

Minutes- Hardwick Equity Committee Meeting
HEC Meeting with Building Fearless Futures
6:00 pm, Monday May 3, 2021
Via Zoom

Present: Ceilidh, Chip, Lucian, Audrey, David, Beth (notes)

Special Guests: Rachel, Laura & Netdahe of Building Fearless Futures (BFF)

Action steps:

- Netdahe will email Lucian to connect w/ Everytown BIPOC Land Stewardship Project
- Connect BFF to areas of need (this includes but is not limited to town level conversations) for consultations
- Space on next meeting agenda for discussion
- Rachel will send a list of organizations specializing in specific issues to Ceilidh

Meeting called to order 6:06 pm

Key points:

About BFF- non-profit under Wheelock Mountain Farm; 3 members collectively have over 25 years' experience with activism and work against racism; they work in multiple schools; they offer direct support to BIPOC students in multiple ways as well as direct consultation with school admin and other businesses

-Netdahe: intervention work -one on one with people displaying racist ideas & actions; help people see how racism hurts them directly

-Rachel: works with BIPOC students -mostly girls- pairing them with mentors, broadening their experiences, helping them find resources necessary for their self-care, health and well-being; creating space for other BIPOC VTers, offering support for health and well-being to counteract the direct health effects of white supremacy

-Laura: hosting workshops on dismantling white supremacy; creates affinity spaces for BIPOC, helping kids understand effects of white supremacy on them; advocating for kids who often go unheard; development with teachers & parents

Issues that students & community members bring to the conversation: family acceptance, policy/law issues, coded media/political messaging, lack of understanding of bigger issues/interconnectedness, denial that racism is real, polarization of ideologies (which harm BIPOC most directly), silenced when starting/trying to talk about issues, lack of support for students and for people wanting to create change (community members must speak up when necessary), cumulative effects of racism & microaggressions, stress of management of those effects

Issues:

-White supremacy creates disembodiment for all involved -BFF also helps ppl get back in touch with themselves

-Talking about these realities often makes people uncomfortable

-There is no reason why even the most poor people cannot end up on the path of working for anti-racism

-however, there is a deep backlash/pushback happening right now to people engaging in these conversations; as a result, people doing anti-racist work don't feel safe -how to create safety for people doing this work?

How to create spaces:

- Build relationships
- Build trust & credibility
- Personal commitment to anti-racist work -must be honest with yourself (personal work, acknowledge self, listen, learn); do the work necessary to create equality
- Be brave, be bold, work hard, accept that it will be uncomfortable (but keep showing up)
- Kids are often more open than adults -talk with them
- Show up as being helpful to BIPOC and other marginalized communities -listen to what that means
- Listen to voice of marginalized communities, identify who is going unheard -reach out to them, engage with the networks of those communities (LGBTQ+, disabled ppl, etc)
- Reach out and engage w/BIPOC efforts/projects
- Be available to the community to help people process and make sense of experiences
- Influence change in all the pertinent areas (policy, personal, etc) -this must be organized, coordinated and consistent
- Recognize how policy leaves people out -work to change that to create an equitable community
- Pay marginalized communities for the work they do in addressing these issues (there is a wage gap for marginalized communities); invest in programs that support growth in these areas
- Equip selves to deal with the pushback; stand firm as a group against the pushback, use leverage to keep spaces/laws/policies safe & mindful of marginalized communities
- How to create space for convo w/people who don't want to engage? Stay curious, avoid confrontation (that many people are expecting), ask questions, hold space for other people's humanity; Educate as many people as possible in how to approach moments effectively

*Many groups working on education w/in community -how do we leverage voices instead of recreating them; we want to dig deep into the questions we/community has -how can we be mutually supportive & what policy areas can we be most effective in?

*Connect BFF to areas of need (this includes but is not limited to town level conversations) for consultations

*Specific organizations are dealing with specific issues in issues such as: housing/land, schools, policing. BFF can help direct town/committee towards specific orgs as needed

*JRH6 states racism is a public health issue, passed VT Legislature yesterday

Resources:

Green Book Guides

"The Sum of Us" by Heather McGhee

"How to be An Antiracist" by Ibram X. Kendi

Possible connections:

Clemmons Family Farm

Everytown BIPOC Land Stewardship Project

Rights & Democracy

Coalition for Ethnic & Social Equity in Schools

VT Racial Justice Alliance

Wheelock Mountain Farm

Other equity committees

Other select boards working on these issues

“Give and Make space/take space”

“Not about us without us”

“If you value something, you will make it happen”

Doing this work is incredibly important & necessary -it is essential to our survival