

NEXT KCDW MEETING OCT. 17TH: Yacht Club Broiler – No host lunch - 11 am; Meeting - noon. Please NOTE we have moved this meeting to a SATURDAY to allow time for a full discussion of proposed Bylaw changes. This is the meeting at which we will vote on these changes as well as any proposed amendments to these changes. Also please note, that our November meeting will be on the 18th, a week earlier than usual. Please bring non-perishable items for the Food Bank. NO RSVP required.

BLACK LIVES DO MATTER

by Jo Fox Burr

Initially when the Black Lives Matters (BLM) activists took over Bernie Sanders' podium at Westlake and declared the crowd boos showed how racist Seattle was, I was turned off. It seemed an unfair judgement and a seriously misguided way to get the attention of those who might actually be sympathetic. Then I read an email dialogue published on The Atlantic website (8/21/15) between a journalist, Conor Freidersdorf, sympathetic with BLM but similarly bothered, and a young black Seattle woman, Martha Tesema, who supported the BLM actions, and I found myself more on the fence. What struck me most, though, was that as hard as they both tried to understand each other, neither fully succeeded.

Recently Charlie Rose interviewed Ta-Nehisi Coates whose book, "Between the World and Me" was written as a letter to his 15-year old son about what it means to be a black man in this society. Coates reminded us that black people first came to this country as slaves, i.e., as property, which he felt was a major factor in the racial injustice he perceives to be permanent. This gave me pause.

I remembered a bit from Ken Burns' Civil War documentary which talked about why the Emancipation Proclamation was issued. While Lincoln opposed slavery, he initially refused to declare the Civil War was about abolishing it, as many Northerners would not have fought for that. When slaves started escaping to the North, this presented a conundrum, as the Fugitive Slave Law required them to be returned to their owners. To avoid doing that, the North declared them to be 'contraband of war.' Only after that were they freed. Ultimately, to keep European powers from supporting the South and to help manage the increasing numbers of escaped slaves, Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation. In other words, the initial African Americans' legal transformation from being property to becoming free human beings was not as much a matter of general public conscience as it was a matter of expediency. And this followed a history of 250 years of enslavement. The Civil War was only 150 years ago! Black people have spent more time in our society as slaves than as free people, and perhaps more importantly our society has spent more time sanctioning slavery than not. Could this be a part of why Freidersdorf and Tesema have difficulty understanding each other?

While I have not read his book, Michelle Alexander's review of Coates' book in The New York Times (8/17/15) states that since it was written from one black man to another, it does not contain the usual "hedging and filtering and softening and overall distortion that seems to happen automatically...when black people attempt to speak about race to white people." Ouch! As Coates feels racial injustice is an unchangeable fact of life, he does not offer his son guidance as to how to overcome it. This is depressing, but it is an honest look at what current reality appears to be for Coates and perhaps many other Blacks. It leaves me feeling guilty for not fully realizing this before, but understanding it could be a good way to start a better dialogue.

Of all the current white Democratic leaders out there, the one BLM seems to most appreciate is Elizabeth Warren. I'm sure that her full embrace of their cause is a major factor. However, I suspect her honest admission that as a white politician she cannot begin to truly understand their fear, oppression, and pain must make her seem more genuine. And I'm left to wonder if what the BLM movement needs most, aside from the recognition that they DO matter, is an admission that our lack of understanding of how our past history together still plays a role in our present interactions. Perhaps if we could come to a

Support

Contact site support at support@kitsapdemocraticwomen.org

reckoning about that, we could finally find a way to constructively move forward.

OTHER UPCOMING DEMOCRATIC MEETINGS AND EVENTS: (*GM designates a general membership meeting)

Kitsap Co. Dem. Central Com: GM* Oct 19 (Monday); 6:30 pm Desserts; 7 pm meeting; Eagles Nest
23rd Leg. District Democrats: GM* Nov 17 (Tuesday); 6:30 pm social time; 7 pm meeting; Poulsbo Library

26th Leg. District Democrats: GM* Nov 6th (Thursday); 7-9 pm; Kitsap Rm, Givens Ctr 1026 Sidney Rd, Port Orchard

35th Leg. District Democrats: Nov 15 (Sunday); 2-4 pm; West Sound Extravaganza of Music, Dance, Art & Humor.

Tickets through AdmiralTheatre.org/Tickets - \$25; \$30 at the door

GOVERNMENT CONTACTS

CONGRESS -

Senator Maria Cantwell Senator Patty Murray

202-224-3441 (DC); 1-888-648-7328 (State Offices) 202-224-2621 (DC)

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Murray.senate.gov; Email from Website

Congressman Derek Kilmer (6th District)

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STATE GOVERNMENT -

Governor Jay Inslee: 360-902-4111; www.governor.wa.gov; [3] Email from Website

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23rd Legislative District

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Rep. Sherry Appleton (D) Rep. Drew Hansen (D)

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"They [Black Lives Matter activists] are not asserting that black lives are more precious than white lives. They are underlining an indisputable fact - that the lives of black citizens in this country historically have not mattered, and have been discounted and devalued." - The New York Times Editorial Board, Sept 3, 2015

DON'T FORGET, THAT IT IS NEVER TOO LATE TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE BAKELESS BAKE SALE!!!

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Links

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