

Knowing Our History

how racism was deliberately constructed to create our free country

Dr. Christy Clark-Pujara, distinguished historian and UW professor, presented to a full house of City employees and guests at the Madison Municipal Building on Monday, December 16, 2019. The topic was “Why Race Matters: the Creation of the White Black Binary in the United States.” She asked why there is so much tension, division, and disparity between races in the United States today, especially between Black and white, and found the answer in our nation’s early history.

Beginning by stating that the idea of covering such a massive topic in one hour is “patently absurd,” Dr. Clark-Pujara acknowledged that it’s also problematic to frame the issue in binary black-and-white terms. In particular, she acknowledged that while our country can seem mysterious and strange if we don’t understand the legacy of slavery, we can’t fully understand that legacy until we grasp the scope of the forced dispossession of the land from First Nations people.

The rest of the hour flew by as Dr. Clark-Pujara expertly lifted up historical evidence. She focused on the precolonial period and early republic through the mid-19th century. Some key concepts included the ways in which slavery in the Americas differed from anything the world had before seen; the deliberate construction

“Race matters because it is a historical construction that is part of the very foundation of our present society.”

of racism into the laws of the United States; and the ways this played out in the North.

The institution of slavery as practiced in the Americas was unique for several reasons, explained Dr. Clark-Pujara. Slavery here existed on a massive scale never before seen in history. Historians know from written evidence that 12.4 million African people were enslaved, and five to six million deaths were caused, by the American institution of slavery. In contrast, in the entire Roman Empire, the number of people who experienced slavery at some point in their lives is measured in the tens or hundreds of thousands.

American slavery was unique in that it was explicitly based on race. Dr. Clark-Pujara demonstrated in detail, using Virginia as an example, the

Continued on page 3



Affinity Groups Can Help You Get Involved

The City has two staff groups that are open to any staff person that is interested.

Women's Initiatives Committee

WIC partners with the City of Madison to involve women in all job positions, decisions, policies, and functions through advocacy and education. All permanent employees who have passed their probationary period can join. Any City employee may seek membership after attending two consecutive meetings.

Multicultural Affairs Committee

The Multicultural Affairs Committee (MAC) is comprised of City of Madison employees and charged with addressing issues of concern to City of Madison employees from historically underrepresented racial and ethnic groups. Any City employee may seek membership after attending two meetings. Meetings are open to the public, and all employees are welcome to attend.

Find out more about both groups on employeenet. ■■

Focused Interruption Coalition:

By Rebecca Below, Department of Civil Rights

In November, the RESJI Speaker Series featured 2019 recipient of the City-County Martin Luther King, Jr. Humanitarian award, Anthony Cooper. Mr. Cooper was chosen for this award for his outstanding community service, including his work with the Focused Interruption Coalition. Mr. Cooper described how he and his team are a point of contact for the community to help with de-escalation and crisis response.

Mr. Cooper described how as a person that had been justice-involved many years ago, he sought to set a better example for his sons, and now wishes to encourage and help individuals navigate their way to better outcomes by providing support and connecting individuals to resources. In the first nine months of 2019, Focused Interruption Coalition was involved in 26 total incidents to interrupt violence, provide crisis response and support to victims in the community, impacting 146 program participants.

Focused Interruption Coalition partners with many different agencies and resources in the community to support their program participants including Public Health Madison Dane County, the Madison Police Department, UW Hospital and Clinics and UW Health, Thomas and Associates licensed therapists, Urban League of Greater Madison, and CSIT (Community Safety Intervention Team).

For more information on Mr. Cooper's presentation, go to:

<https://media.cityofmadison.com/Mediasite/Play/3da4bcfdaf044e09b7dcad366dc6e31d1d>

CELEBRATE BLACK HISTORY AND WOMEN'S HISTORY



Department of Civil Rights
and Monona Terrace

FEBRUARY 28

Free HARRIET SCREENING!
7:00 pm, Monona Terrace
Discussion to follow

Free and open to City employees
and the public

“I make no pretension to patriotism. So long as my voice can be heard on this or the other side of the Atlantic, I will hold up America to the lightning scorn of moral indignation. In doing this, I shall feel myself discharging the duty of a true patriot; for he is a lover of his country who rebukes and does not excuse its sins.”

—Frederick Douglass, "Love of God, Love of Man, Love of Country," September 24, 1847

FEBRUARY

February is **Black History** Month

2/27/2020

RESJI Part 2, 9am-noon, MMB 215
Applying Racial Equity & Social Justice.

2/27/2020

CORE Team meeting, 10:00 am–11:00 am. **Networking meeting.** MMB 215.

MARCH

March is **Women’s History** Month

3/5/2020

RESJI Part 1, 1:00-4:00 pm, MMB 206. **What are Racial Equity & Social Justice?**

3/16/2020

Speaker Series: Othering and Belonging: Alia Stevenson. 1:00-2:00 pm, Room 206, MMB.

3/26/2020

CORE Team meeting, 10:00 am–11:00 am. CCB Room 357

3/24/2020

RESJI Part 1, 9:00 am-noon, MMB 153. **What are Racial Equity & Social Justice?**

March 13 to April 15 is National **Deaf History** Month

APRIL

4/7/2020

RESJI Part 2, 1:00-4:00 pm, MMB 206 **Applying Racial Equity & Social Justice.**

4/15/2020

RESJI Part 1, 1:00-4:00 pm, MMB 206. **What are Racial Equity & Social Justice?**

4/20/2020

Save the date: Dana Cutler Presentation. 1:00-3:00 pm, MMB 215.

4/23/2020

April 2020 CORE Team: Latinx Community Engagement Team update.

4/25 & 4/26/2020

9:30 am to 4:30 pm. Goodman Community Center. \$50.00. **The Inner Work of Racial Justice. Healing Ourselves and Transforming Our Communities. A Mindfulness Retreat for Black, Indigenous, Latinx and other People of Color.** For questions, email: hsorensen@uwhealth.org

“Never be limited by other people’s limited imaginations.”

—Dr. Mae Jemison, first African-American female astronaut

Free Black History Month events at South Madison Library

In celebration of Black History Month, February 2020, an exhibit of the beautifully decorated covers of UMOJA will be at the Goodman South Madison Library, 2222 Park St., for the entire month of February. The Exhibit, food receptions and all events are free to all. This is in partnership with the Committee for a Black History Museum in Madison, and is sponsored by Beyond the Page, and the Friends of Goodman South Madison Library.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 20TH, 6-7:30 PM

Tribute to Our Elders: Speak and Song

This is a tribute to Wisconsin Community Activist, Joe McClain, and our elders. Joe McClain testimonials are welcomed. Precious Memories Choir, a choir made up of people with memory loss, their caregivers, family and friends, will sing. A soul food tribute, with historical African American dishes including red beans and rice, (one with meat and one without) cabbage and tea cakes.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 27TH, 6-7:30 PM

African American History in Madison

Come enjoy local history buffs Pia Kinney James, Char Braxton and Edith Lawrence Hilliard as they pay tribute to their legacies in Madison through a discussion of Madison past, present and future. They are from African American families who have lived in Madison for generations. There will also be a Soul food meal featuring African American food from local African American caterer, Ruthie’s Chili Spot. The menu is succotash, one with meat and one without, cornbread and sweet potato pie. 