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# JOHN GEORGE DEMOCRATIC CLUB

## NEWSLETTER--August, 2015

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### 5th Biennial *John George Social Justice Award Reception*

### *Taking Action:* **BLACK LIVES MATTER**

**September 16, 2015**  
**5:30 – 7:30 PM**  
**Everett & Jones,**  
**126 Broadway, Oakland**

**This year's John George Social Justice Awards will honor three individuals and one group, all of whom have committed themselves to social justice.**

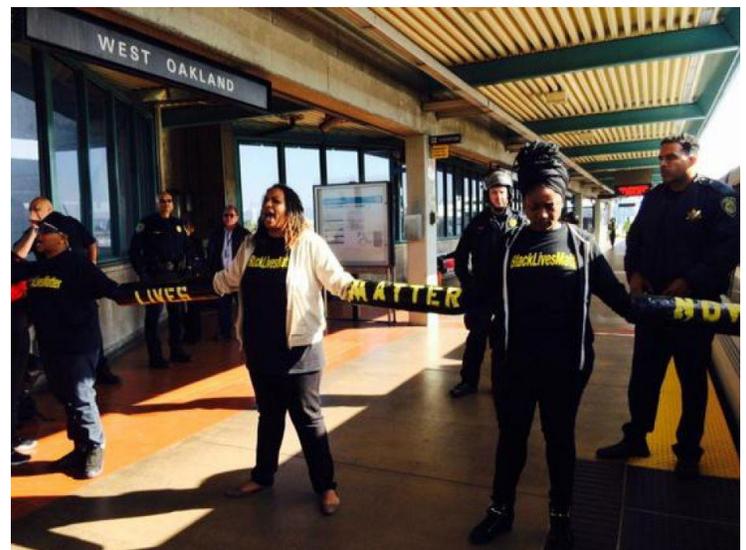
**Keynote speaker:** Assemblymember Tony Thurmond, 15th Assembly District

**Boona Cheema--Lifetime Achievement Award,** Building Opportunities for Self-Sufficiency (BOSS) – 34 years as executive director, to build the biggest service provider for homeless in Berkeley.

**Black Lives Matter activists—Social Justice Award** arrested at West Oakland BART – 14 courageous women protested the ongoing police violence against African Americans across the country on November 28, 2014 in a civil disobedience action. Their hashtag "Black Lives Matter" has become a national slogan for social justice.

**Miss Asiay Johnson--Young Adult Social Justice Spirit Award --** Youth from East Oakland Youth Development Center -- a graduate of Envision Academy. Will be attending as a Freshman at Sonoma State University.

**Carol Tolbert--Public Policy and Community Service Award--**Executive Director of Oakland's Civic Pride organization since 1989 providing youth education, mentoring, and leadership development.



West Oakland BART—November 28, 2014

## John George Youth Art/ Essay contest winners



Winning elementary student, Alexis McCain, from Mrs. Brooks 5th grade class at P.L.A.C.E.@Prescott

School Board member Jumoke Hinton Hodge presented the awards at the West Oakland Library, on May 23rd. Laquita McCulley from the Community Trust Credit Union opened up saving accounts for the winners.

This year's essay theme was: "There is a national movement around the slogan 'Black Lives Matter.' What do you think this means for Oakland and what can we do to make sure all lives matter in Oakland?"

For elementary School Students, the theme was to draw a picture illustrating what Oakland would look like if everyone mattered.



Jumoke Hinton Hodge, Laquita McCulley, Yahya Munsar, Alexis McCain, and Sandra Johnson Simon at the awards ceremony

The winning essay is from Yahya Munsar, 6th grader at West Oakland Middle School.

Here is Yahya's essay:

"Black Lives Matter"--we've heard it many times, but what does it actually mean? In my opinion, "Black Lives Matter," is a phrase that many people use to express their perspective on how people should be treated. Not only is it a slogan, but it has a deeper meaning to it for all of us including Oakland. Black Lives Matter is a movement that is already taking place. Look at Baltimore for example, the countless nights the people protested, the way their voices were almost gone, but they still kept chanting. Another example of a passionate crowd is the protesters in Oakland. The reason why I call the Oakland crowd passionate is because they have strong beliefs on what they want which is to be equal. They were a very intense crowd which gave them a serious reputation. This reputation gave them a lot of attention from everywhere, which in my opinion is a good thing because Oakland can use it to its advantage in terms of getting what they want, which is justice and equality for everyone.

Oakland is one of the many cities that took part of protesting after the death of Trayvon Martin. When I would look outside my window, I would hear them chanting with passion and a little bit of anger, "Black Lives Matter." Right then and there I know something big was upon us. It was as if I was there during the Martin Luther King protest back then in the day. After a few more nights of hearing the protesters another African American man was killed. The crowd grew more furious than ever. Even though the violent approach was not appropriate, I knew we were getting the attention of many civil rights leaders. These civil rights leaders play a big role in the way things should be done. This can come to our advantage by letting them speak to government leaders.

As Oakland, we don't get much attention from anywhere; it's almost as if we are living under the shadow of San Francisco. So in my opinion what we have to do is not only take advantage of the attention we are receiving but combine with other political and civil rights leaders and speak out to the government. We gain their attention so they know what the people want and expect from the government.

However, if that does not work what the people should do is start a petition to investigate every death of every person in police custody. This means that regardless of the person's race or who they are, if they died of police brutality, or if the police abuses their power to the point where they are hurting another person, they have to be investigated. If this were to happen, I think things would be a lot safer in terms of people being equal."

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"The idea that some lives matter less is the root of all that is wrong with the world"—Paul Farmer

## Coal in Oakland?

By Jack Lucero Fleck



Rev Daniel Buford from Allen Temple Baptist Church speaks to 300 opponents of coal in Oakland on July 21 at City Hall

Dozens of speakers—parents, doctors, West Oakland residents, union representatives, young people and veteran activists—all urged the city council to oppose coal in Oakland. Developer Phil Tagami is proposing to bring millions of tons of coal to the former Oakland Army Base. One union activist rejected the customary "we need the jobs" argument saying, "There are no jobs on a dead planet." Ms. Margaret Gordon told the council, "You can stop coal in Oakland" because of its impact on health and safety.

Ms. Gordon was referring to a clause in Tagami's contract that allows the city to reject any proposal that has health and safety impacts after holding a public hearing. The Council is poised to make just such a finding and has scheduled a hearing on September 21.

Opponents to the coal plan include all of the East Bay's legislative representatives—Rob Bonta, Tony Thurmond, and Lonnie Hancock. The three officials wrote an excellent opinion piece which is excerpted below:

"Oakland is considering a proposal to bring in, and then export, up to 9 million tons of Utah coal per year. Trains bringing this coal to Oakland would crisscross a large swath of Northern California on their way to the Bay Area.

Coal is the most carbon intensive fuel on Earth. This is the coal industry's latest effort to get a toxic commodity to environmentally lax overseas markets.

California and the Bay Area in particular are leading the way on climate and clean energy policies. This year, the Legislature is considering SB185, which would divest our largest public pension systems from coal investments. In April, Gov. Jerry Brown signed an executive order strengthening AB32, California's groundbreaking Global Warming Solutions Act, requiring a reduction in California's carbon pollution to 40 percent below 1990 levels by 2030. He also called for expanding our clean energy economy by requiring that half of our state's energy come from clean resources by 2030.

As part of this effort, local leaders are courageously taking a stand against coal. Last summer, following the Port Commission's unanimous rejection in February 2014 of proposals to export coal from the Port of Oakland, the Oakland City Council passed a resolution opposing the transport of fossil fuels by rail through the city. That resolution specifically expressed opposition to coal exports from Oakland. And, they are not the only ones; Berkeley, Richmond, Emeryville and Albany also passed resolutions opposing coal, petroleum coke and oil running through their cities and into our communities by rail.

Opening up our ports to coal means dirtier air in the Bay Area and a warmer planet for everyone. A major national railway estimates that each open-top rail car loses up to 1 ton of coal dust between the mines and the port, translating to 60,000 pounds of toxic fine particulate matter coating our neighborhoods and entering our air and water for every coal train trip. Communities such as West Oakland and North Richmond, disproportionately impacted by urban pollution, will be at even greater risk of asthma, heart disease and cancer.

Carbon pollution knows no boundaries. Transporting coal through our communities and exporting it from our ports means turning our backs on our community's values and risking California's strong reputation as a climate leader. We strongly oppose this project. This is our Bay Area. Let us make sure our future is clean, safe and prosperous."

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## White Fragility: Why It's So Hard to Talk to White People About Racism

by Alona Clifton (Co-chair Emeritus!)

*Note: This is a review of an essay Robin DiAngelo, PhD, Associate Professor of Critical Multicultural & Social Justice Education. She currently serves as Director of Equity for Senior Services, Seattle/King County. For the full essay, please [click here](#).*

Dr. DiAngelo has tapped into many of the things that **I think**, that **I know** and, of equal importance, things that **I feel** to be true. Therefore, reading her article was quite rewarding!! Below are selected excerpts that highly resonated with me along with my comments.

Dr. DiAngelo starts out stating that the socialization process for whites leaves them "**racially illiterate**...with a lack of humility."

**This is probably, for me, the most important assertion by DiAngelo. Most white people have no understanding of structural racism and, therefore, cannot engage in a meaningful deep-level conversation about the tool of structural racism: individual racism.**

"This **systemic and institutional** control allows those of us who are white in North America to live in a social environment that protects and insulates us from **race-based stress**. We have organized society to reproduce and reinforce our racial interests and perspectives."

“Social scientists understand racism as a multidimensional and highly adaptive system -- a system that ensures an unequal distribution of resources between racial groups...While individual whites may be against racism, they still benefit from the distribution of resources controlled by their group”

**For me this would have been a good opportunity to introduce the concept of capitalism and its relationship to U.S. racism.**

“Further, [whites] are centered in all matters deemed normal, universal, benign, neutral and good. Thus, [they] move through a wholly racialized world with an unracialized identity (e.g. white people can represent all of humanity, people of color can only represent their racial selves).”

**The notion that white people can represent all of humanity, while people of color can only represent their racial selves, must be challenged by all peoples.**

“**Individualism:** Whites are taught to see themselves as individuals, rather than as part of a racial group. Individualism enables us to deny that racism is structured into the fabric of society. This erases our history and hides the way in which wealth has accumulated over generations and benefits us, as a group, today. It also allows us to distance ourselves from the history and actions of our group. Thus we get very irate when we are "accused" of racism, because as individuals, we are "different" from other white people and expect to be seen as such; we find intolerable any suggestion that our behavior or perspectives are typical of our group as a whole.”

**Individualism is the hallmark of white people. The problem is that it comes at the expense of communities. and therefore at the expense of the well-being of communities; it would have been**

**good for the author to introduce the concept of so-called American meritocracy and its falseness within white America.**

“**Constant messages that we are more valuable:** Living in a white dominant context, we receive constant messages that we are better and more important than people of color.

For example: our centrality in history textbooks, historical representations and perspectives; our centrality in media and advertising; our teachers, role-models, heroes and heroines; everyday discourse on "good" neighborhoods and schools and who is in them; popular TV shows centered around friendship circles that are all white; religious iconography that depicts God, Adam and Eve, and other key figures as white.”

**I find the “constant messages that we are more valuable...” to be the most hurtful. The subliminal and not so subliminal messaging by white America of its importance to the centrality of American life is infuriating!! This type of superiority denies the role and therefore the importance, of in particular, African-Americans to the greatness of America on the world landscape!**

**This was a very thought provoking article with provocative “food for thought” whether one agrees or not.**



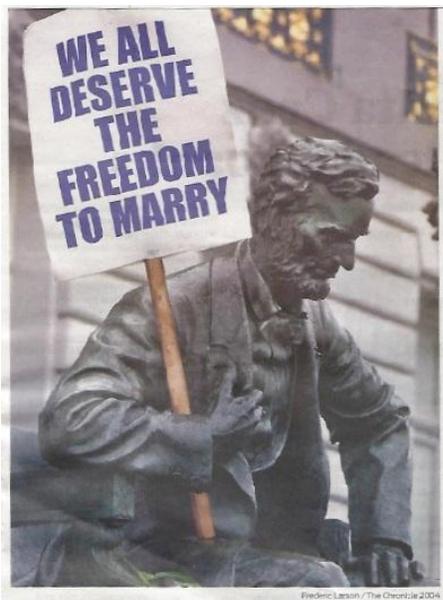
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(cartoon from the SF Chronicle)

"The Confederate flag should not come down because it is offensive to African Americans. The Confederate flag should come down because it is embarrassing to all Americans. The embarrassment is not limited to the flag, itself. The fact that it still flies, that one must debate its meaning in 2015, reflects an incredible ignorance. A century and a half after Lincoln was killed, after 750,000 of our ancestors died, Americans still aren't quite sure why." Ta-Nehisi Coates

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(Photo from SF Chronicle—2004!)

Amazingly enough, even the arch conservative US Supreme Court managed to approve gay marriage this summer, and the Affordable Care Act was reaffirmed!

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**MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Tel: (D) \_\_\_\_\_ (E) \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Enclosed are my dues for:

\_\_\_ \$40 (Regular)

\_\_\_ \$10 (Low Income)

\_\_\_ \$50 (Sustaining)

\_\_\_ \$100 (Sponsor)

Please make checks payable to John George Democratic Club and mail to P.O. 18802 Oakland, 94619. Contact: 510-436-7682, email: [jgdc@igc.org](mailto:jgdc@igc.org), web: [www.jgdc.org](http://www.jgdc.org)

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