

A Time for Reflection

Good morning Woodstock and surrounding towns. I have found in these past few weeks more time for reflection. Reflection on work, on previously ignored priorities, on the importance of staying connected to friends and family while we cannot physically connect.

Yesterday, I attended two very different events that gave me cause for reflection on the work of Pentangle and my role as a parent and individual in the world we now live in.

In the morning I attended a zoom memorial service for a beloved neighbor attended by over 400 people in addition to her family, dear friends, husband and five children. There were many poignant, sad, and yet happy moments in the one-hour service. One particularly moving moment was when her young children read aloud past advice they had received from their mother.

There were many pearls of wisdom in what they read. One stood out to me, and I a paraphrase; “move in different circles and circles that don’t intersect so you can engage with a wide variety of people.”

I thought about how young people encouraged to “move in different circles” have a better shot at being more tolerant and inclusive adults. Obviously, here in small largely white community moving in distinctly different circles can be a challenge. Our best attempts as parents of young children was to expose them to literature, music and movies that reflect the diversity of the world, and the value and importance of being engaged, informed and active citizens.

The second event I attended was the vigil on the Village Green gracefully and passionately preside over by Rev. Leon Dunkley from the North Chapel.

At the end of the vigil we took the symbolic knee for nine minutes in remembrance of George Floyd.

In that nine minutes, I again reflected. Reflected on how I can be part of this collective effort to break the violent cycle of hate and wrongful death.

I thought about how the arts are a perfect vehicle to explore, and create dialog around difficult societal issues including endemic racism and unchecked police violence. I thought about some of our past Youth in Arts Programs and how deep the messages included therein penetrated the students minds and ways of thinking about race and about the black experience in America.

I remembered questions students asked during a workshop with members of the Dance Theatre of Harlem on the history of the African American experience from the slave trade up through Black Lives Matter through dance, poetry, and music. It was clear many of the students while they spoke of their love of hip hop had no notion of its roots. And though they had heard the term Black Lives Matter they did not view it in the context of history, nor had they understood how deeply rooted the entire African American experience was tied to slavery.

I also recall the student’s reactions to the one woman show *Warrior’s Don’t Cry* based on Melba Pattillo Beal’s searing memoir of her battle as one of the Little Rock Nine to integrate Little Rock high School in 1957. The actress playing Ya Girl, a young activist whose passion for societal justice is reignited when Melba Pattillo’s voice comes through her cell phone imploring her to keep up the struggle. The actress tried to connect with the student audience urging them to join her in raising their hands to make a

difference. It was more a matter of their sense of decorum as an audience than actual resistance that kept them quietly sitting their seats.

At the talk back at the end students were asked what issues mattered to them. There was quite a range from LGBTQ rights, climate change, sexism, to protection of the second amendment. There were only a few call outs for an end to racism. I wondered as I shifted knees how different their reaction would be today.

As we left the green and walked toward the Town Hall I thought how I will need to find creative ways to continue to help engage our young people to see the world from different perspectives, to give them a view into that which may be unfamiliar. So that they too can reflect on the importance of their role in whatever circle (s) they may move in.