space for both anger and compassion is actually necessary in the work of creating transformative change."

The City's focus and commitment to establish racial equity and social justice as core principles in all its decisions, policies, and functions attracted Kristy to her current position with the City. "I felt drawn to this position because of its focus on both the policies and systems within city government and care for neighborhoods and communities," she said.

Kristy is looking forward to living in Madison and has family in the Midwest. She is excited to learn about social justice organizing in Madison and ways she can contribute to and honor that legacy.

While serving as the Assistant Director at The Brown Center for Students of Color at Brown University, she developed Nurturing Alignment. The program is for social justice skill building in an environment where people aren't as afraid of saying the wrong thing, while still engaging in accountability. "Unlearning systems of oppression takes work and practice," Kristy said. Nurturing Alignment was about building a culture of practicing things like apologizing, naming impact, recognizing biases, implementing boundaries, self-reflection, and coalition building.

Kristy loves to cook and rarely makes the same meal twice. "The nutmeg in my pantry is harvested by my grandfather who lives in Kerala, India and is still growing, hand picking, sun-drying, and selling nutmeg in his youthful age of 94!" she said.

For Kristy, food is a daily practice in gratitude: gratitude for sustenance, the land, ancestral and diasporic knowledge, food systems, farmers, unseen labor, and more. She cooks as seasonally as possible with warm aromatic spices like cardamom, cinnamon, star anise, and, she always finds a way to put her grandfather's nutmeg in her dishes.

Continued on page 4

11. **Lincoln University** in Pennsylvania became the first degree-granting institution of higher education for African Americans. It paved the way for Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

12. **Cathay Williams** became the first and only female **Buffalo soldier** in 1866. She would pose as a male for two years until a doctor discovered that she was a woman, which led to her immediate discharge.

13. The year 2019 marks **400 years** since the first documented Africans arrived in the United States via Point Comfort, VA.

14. **John Mercer Langston** became the first African American lawyer in the United States when he passed the bar in 1854. He's also the great-uncle of famed Harlem Renaissance poet **Langston Hughes**.

15. **Hiram Rhodes Revels** became the first African American person elected to the **U.S. Senate**, serving from February 1870 to March 1871.

16. **Elijah McCoy** is regarded as one of the most prominent black **inventors** ever. He's credited for inventing over 50 devices.

17. Mathematician and scientist **Benjamin Banneker** is credited for designing the layout of Washington, D.C.

18. Politician and educator **Shirley Chisholm** survived three assassination attempts during her campaign for the Democratic nomination for the United States presidency in 1972.

19. The largest women's organization is the **National Council of Negro Women**, which was founded by educator and political leader **Mary McLeod Bethune**.

20. **Xavier University**, a historically black college in Louisiana, has one of the highest success rates in the country for getting their graduates into medical school.

21. **Thomas L. Jennings** (1791-1859) was the first African American person to receive a patent in the U.S.

Tariq Saqqaf

Welcome to the Department of Civil Rights

S. Tariq Saqqaf joins the Department of Civil Rights after running the City's Neighborhood Resource Teams (NRTs) out of the Mayor's Office for the previous eight years. He is now in a new role in the nascent Equity and Social Justice Division that pairs his previous responsibilities with NRTs along with coordinating the City's Racial Equity and Social Justice Initiative (RESJI).



Tariq sees a number of opportunities in the new role and is excited about the change. "While there will be some natural growing pains, I'm really looking forward to syncing things up. The City is fortunate to have so many truly dedicated staff working throughout all levels of the organization but there are so many different efforts and it can become overwhelming. Being able to work more directly in RESJI while maintaining a focus on NRTs will allow me to help people better connect the dots so we can all, ultimately, advance racial equity and inclusion more effectively," he said.

Racial equity and inclusion have been core values for Tariq throughout his life and he works to infuse them in every setting he walks in... from his work expanding opportunities for youth, advocating around mental health reform, or organizing to build skateparks. Tariq grew up in and has lived in Madison for most of his life, though he lived in Saudi Arabia for a few years and was born in Trinidad and Tobago. That connection to Madison is important to Tariq within the context of his approach to racial equity, especially given the way bias and discrimination show up within liberal and progressive circles. ■■

22. **Allensworth** is the only California community to be founded, financed and governed by African Americans. Created by Allen Allensworth in 1908, the town was built with the intention of establishing a self-sufficient, all-black city where African Americans could live their lives free of racial discrimination.

23. **Halle Berry** was the first African American to win an **Academy award** for Best Actress for her role in *Monster's Ball*.

24. In 2018, **Kobe Bryant** became the first athlete and the first black person to win an **Oscar** for Best Animated Short for his film, *Dear Basketball*. He was a credited writer for the project.

25. **Aretha Franklin** was not only the first African American woman inducted into the **Rock & Roll Hall of Fame**, but the first woman, period.

26. **Hattie McDaniel**, the first African American to win an **Oscar**, was not allowed to attend the national premiere of *Gone With The Wind*, the film featuring her award-winning performance, because she was black.

27. **Nat King Cole** was the first African American to reach #1 on the Billboard charts and the first African American to host his own television show.

28. In 1921, an entire city in Oklahoma was burned to the ground due to a racial disturbance and retaliation. This was the **Tulsa Race Riot**.

29. **Quincy Jones** is the most **Grammy-nominated** artist in the history of the awards show with 79 nominations and 27 wins. ■

www.revolt.tv/2019/2/1/20825543/29-black-history-facts

Welcome Aboard

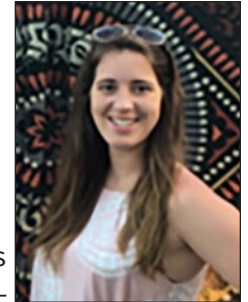
EOD Paralegal Intern: Andrew Briceno

I have lived in Madison for the past 5 years and am originally from Southern California. I recently graduated from UW-Madison with a Bachelor's Degree in Sociology, Political Science, and Gender & Women's Studies. Currently I am enrolled in the Paralegal Program at Madison Area Technical College which I will graduate from this May. I enrolled in MATC's Paralegal Post-Baccalaureate program as I have always wanted to pursue a career in the legal field but have been unsure whether or not to move forward with law school. My hobbies include listening to music, reading, bingeing the latest offerings of Netflix, and enjoying the delicious takeout Madison has to offer. I am incredibly passionate about advocating for marginalized communities and ensuring their voices are not only heard but understood. With that I have always considered a focus on civil rights law. I am grateful Rebecca Below, Clifford Blackwell, and Byron Bishop selected me as one of the Paralegal interns as this opportunity will be an incredible learning experience. ■■



EOD Paralegal Intern: Morgan Seifert

Morgan Seifert is a spring intern at the Department of Civil Rights. Morgan is a mother of three children, who enjoys reading and running in her spare time. Morgan has a bachelor's degree in communications disorders from UW-Whitewater. She has been working in childcare, since the birth of her oldest, but she has decided to make a career change. Morgan has decided to do the post-baccalaureate paralegal program at Madison Area Technical College because it allows for some flexibility in what kind of setting she will be working in and the type of meaningful work she will be doing. The Department of Civil Rights was her first choice for an internship site because she would love to work in a setting that allows for a good balance between work and home life, and where she can make a difference helping others. ■■



Continued from page 1

“My partner, Michael, and our dog, Bonbibi-Blauw-Kumar-Kutten, and I are all very excited to move to Madison to explore our favorite activities – connecting with intentional community, roaming through the woods with our dog, and daydreaming what we should eat for our next meal. Suggestions are welcome,” said Kristy.

Kristy was happy to learn that sharing food (when there is NOT a pandemic) is a tradition for the Department of Civil Rights. She looks forward to a time we can all meet in person to collectively engage in equity and social justice work. As manager of the newly created Equity and Social Justice Division she'll oversee neighborhood resource teams, the language access program, racial equity and social justice, and disability rights. ■■

NEWS & VIEWS

Thanks for reading! We hope you enjoyed these stories and we want to hear your feedback for future issues. The newsletter will be published quarterly.

We'd like to hear from you regarding racial equity and social justice in your work or your department.

Contact newsletter editor Donna Collingwood at dcollingwood@cityofmadison.com



Racial Equity & Social Justice Initiative

RESJI Core Team

Core Team is a (currently virtual) space for everyone who has any connection to the initiative to meet and connect.

The next Core Team Meetings are Feb. 25 and March 25, 10:00-11:00am. Contact Gabriela Arteaga (Garteaga@cityofmadison.com) or Lana Wood (iwood@cityofmadison.com) for more information.

Hope to see you there.

Join us!