

Anti-racism letters in the Benicia Herald

Sunday, April 25, 2021, by Jean Walker

What Can I Do to Make Racism Go Away in Benicia?

Racism is systemic, woven into our daily lives, like the threads that hold our garments together, until one day a thorn catches a frayed bit of a hem, and the dress unravels, revealing the shoddy work of a hateful seamstress.

I've been wondering, what can I do to make racism go away in Benicia?

As a white person, I must take it upon myself to become aware of my unconscious bias. I must come to understand how my white privilege has influenced the circumstances of my life.

I believe with individual awareness positive changes will follow. I hope I am able to write and talk to people about my incremental transformations. It's not an easy path. It takes commitment, a willingness to make mistakes, and to learn from those mistakes.

I am still working on my unconscious bias and learning to be more aware of how my white privilege provides me with benefits that most Black people do not have.

I hope that in our town of Benicia, all citizens will agree to work on becoming aware of their unconscious biases, and use their skills to create anti-racist environments and relationships in their families, groups of friends, and work partnerships.

I am pleased the City of Benicia has begun to live up to its commitment of Resolution 20 that was passed near the end of summer 2020. Hiring Dr. Maliika Chambers as the City's new Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Manager in March 2021 was a positive first step of many more steps the City must take to continue its journey of becoming an inclusive town. I eagerly look forward to the day when Dr. Edwards, two City council members, two members of Benicia Black Lives Matter, and at least one-at-large member of the Benicia community, will initiate meetings of the City's Community United for Racial Equity (CURE) committee.

I also look forward to our city council members working as a team to appoint people of color who offer to volunteer their time and skills to work on city commissions and committees. I know two such citizens were appointed by Mayor Young earlier this year. Unfortunately, the Appointments Interviewing committee declined to approve those appointments. Of course, it is



the right of the committee to make that decision. However, people of color might be discouraged by the committee's actions from applying for future volunteer openings.

In closing, I would like to thank Vice Mayor Campbell for participating in the Showing Up for Racial Justice Study and Action course earlier this year. He and I were in the same session on Saturday mornings. A new session begins on Saturday June 12th. It would be wonderful if one or both of the council members who will be on the CURE committee would be able to participate. For anyone interested in learning more about the course, go to <https://benicialibrary.org/standing-up-racial-justice>.

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