

Inclusion: It's About Fellowship

Brian Linaberry, *Building Inspection*

Inclusion is the key concept of the latest poster in the RESJI poster series.

There is a big difference between **acceptance** and **inclusion**. Acceptance is passive, for one thing. Accepting means we are allowing someone to be in our presence. Acceptance might just mean tolerance. Inclusion, though, is taking that additional step to bring a person into the group or the activity. Think about inclusion when you see someone hovering on the fringe of a group. Welcome them. Include them. Take the extra step. 🇧🇪



Representing the Underrepresented

Abbie Kurtz, *DPCED*

I attended the first day of the YWCA Madison Racial Justice Summit. Three presentations made an especially strong impact on me: The opening keynote, *The Strange Case of the Hipster Headdress: Reclaiming Indigenous Representations*, and the breakout session, *Native Representations, Pop Culture, and Cultural Resistance in Cyberspace*, both presented by Adrienne Keene, as well as the lunchtime Performance Keynote: *Undocujoy: Shifting the Perspective in Undocumented Representation*, presented by Yosimar Reyes.

They made such a strong impression on me, because this is my white privilege – that I can tell my story, and that my story will be heard, and accurately and respectfully reflected. In books, movies, on social media, in the news, in my every day life. I assume that. That I will see myself reflected positively in the world around me. That I will be accepted and portrayed in all my complexity, that I will have the space to portray myself in all my complexity.

Through these presentations, I saw the way underrepresented people's identities are defined by people in our mostly European-American society, and the negative impacts on the people who are in the minority. Keene pointed out, if you google Native American, you'll see Natives in headdresses, in ceremonial dress, images from long ago. She explained that headdresses weren't even the Native wear for some people in the images, and ceremonial dress is only worn under sacred circumstance. There

Continued on page 4

Common Councils' First Chief of Staff: A Conversation with Kwasi Obeng

Q: Can you say a little about your background?

I am a native of Ghana in West Africa but was born in Senegal, educated in England and the US, and I call Atlanta home because that is where I spent most of my adult years, 15 years to be exact.

Q: You've had a relatively short time in this new position. What do you see as primary area(s) where you can make a difference?

There are several ways that I try to make a difference. First and foremost, I



try to ensure that the Common Council Office provides excellent customer service to all 20 Alders. Services include, but are not limited to, legislative research so that Alders can make decisions based on data and best practices, not just anecdotes; responding to constituent concerns, and assisting to draft legislation. I also feel like I'm an integral part of the Council's efforts to expand its community outreach and engagement. This means building connections with all communities across the City and ensuring that the Madison City

Continued on page 3

Façade Grants Help Small, Minority-owned, and Women-owned Businesses Afford a New Look



Donna Collingwood

Walk around in one of Madison's shopping districts and you will see a business that has benefitted from the Façade Improvement Grant Program. The program began in October, 2000, with the goal of supporting and encouraging small, local businesses to reinvest in downtown, neighborhood shopping districts, and business areas. These are matching grants, with business owners providing some of the funding. Grants are \$10,000 for one façade, \$20,000 for a building with two façades, and \$25,000 for a "flatiron" building.

The objective of the program is to restore, beautify, or enhance the façade or elevation of a commercial building. The grant assists projects where retail activities can be promoted by creating attractive environments that preserve and enhance the neighborhood character. Well designed façades elevate the level of architectural design and promote the use of quality materials.

The program recently awarded the 100th grant to Tiny's Tap. \$1,316,000 has been invested in Façade grants supporting over \$2,975,000 in privately funded improvements for a total of over \$4.2 million dollars' worth of improvements to properties in our most visible neighborhoods.

Several projects funded with Façade Improvement Grants have recently won design awards. Façade projects at 117 E. Main Street (Maduro) won the 2018 Mayor's design award for Historic Preservation. The Wisco at 852 Williamson St won the 2018 Mayor's design award for Transformation. 707 S. Park Street (woman-owned Design Craft) won the Mayor's Design Award in 2016. 🇧🇷



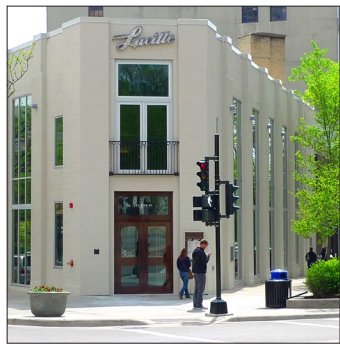
Alano Society



Southside Bank



Woman-owned Laquerus



Lucille



Minority-owned Buraka



The Piano Bar



Bialy's



A DRAMATIC MAKEOVER

1602 Gilson Street

Becomes Funk Factory Geuzeria

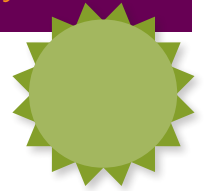
Webinar Series

Jason Glozier and Norm Davis did a live webinar for the League of Municipalities on Support Animals and the Law. They covered the basics of service animals and emotional support animals and fielded questions from the viewing audience.

You can access the webinar [here](#).

Upcoming 2019 webinars include:

- Madison's Protected Classes Jan. 10
- Racial Equity Social Justice Initiative Feb. 14
- Affirmative Action, March 14



Continued from page 1

Government is working effectively and efficiently for everyone, by informing the public on the great work the City is doing and soliciting feedback on the quality of the delivery of services. It is important that I help to develop a culture where all residents are comfortable to reach out to the Alders and the Council Office to express concerns or praise. Finally, I try to serve as a liaison to the Mayor's office and Department staff to ensure there is no duplication of efforts, that Council priorities align with the Mayor's, and that we are efficient and effective in meeting the needs of all our residents. Through open communication, I try to ensure that our office is on the same page with City staff with respect to what is pragmatic and what our capacities are. I also try to assist, along with the Mayor's office and department heads, in fostering public/private partnerships.

Q: You mentioned (in a *Cap Times* piece) a report by the Department of Justice while you were in Chicago. Chicago is known, right or wrong, for crime and policing issues. How were the recommendations implemented and do you think they've had some success in reducing violent crime, assuming that was part of the goal.

Chicago, in a lot of respects, is very different from Madison. Issues in policing were completely separate from crime rates, though some officers expressed concerns that they were on edge and sometimes reactionary due to the high numbers of gun violence crimes. In Chicago, all City employees have a residency requirement so with respect to policing, we made recommendations like attempting to assign officers close to where they reside where they are familiar with the community. We also determined that a gun buyback program executed by the Chicago police department was effective in getting a lot of guns off the streets. Finally, prior to my departure, a public safety section was created in the Office of Inspector General to evaluate the efficacies of the police oversight agencies. There is still a lot of work to be done and cultural change always takes time but with the conviction in the Laquan McDonald case, I believe that

police departments across the country will be incentivized to police themselves and hold each other accountable. Several recommendations were made to the Chicago Police Department and there are mechanisms in place to conduct follow up audits and determine how much progress has been made in implementing corrective actions.

Q: Madison, like other municipalities, is experiencing that same struggle with how much policing is enough? Are certain neighborhoods overpoliced? And why does it seem the MPD gets pretty hefty budget increases each year?

In many if not all municipalities, police take up the lion's share of the budget so in that respect, Madison is not unique. However, unlike most major municipalities, crime is not necessarily localized in any part of the City. Both the East side and West side get a decent amount of crime incidents so I have no reason to believe that certain neighborhoods are over-policed. I do believe that there are pockets of the city, including downtown on State Street, that receive a high number of calls for service, some due to alcohol related incidents. The city is rapidly growing and becoming more diverse which raises some anxiety, but relatively speaking, Madison is a very safe place to live.

Q: Apparently the consultants felt one area of MPD that needs work is the Critical Incident Response. Do you agree and will that happen?

Critical Incident Response is a challenge in any municipality. I think there needs to be a broader national discussion as to the role of police departments. Right now, we expect the police to embrace roles that they have not been trained for historically and culturally. We expect them to maintain law and order, be social workers, community advocates, and much more. I do believe that MPD has taken steps to incorporate de-escalation training in their academy and it is something that should be ongoing. There are so many theories as to what policing in the 21st century should look like. Broadly speaking, the police department is but one cog in the wheel. For significant change, we need

to evaluate the entire criminal justice system and find better ways of dealing with mental health issues rather than incarcerating people. For example, I wish the current approaches being proposed to the opioid epidemic were employed in previous years with the crack cocaine epidemic.

Q: Desk: messy or organized?

Organized chaos.

Q: Why is the Racial Equity Social Justice Initiative (RESJI) important to you? How does it affect your day-to-day work/life?

Racial Equity and Social Justice is the bedrock of the reason I chose a career in public service. I believe in distributive justice and believe that the role of government is to ensure that every individual is able to meet Maslow's hierarchy of needs. In my day to day, this means reaching out to all communities and making sure that there are open lines of communication with everyone in the City from the affluent to the less fortunate and the voiceless. I work with Alders to ensure that the voices and sentiments of everyone in their district, no matter the demographic, is well represented.

Q: What are you looking forward to?

Spending time with family in Ghana for New Year's day and summer time in Madison.

Q: If the whole world were listening, what would you say?

Love one another.

Q: Who would you like to see featured in a future profile in this newsletter?

I'm thinking Anthony Cooper of Focus Interrupted has a powerful story.

Q: What is the wallpaper on your cellphone?

I keep it simple. It is a gray textured screen.

Q: What's your favorite song?

That's a tough one. I think my all-time favorite is Redemption Song by the great Bob Marley. 🇵🇸

Continued from page 1

are few images of present day, every day Native Americans. And, when European Americans do appropriate images, they do so insensitively, as in sexy Indian women Halloween costumes, paper headdresses at Thanksgiving, ceremonial clothes worn at music concerts. Keene spoke about a study where Native American and European American students were both shown images of Native Americans: Pocahontas, Chief Wahoo, or Negative Stereotypes. After seeing the images, even the “positive” image, Native Americans felt worse about themselves. When she was interviewed on NPR, and there was an accompanying photo of her, she received a lot of criticism about not looking Native American. She explained this is another example of extraction from Natives in a long, difficult history of extraction—extraction from land, from culture, from language, and from the opportunity to see and portray themselves as they are.

The Lunch & Performance keynote puzzled me at first. After watching Reyes’ movie, in which he showed every day, even joyful moments in the lives of undocumented people, I wondered whether he was trying to trivialize the plight of the undocumented. Then I realized he, an undocumented person, was making a movie about the undocumented so they can be seen fully—not as objects of our pity, of our fear, of our hate, of our, of our, of our, and described with one noun or adjective, “undocumented”—but as whole people with complex lives, not to be defined by others, but by themselves.

Both Keene and Reyes offered alterNatives to European-American views of Native Americans and undocumented people. By Keene speaking out as a Native scholar, writer, blogger, and activist, she helps define Native American. Keene also pointed us to Native American run sites and perspectives: Beyond Buckskin Boutique and Natives Outdoors offer Native American designed products,



The newly-renovated Madison Municipal Building is part of the Façade Grant Program. There will be an open house with tours on December 8, 2018.

IACA certifies that art and crafts are made by Natives, Natives in America is an online literary publication, Trail of Lightning is a post-apocalyptic fantasy steeped in Native American culture and history and written by a Native author, there's an Indigenous Comic Con, Indian and Cowboy offers Native podcasts, Well for Culture is a mind-body Native oriented site, and both Oyate and The Zinn Education Project offer resources so that Native lives and histories are portrayed accurately in the media.

In Reyes’ own story of being an undocumented person—and his poetry, performance art, and movie about undocumented people—he shows by example that underrepresented people can and need to take control of their own stories.

How can the RESJI newsletter facilitate

this? We want to allow space for you to share your story in this newsletter. It's great that we draw attention to underrepresented groups by writing articles. But perhaps, even better, we can give space to you, space for people not typically heard from to represent yourselves, to speak, so you can be seen for who you are, not filtered through someone else's lens. Due to space constraints, we will choose which submissions to publish and when, while keeping the author apprised. Please contact Donna Collingwood for more information. 🇺🇸

Videos from the YWCA Summit:

- [Adrienne Keene and Yosimar Reyes](#)
- [Bettina Love](#)
- [Reanae McNeal](#)

RESJI Trainings in 2019

A top goal for 2019 is to get employees who do field work or work different shifts access to training. Parking, Fire, Police, Library, Engineering, Fleet, and Metro all have employees who work other than first shift, Monday through Friday, or are out in the field and so have had difficulty attending trainings.

The trainings will be one hour in length to best fit schedules and will be held on site in the different departments. RESJI will partner with agency staff to schedule these trainings and bring racial equity and social justice learning opportunities to their employees. 🇺🇸

