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It's Time to be Truthful about our History

Recently I was privileged to observe the Slave Medallion ceremony at Linden Place in Bristol. The program was richly informative and very spiritually moving. Members of the Algonquin, Pokanoket, and Wampanoag tribes spoke with eloquence and honest description, offering accounts of the history of the slave trade and Bristol's major role in it.

Linden Place itself was built from the profits of the slave trade and it is important to recognize this fact. I have only praise for the Board of Linden Place and its executive director, in that they have moved toward a place of due reparations with a great gesture of peace and healing in hosting this important Juneteenth celebration. Linden Place is planning more events in the coming months, toward an understanding of history and accountability. Our native brothers and sisters performed in song and dance, marking Juneteenth's time as a blessing of the land, and a prayer for our common humanity, that all people seek to be free to live their lives unencumbered.

The event on Juneteenth also had Governor McKee and our senators talking about the importance of making this a holiday, less celebratory perhaps but more a time of remembrance and peaceful resolution. It becomes an opportunity for us to look at our past, often filled with horrific and shameful deeds done for economic gain and profit, harshly taken from the labor of people who were stolen from their faraway lands, while also stealing the local lands of our native indigenous peoples. Juneteenth becomes a holiday, not unlike Memorial Day or Veterans Day where we honor the people who perished and gave their lives in sacrifice toward the defense of freedom and democracy. I know some will disagree with me, but are not these long established dates really about peace and healing, with the marking of Juneteenth similarly about reconciliation?

Our history has been slanted with bias, written from points of view that were taken from a majority's rule. Yes, I am talking about white supremacy that has determined the directions and practices of our social order, be it laws, housing, education, government and politics, and even religion. We really cannot deny this, though we may try to avoid

this reckoning of the past. The point is not to wallow in past practices, but to coordinate and design practices that will set us upon a more truthful path in understanding the grave mistakes made, and better to move forward toward a renewed system of brother and sisterhood.

We can do this. It begins with reparations and acknowledgements of past practices. We, the white majority that once ruled all, must own up to our historic activities, and move toward healing and resolution. We need not fear the repercussions of equality by making way for opportunities to those who have been previously denied, nor fear a loss of control for others to succeed. Yes, Critical Race Theory is important and must become part of our educational systems to truly understand the meaning of freedom and equality. We all will benefit by this. It is not about condemnation, rather truth, and nothing less.

We can no longer “whitewash” history, censor, or omit painful stories of ourselves. We are all responsible and are to be held accountable, whether by the actions of ancestors as well as those others that came before us. We are here now and have the opportunity to truly enact policies and practices toward healing. Let’s choose to move forward motivated by love, not fear. We can do this.

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