



GIFFORD PARK'S PRIDE

Gifford Park Neighborhood: A great place to live, work, learn, and play.

www.giffordparkomaha.org

THE NEW YEAR IS HERE



GPNA MEETING

Thursday February 3rd

6:30-8PM

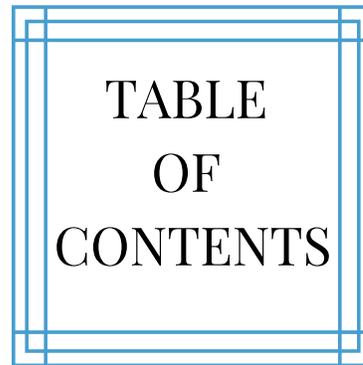
Meeting will be via Zoom

Meeting ID 850 6563 4855

Passcode GPNA

More information on Page 3

2022



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Community news

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Upcoming...

Book Club

New Gifford Park neighbors Emily and Jacob Belvery will be starting a neighborhood book club on Sundays from 4-5 pm. We will meet at Myrtle and Cypress Coffeehouse, and our first gathering will be on February 20.

Email emily.barz@cune.org to join!

Neighborhood Meeting

February is cold and the heating bills are even colder. Join us to share and learn ways to keep those bills down, participate in food distributions in the neighborhood, and start food gardens at our homes. If you complete the survey, the Gifford Park Prize Patrol might hook you up.

AND February is Black History Month! Stay tuned for celebrations around the neighborhood!

We try very hard in Gifford Park to be a pedestrian-friendly neighborhood. As a friendly reminder, and in respect to your neighbors, please keep your sidewalks shoveled to keep pedestrians safer. Omaha has a city ordinance to clear sidewalks within 24 hours of a snowfall. Residents can call the Mayor's Hotline (402-444-5555) to report addresses of properties that do not clear their walks within the 24 hours. Pitch in and help shovel your neighbor's sidewalk if they need help.



Local resident Katie Donaldson's first snow angel!

**Be A Good Neighbor
Please Shovel Your
Sidewalk!**



Board member column



Wendell Stanley's reply to criticisms of the GPNA that were made at the GPNA neighborhood meeting on November 4, 2020.

The following is a copy of the email that Wendell Stanley sent to the folks who distributed letters and knocked on doors to stimulate conversation about GPNA's governance structure and implore GPNA to be more inclusive. Also, at the November 4th neighborhood meeting, these folks called for the resignation of Martin Janousek from the GPNA board:

This reply is in my new official capacity as Vice President of the GPNA board for term year 2022 after having served one year on the board as a member at large, 2021 term year. The purpose of this reply is to acknowledge receipt of your email and begin establishing the more functional terms of engagement forward.

Eli, you represent an undisclosed group who on two occasions have distributed letters of protests at GPNA gatherings against GPNA collaborators and a named volunteer. They obviously trust your representation. I look forward to meeting each of them at the appropriate time.

There is no mutually healthy purpose I am aware of for them remaining anonymous.

Allow me to offer clarity on the indictment, "vener of open elections." My goal is to share perspective which may help serve your decision to become more ally than adversary.

Measures of agitation and protest are not the best ways for you to make the difference you claim to seek. In order to effectively work together, parties must maintain a working agreement. Finger pointing and accusation is not the optimal path to harmony.

Please consider that GPNA is a 501(c)3 volunteer organization whose power for nonpartisan grass roots community building is the vested interests of its voluntary membership. Membership enrollment is open year round for residents of the neighborhood and interested parties generally speaking only costing a nominal annual fee. GPNA is governed by a board dually nominated and elected from its collaboratively active members.

What you term a 'vener of open elections' is actually an open track of volunteers who have filtered into leadership by cooperative participation over the years. While it's understandable how an outsider might misconstrue the checks and balances in place, residents who demonstrate an interests by 'coming along side' community participation in GPNA activities intuitively understand the process.

Leadership capacity is orientated around hands on effective activity in the trenches. Another factor is what a potential leader brings to the shared table. GPNA is made up of givers of time, talent, and treasures.

Generally speaking, protest has not proven an effective means to progress historically and is therefore currently not a part of the GPNA's toolbox. This is not because we officially disdain protests. Pragmatically, we are pressed to make the best use of the limited resources entrusted us.

Volunteer organizations who frustrate people's time don't last. Hence cooperative voluntary effort serves as the heartbeat of our viable association. Paraphrasing our current President, Alex Goswami, we aim to continue as a 'call in' safe place and not a 'call out' accusation zone.

GPNA is precipitated along the tangent of collaborative efforts of neighbors, members, initiative partners, and allied entities with common goals in mind. In essence, we function to leverage natural and civil resources into sustainable quality of life for GP neighbors. Although tempting, our current purpose is not advocacy for sides of the broader political debates of socialism vs capitalism, fluidity vs patriarchy, native sovereignty vs colonial discovery, CRT vs supremacy. Our jurisdiction is facilitating the infrastructure that mutually enrich residents of our neighborhood and overlapping communities within our borders.

The remainder of your allegations would be best resolved with the entities you have questions concerning. GPNA nor its officers are authorized spokespersons for their respective operations, i.e., Yates, Big Muddy, Garden, Market. As publicly stated in the last general meeting, solutions to perceived problems above and beyond protests are welcome. Your involvement to make a difference is welcome. All I ask is that you reconsider your potential as an ally before continuing as a face of disruption. As a volunteer who value not only my own but the time of others who serve (including yours,) our opportunities to improve and maintain our neighborhood quality will not be held hostage to adversarial attacks from outside interests better served by organizations designed to fulfill their respective missions. The last draft of our vision says it best... "to make Gifford Park neighborhood a great place to live, work, learn, and play." Any movement or adversary of that vision will find itself tabled for review by a delegated committee towards official resolution.

I will be in touch once a voluntary committee for further review has been appointed by the board.

Gifford Park Receives Arboretum Award

By Karma Larsen, Nebraska Forest Service & Nebraska Statewide Arboretum

OMAHA- The Gifford Park neighborhood received a Community Landscape Award from the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum on Nov. 5. This award recognizes projects that have significantly improved the green infrastructure in a community.

Gifford Park's collective effort to improve the feeling of connection, fun, and purpose within our neighborhood has been deemed worthy of emulating in other urban communities. The neighborhood provides a space where people of all ages, colors, and socio-economic backgrounds can come together for youth activities, green space management, and local food production. In the heart of the neighborhood, the Youth Garden and adventure playground provide a place for youth to play while growing food in their individual garden plots. A treehouse sits at the base of two ancient catalpas, providing access to a zipline and an overhead view of the gardens and activities below.



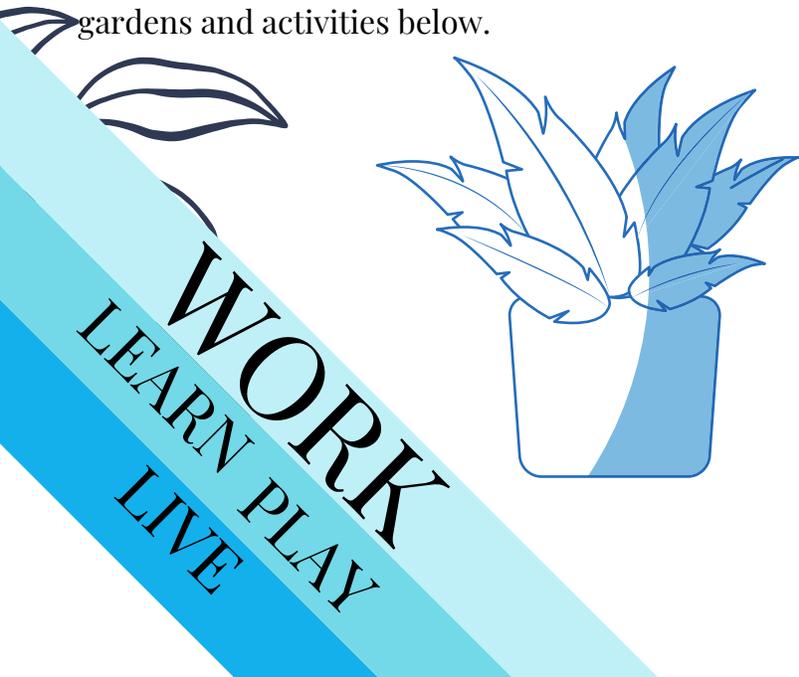
Elsewhere in the neighborhood, vacant lots and other public spaces have been made usable for vegetables and other crops; proving the value of urban agriculture and permaculture. The neighborhood itself serves as an arboretum where trees are planted, tended, and grown for all their benefits including food, shade, shelter, comfort, beauty, wildlife habitat, and stormwater capture.

These widespread activities happen through a cadre of dedicated hardworking volunteers. These volunteers include Chris Foster, Marie Hélène André, Alex Goswami, Cynthia Shuck, Stuart Shell, Dana Freeman, Kate Bodmann, Ron and Vicki Frey, Dana Carlton-Flint, Richard and Clarinda White, Martin Janousek, the Stanley family, Brent Lubbert, Diana Failla, Tyler Magnuson, Eliza Perry and more.

Community Garden

This is the time of year folks start thinking about gardening. Soon we will start to plan for community garden projects, the youth garden program, as well as Adventure Playground. Stay tuned for more updates in our next newsletter as spring approaches.

If you have any questions or are interested in becoming involved with the community garden, youth garden program or Adventure Playground, contact Chris Foster (402-290-8187 or foster3413@cox.net), or Rose Carlson (402-639-5952 or rhcarlson4@yahoo.com).



2020 Neighbor of the Year

Tyronda Pierce

The GPNA honored Tyronda Pierce as our 2020 ‘Neighbor of the Year’ at our 32nd Annual GPNA Holiday Banquet hosted by Duchesne Academy on December 2nd. She just became our newest GPNA board member, her goal is “To help with the investment of growth in our youth to seniors.”

Tyronda was born in Newcastle, Pennsylvania and has six other siblings. Her childhood dream was to be a veterinarian, and she excelled in track and basketball. Her favorite musicians are Leela James, Charlie Wilson, and Earth, Wind, & Fire.



Article by Chris Foster

Tyronda is a longtime Gifford Park resident for over 20 years and GPNA volunteer for many of our neighborhood programs and events including Easter egg Hunt, Halloween festival, neighborhood & park cleanups, youth garden, Adventure Playground, youth tennis, youth soccer, youth basketball, Yates Community Center, Gifford Park Elementary School, holiday banquet, Slip’N’Slide, 33rd Street Block Party (parade and hoop-it-up), and is a great neighbor keeping an eye on the neighborhood, especially our youth and more vulnerable folks. Tyronda is the type of neighbor who will call to check on how you are doing for no particular reason, because she genuinely cares.

Tyronda includes her children (Dale, AJ, Faushia, Alissa) and grandchildren (Shacole, Zayde, Brenda, Arnett III, Soul) in participating and volunteering. Her son AJ & former daughter-in-law Marquis (founder of The Keys Foundation) organize our annual youth basketball that started a few years ago at Yates and moved to Gifford Park elementary in 2019 because of the great success of the program. In fact, her children played and won the first 3-on-3 hoop-it-up at the GPNA Block Party! By the way, Tyronda has some great moves herself on the basketball court...trust me!

In 2020 Tyronda was honored as YouTurn’s 2020 Community Volunteer Award Recipient for her commitment to violence prevention and changing lives by helping YouTurn fulfill its mission of helping youth “Make A 180 Against Violence”

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LIVE
LEARN PLAY
WORK



(cont.) The organization committed to ending youth violence and works one-on-one with the highest risk adolescents and young adults, 12 to 25+ years of age, that are negatively impacted by violence in the community. YouTurn offers support and resources to break the cycle of poverty, reduce violence and trauma, and promote positive behavior change leading to resiliency, healthier families, and safer communities.

Tyronda has volunteered all her life including King Solomon Missionary Church (children's committee), YMCA, Mad Dads, Omaha Healthy Start, Walnut Hill Elementary (PTO president), Kellom Elementary, Gifford Park Elementary, Learning Community (parent advisor), and other organizations.

Our most recent GPNA 'Neighbor of the Year' Monica Lehn provided this quote...“Tyronda was so welcoming when I first ventured into the neighborhood. At the youth garden, I walked away from our first conversation with a sense of being in the right place. My son Ezra says, when hears ‘Tyronda’ he thinks ‘extremely kind’.” From your GPNA friends, congratulations Tyronda, you are doing incredibly important work, not just in Gifford Park, but the broader community too!

2021 Neighbor of the Year



Adrian Petrescu

The GPNA honored Adrian Petrescu as our 2021 'Neighbor of the Year' at our 32nd Annual GPNA Holiday Banquet hosted by Duchesne Academy on December 2nd, we actually kept it a secret from him! Adrian, along with his wife Marie Hélène, have been HUGE Gifford Park neighborhood cheerleaders, promoters, and ambassadors.

Adrian is an avid reader, storyteller, and photographer, and loves technology, innovation, and teaching – you have probably seen many of his photos and articles in our GPNA newsletter, especially any stories related to Yates and last summer's wildly successful Science & Arts in Parks (SAP) program at Yates. SAP was a partnership with GPNA and Yates Illuminates for youth to have fun and learn about physics and the energy of the future as they built and raced solar powered fuel cell model cars, built solar concentrators by heating water, learned to take and edit nature pictures, built functional Lego-like machines and electric circuits, and competed in teams for prizes.



LEARN
WORK PLAY
LIVE

He has been volunteering for many years on numerous other neighborhood programs and events including Restore Nebraska, Neighborhoods USA, community garden, youth activities, neighborhood Market, Save Yates efforts 1 & 2, Slip'N'Slide, Midtown Neighborhood Alliance, and others...not to mention supporting Marie Helene when she was GPNA president twice in the past several years!

Adrian was born in Bucharest, Romania and got to Omaha and Gifford Park Neighborhood in particular 'as soon as he could' (as he likes to say). He got his PhD in Pittsburgh PA, and has taught around the country, from Toledo OH to deep South Texas, to the suburbs of Philadelphia and on military bases overseas. Adrian & Marie H el ene have been in the neighborhood for over 8 years now.



I want to highlight Adrian's love of our Gifford Park community and education. No one did more than Adrian (and Marie H el ene) for our last Save Yates effort by organizing many meetings, preparing speakers and encouraging letters of support from the community for the OPS board, distributing 'Save Yates' yard signs and banners, creating and updating the Save Yates website and Facebook, worked with a variety of local media, and countless other behind the scenes work to educate and promote the effort to the public which ultimately led to that fateful evening November 16, 2020 when OPS board members voted to sell Yates to the community.

Adrian's work did not stop there, in fact it only just began as the effort continues to work with our great partners the Weitz Family Foundation and anchor tenants who will occupy Yates Illuminates as soon as this summer! Congratulations Adrian from your Gifford Park friends and neighbors, your enthusiasm is contagious!



PLAY
LEARN WORK
LIVE



Gifford Park Resident Awarded Amplify Arts Public Impact Grant



Zedeka Poindexter is a North Omaha-born writer and performer. In her work, she builds a historical record through poems and essays that draw on all five physical senses to connect with readers and listeners. Raised in multi-generational homes by descendants of the Great Migration, she draws on issues of race, class, struggle, and joy to fuel her work.

She was awarded a Public Impact Grant by an external selection panel in the amount of \$10,000 to develop new, public-facing work that interrogates the disparities Black women confront in the healthcare system. Over the course of her two-year grant term, Zedeka will conduct and transcribe interviews with Black women to gather stories that shine a light on how their lived experiences, bodies, and voices are often minimized, manipulated, and ignored when seeking medical care.

Zedeka will transmute these stories into a layered choreopoem that uses sight, sound, touch, and feeling as tools to center empathy and understanding. The finished piece will have a local run and dedicated performances for audiences of Omaha-area medical practitioners specifically. As an integrated piece of her staged work, Zedeka will also make her process simple to replicate for other communities by developing an interview guide, transcript analysis toolkit, and production roadmap. If you want to be an interview participant, email Zedeka at znpoindexter@gmail.com.

Zedeka has worked with the Nebraska Writers Collective for over ten years to provide writing and performance education in schools, community organizations, and correctional facilities. As Slam Master for the Omaha Poetry Slam, she guided local artists through generating new work, stage performances, and fundraising. She is the first woman, and the only woman of color, to be named Omaha City Poetry Slam champion. As a member of Omaha's poetry slam team, she qualified for semi-finals at the National Poetry Slam. Only one other team achieved this honor in its 18-year history.

Her work can be found in print and online anthologies, including *The Metropolitan*, *Slamma Lamma Ding Dong: An Anthology of Nebraska Slam Poetry*, and *Alight: Best Loved Poems from the 2013 Women of the World Poetry Slam*.

Amplify's Public Impact Grants are \$10,000 awards over 2-years (\$5,000 each year) that provide funding and logistical support to Omaha-area artists and organizers whose working processes foreground civic engagement, community-informed collaboration, and creative problem solving to better understand the complexities of systemic challenges and their impacts on communities.

The Public Impact Grant is awarded by an external selection panel of artists, arts professionals, and community leaders to an individual artist, collaborative group, collective, or duo. 2022-23 Public Impact Grant selection panel included Fernando Montejano, Lauren Simpson, and Zhomontee Watson.

Yates Illuminates

Article by Chris Foster

SAVE YATES



Some background, in 1999 Omaha Public Schools (OPS) closed Yates Elementary School at 32nd & Davenport Street because the building was too small for the increasing number of neighborhood children, so the Gifford Park Neighborhood Association (GPNA) has been fighting ever since to save the historic Yates building and get back our neighborhood school.

After closing in 1999, the Yates building was used as an alternative school for several years and then around 2008 as a community center for classes and programs for refugees & immigrants, Native Americans, special needs families, and for activities serving the surrounding neighborhoods.

In 2015 GPNA launched a community wide “Save Yates” effort which successfully saved the building and encouraged OPS to purchase vacant Creighton University parking lot property at 32nd & Burt Street to build our new school called Gifford Park Elementary, which opened in August 2019! Then in October 2019 OPS announced plans to sell the original Yates building, so GPNA led another “Save Yates” effort involving finding a buyer and community partner to have an educational community center. Our dreams were answered when in January 2020 we the GPNA told our story to Katie Weitz, executive director of the Weitz Family Foundation (WFF). Weitz toured Yates and believed in the community’s vision for the building’s preservation. Katie and her WFF team worked tirelessly with GPNA and community partners to submit an offer of \$100K, and a great community-supported plan called Yates Illuminates to OPS to buy the building. At the November 16, 2020 OPS board meeting OPS voted to sell Yates to WFF for our educational community center plan! Many thanks to our OPS board representative Marque Snow for his hard work and many meetings on both Save Yates efforts!

Yates Illuminates will provide creative programming, learning, and interactions we ALL will experience soon in the next chapter of this beautiful historic building. Just a small sampling of activities will include visual & performing arts, immigrant & refugee & new American programs, STEM/STEAM learning, robotics, senior programs, financial literacy, garden classes, meeting spaces, kitchen facilities, shared workspaces for nonprofits and community groups, and more...accessible and affordable for ALL. Katie and WFF team have been the best community-minded partner you could ever have leading this effort, they care deeply about creating a successful place where everyone feels welcome...especially in these current times. Yates Illuminates is an inspiration of hope for now and future generations!

Since acquiring the building we have been working with our great anchor tenants on a governance structure, and doing major building renovations, restoration, and accessibility upgrades...we are very excited about the possibilities around accessibility to make Yates a model for other future building upgrades in Omaha. Of course, these construction costs are significant, but needed to meet current building codes and our mission. To raise capital funds, we have created a 501c3 non-profit called 'Yates Fund' to accept donations.

So far, we have received \$1 million from an anonymous donor, a \$1 million challenge match available from The Sherwood Foundation, and we have received some generous donations from other local foundations and community members toward the Sherwood match. Over the past month, we have met with representatives from City Council, Mayor's Office, State Legislature, and County Commissioners to tour Yates to share our plan and ask for potential funding.

We are continuing to do fundraising for the remaining building renovation costs as we plan to open around July 2022. We have already completed many construction items including a large retaining wall, interior window restoration, exterior window painting, HVAC, and new roof, with work in progress on other upgrades including a new elevator. Please contact me if you have interest in donating to Yates Fund, or if you have any questions.



HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT GIFFORD PARK?

Ever have a question about Gifford Park that can't be answered by a Google search? If so, send in your questions here and find answers in the next issue!

iwanttoknowgifford@gmail.com

SAVE YATES



Holiday Banquet

Article by Chris Foster

Nearly 130 GPNA members, family, friends and guests gathered for our 32nd Annual GPNA Holiday Banquet Thursday December 2nd. Our great neighbor Duchesne Academy again hosted the event in their beautiful auditorium. As people arrived, they viewed historic memorabilia and photos, including our history scrap books created by GPNA historian Eva Swanson, and old Yates Elementary School yearbooks and PTA scrapbooks, some dating back to the 1930's! Attendees purchased handmade candles from Refugee Empowerment Center and shirts from Gifford Park Elementary.

Before and during dinner we displayed the 2019 rolling slideshow of GPNA activities since 2019 was the last "normal" year before COVID restricted activities. Dinner started with GPNA vice president Marie Helene Andre and Duchesne principal Dr. Laura Hickman welcoming everyone.

We enjoyed an amazing home-cooked dinner and dessert, compliments of Gifford Park's own Wendell & Alyssa Stanley family, and help from Rodney Hay who cooked the turkeys. Matt Cronin livestreamed the event for those not able to attend. Children then enjoyed opening donated presents.

Our program included updates on Gifford Park Elementary, Yates Illuminates, Omaha Mobile Stage, Year in Review, Porchfest, Science and Arts in Parks, youth recognition (David Perez Romero), and finished with Neighbor of the Year recognition. Food donations collected went to the Food Bank.



•Dr. Laura Hickman (Duchesne Principal) – On behalf of GPNA, you and your staff are a tremendous host and neighbor!

• Susan Mayberger (GPNA secretary) – Thanks for leading our banquet committee and handling RSVP's and so many details!

• Wendell & Alyssa Stanley family – We have run out of words to adequately thank your family for providing practically EVERYTHING for this wonderful dinner...you hit another home run!

• John & Jenn Aerni family – Thank you all for helping setup and serve dinner, cleanup, and being very flexible as always!

• Rodney Hay – Everyone loves your turkeys!

• Brent Lubbert – Mister IT and A/V guy who selflessly works behind the scenes to keep the slideshows running smoothly!

• Tyronda Pierce – CONGRATULATIONS for being 2020 GPNA Neighbor of the Year!

• Adrian Petrescu – CONGRATULATIONS for being 2021 GPNA Neighbor of the Year!

• Rose Carlson – Thank you (with help from Emily Speck) for welcoming folks and handling memberships. And HUGE thanks for managing the always challenging children's gifts...we had around 30 children attend this year!

• OPS Board member Marque Snow – Thank you for GREAT efforts supporting first Gifford Park Elementary and most recently in November 2020 the selling of the Yates building to the community!

• Katie Weitz, Kaitlan McDermott, Daniel Padilla of Weitz Family Foundation – GPNA is forever grateful for your vision and commitment to Yates Illuminates!

• Senator Gwen Howard, Doug Schroeder & Senator Sara Howard – Thank you for your generous gifts for the banquet and continued support of GPNA!

• Everyone else – THANKS for a GREAT BANQUET!!!



Martin Luther King Day 2022: Celebrate or Commemorate?

By Anthony Rogers-Wright

Nearly 60 years ago, the United States of America took a small step in the direction of justice when Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act of 1965 into law. Today, we are observing the compaction of the solemn right to vote as, according to the Brennan Center for Justice, between January and December of 2021 19 states passed 34 laws restricting access to voting. On top of that, 2021 saw more than 440 bills that would restrict voting access introduced in 49 states. What this reveals is the simple truth that this country is going in the wrong direction and previously insidious forces of white “supremacy” are now operating in the open with both success and efficacy. This also demonstrates why this year we can’t simply celebrate Martin King’s life; we must work to commemorate it through a rapacious and uncompromising pursuit of justice. For while the 1960’s may have seen this country open a window of opportunity, albeit slightly, to finally live up to ideals of freedom, democracy, and the pursuit of happiness for all, we became complacent and failed to understand that happiness for some is a return to the days of Jim Crow and abject inequality. The result is what we’re facing now – a closing window of opportunity to preserve democracy while white “supremacy’s” pandora's box opens wider unleashing a menagerie of malevolence through and by the law coupled with pernicious policies that are placing a vice grip around the neck of justice.



Martin Luther King, like far too many Black leaders and their accomplices were snatched from us via acts of white supremacist terrorism. And while we will never be able to bring Martin Luther King back to life, the way we respond to this moment will determine if his work continues to live. Collectively, we must continue fighting the good fights, getting into the good trouble, and embarking on the good work necessary to emancipate democracy and justice from its current state of entropy. It’s incumbent upon all of us, especially those who enjoy privilege and social power due to race, gender identity, ableism, sexual orientation, and other attributes play a direct role in the process to ensure that the long arc does indeed bend towards justice.

White “supremacy” has demonstrated that it will storm sacred government buildings, halls, and institutions as well as a willingness to topple democracy itself to proliferate and remain a force to contend with. That’s why this year we must commit to confronting du jour white “supremacy” and racism, with the same fervor as de facto white “supremacy” and racism. This means taking on nefarious liberal forces that call for re-instating solitary confinement, profligate, and unnecessary plainclothes police units, while doing nothing to ameliorate police violence and discriminatory responses to mental health crises with the same fervor as nefarious forces such as the Oath Keepers and their acolytes in government.

What we’re witnessing is all too normal and that’s the problem. Ergo, confronting and clearing the air of an injustice miasma that’s choking out our democracy, akin to toxic emissions disproportionately choking out environmental justice communities, requires a radical praxis that starts with radical empathy in the vein of the great Audre Lorde who reminds us, “there is no such thing as single-issue struggle because we do not live single issue lives.”



That this year's celebration of Martin Luther King Jr's life and corpus of work holds special meaning is an incontrovertible fact. And we must ask ourselves if a young Indigenous, Black, or Brown person, learning of him for the first time in their lives, can truly distinguish the state of this nation before King's journey commenced and where it is right now. Therefore, this year we must engender massive cogitation and introspection by asking ourselves, individually and collectively, key questions about ourselves and the timbre of the nation's polity. Among these questions include, "which Martin King are we celebrating – the radical preacher that best represents who he was or the sanitized, deodorized version of him that make white folk more comfortable in an effort to render their guilt for inaction against, and participation in, both consciously and unconsciously, a synthetic white people's hegemony more amenable?"

In 2010, at the famed Ebenezer Baptist Church, Professor and Black Radical Tradition scholar, Dr. Cornel West decried the "Santa Clausification" of Martin Luther King stating, "I don't want to sanitize Martin Luther King. I don't want to deodorize Dr. Martin Luther King. I don't want to disinfect Dr. Martin Luther King, and we're not gonna domesticate Dr. King." West also reminded those in attendance that the FBI once characterized King as the most dangerous man in America as well as the fact that even Black leaders turned their back on him following his epochal 1967 speech at Riverside Church when King remarked, "I knew that I could never again raise my voice against the violence of the oppressed in the ghettos without having first spoken clearly to the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today -- my own government." This quote alone demonstrates the requisite variables necessary to emancipate an entire nation from the iniquitous cauldron we find ourselves in – temerity, tenacity, and veracity.

This year's celebration of King's life must be different because we cannot allow for those attempting to resurrect the policies of George Wallace, Bull Connor, and Donald J Trump to assert that King would be a member of a major political party that has fully embraced the tenets and tactics of white "supremacy." Nor can we countenance a liberal interpretation of Martin King that defers to snippets of whitewashed quotes like, "I have a dream," manifested solely through yard signs in lieu of the quotidian work necessary for diversity, equity, and inclusion. This MLK Day, hypocrisy cannot be tolerated in the pursuit and maintenance of justice. To this end, it's incumbent upon all of us to confront and abash the litany of lawmakers and individuals, from all political spectrums, utilizing tawdry and meretricious motions to celebrate King's life while doing nothing to emulate his work, and doing all they can to incarcerate his work into a perpetual state of atrophy.



Prose and Poetry



Yesterday, while I was wandering in my neighborhood, I turned around the corner and saw him again. He was kind of depressed and left alone. I could tell by looking into his eyes. He was in this mood many many times since I met him about six months ago. When I first came to this city, I thought it was normal at first. Then I started to run across others just like him. In the beginning, I chose to ignore it, generally as we all do. But then I felt a growing disturbance inside of me, urging me to do something. This time I finally plucked up my courage and asked him:

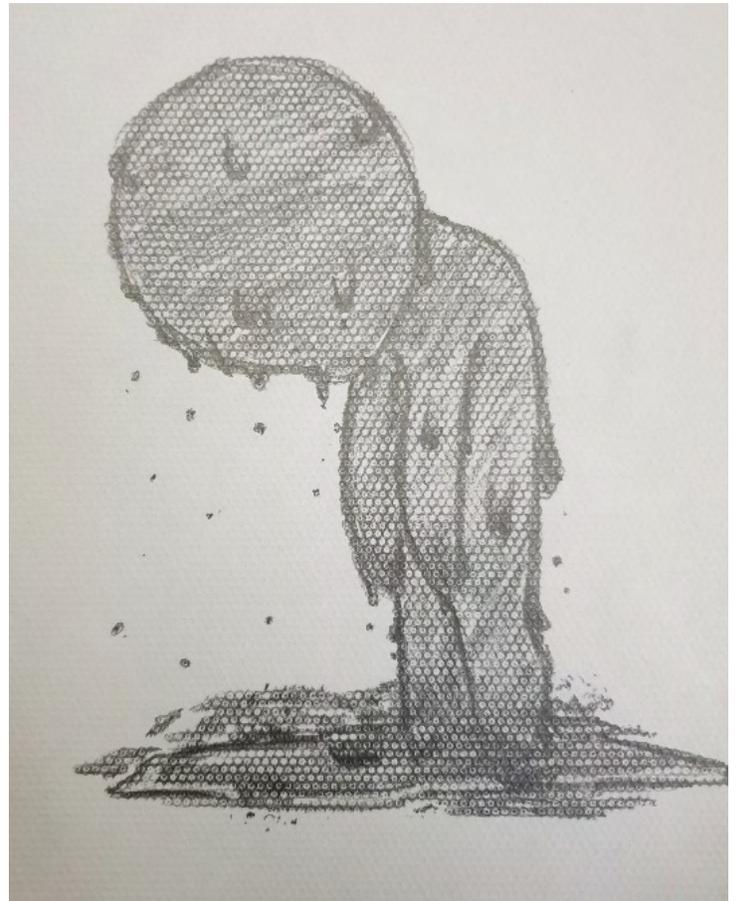
Hey you, my dear flag! Why did you bow your head? Are you sad? Why are you wrinkled and your colors faded? Is there national mourning that lasts forever? Did you lose a war? Who left you at half-staff this way for weeks? Are you aware of your other brothers and sisters in the city that are in the same condition? Isn't there a rule or law about it?

He hesitated for a moment when I asked my questions one after another. He then started to answer slowly, in a shy way. He was indeed very sad. Last 9/11 someone lowered him to half-mast and left him this way. And no one has ever stopped by him for months.

He said he was supposed to be clean and well-groomed all the time. No disrespect should be shown to the flag of the United States of America; should not be dipped to any person or thing. He can only fly at half-staff when the nation or a state is in mourning. The president, through a presidential proclamation, a state governor, or the mayor of the District of Columbia can order them to fly at half-staff. Most often, this is done to mark the death of a government official, military member, or first responder; in honor of Memorial Day or other National Day of Remembrance; or following a national tragedy.

Flying Proudly

By: Patriotic Pessimist





I totally agreed with him. I said you are the symbol of a great country and a great nation! You are always supposed to flutter proudly! You should not be at half-mast I don't know maybe more than one day for any reason. Moreover, those mourning days might be reconsidered by the lawmakers in order to be reduced. Because, even on saddest days, people should look at you, see you when you are flying proudly, all the way up, and then get strength from you, regain their courage and faith in this beautiful country.

I said let me tell you an anecdote about an ally of yours. During the early 1900s, a triumph commander was inspecting the battlefield. He saw the whole unit had been buried under soil by an artillery shell. But one arm of a soldier managed to stay aboveground, and that arm was holding the flag upright tightly. And this was the only thing left from that unit. Afterward, they built a statue of him to make this event memorable.



After I completed my story; hey, you know he said, I am the flag of a country who has been the world's superpower for more than a century. I am the flag of a nation who has always been a pioneer in science, technology, arts, sports, democracy, and in every other aspect. I am the flag of The United States! I trust my people and I believe I continue to be on top among others. His posture changed while saying these. He became upright again. His eyes started to look more determined.

When I started to walk away from him, I thought I was able to make the effect I desired. I couldn't help myself but think; what if one of the countries that even can't be nice to its own people became a superpower, what kind of a world we would live in then?

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Gifford Skate Park

Article by Drew Newlin

Back in the July 2021 GPNA newsletter, I penned an article on behalf of the Nebraska Public Skateparks Council (NPSC) titled “Creating a Space for Skateboarding in Gifford Park,” which contained a link to a short online survey where neighborhood residents and community members could share their perspectives on the subject.

Today, I’m happy to share with you that out of 104 total survey responses to date, 91.3% are 10/10 in favor of creating a skatepark in Gifford Park. An additional 2.9%, 3.8%, and 1% are 9/10, 8/10, and 7/10 in favor, respectively, and the remaining 1% are 1/10 in favor.

Over 30 responses mentioned that a skatepark would be a positive, beneficial addition to our neighborhood, and/or that it would provide a healthy, creative outlet for both kids and adults. More than 20 responses suggested expanding the footprint of the proposed skate space, and/or adding more skateable obstacles beyond what was shown in our 3D renderings.

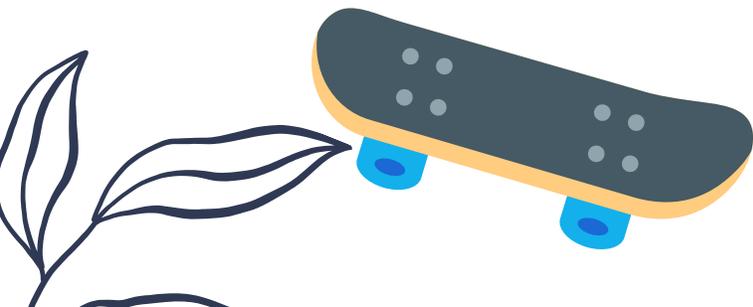
Several responses also addressed the proximity of the skate space relative to other activities within the park (e.g., basketball, tennis, soccer, etc.), largely for safety, and/or to ensure that the spaces for those activities are either preserved or updated in conjunction with the addition of a skatepark or any other new park amenities.

To clarify, the NPSC does not intend to displace any current park activities with the addition of the proposed skate space; we only aim to ensure the inclusion of skateboarding among the activities available within our beloved park. Our goal is to work with the GPNA and our community at large to help cultivate a space where all of these various activities and subcommunities can coexist together!

Based on the overwhelming support that has come through our survey thus far, — as well as a quorum of GPNA membership voting to formally include collaboration on this skatepark project into the association’s 2022 goals — I feel it’s safe to say that creating a space for skateboarding in Gifford Park may no longer be a matter of if, but when.

Despite Nebraska winter driving many of us skaters into hibernation, the NPSC and I are hard at work on advancing this project by: refining our design based upon survey feedback; starting up a capital campaign to raise funding; and seeking out reputable skatepark builders to help. (We’re also in the beginning stages of a few other very exciting projects in Omaha, Lincoln, and Walthill, NE!)

For the latest updates on this project and more, please stay tuned for the NPSC’s new website (nebraskaskateparks.org), find us on Facebook or Instagram (@nebraskaskateparksCouncil), and keep an eye out for forthcoming GPNA newsletters and neighborhood meetings! Know that the NPSC, GPNA board, and I greatly appreciate everyone’s feedback on the survey, and that we will continue to review any additional responses as they come in. If you or someone you know has not yet taken the survey, please visit the following, case-sensitive link: bit.ly/3guEa4Z. Many thanks, friends, and neighbors!





Gifford Park Neighborhood Association
 PO Box 31462
 Omaha, NE 68131



**Gifford Park Neighborhood Association
 Membership Application**

The GPNA membership year runs from January 1 to December 31.

Type of membership: ___ Single (\$10) ___ Family (\$15) ___ Business (\$25)
 Today's Date: _____

Business Name (if applicable): _____
 Business Phone (if applicable): _____

Name (1): _____ Phone: _____ Email: _____
 Name (2): _____ Phone: _____ Email: _____
 Name (3): _____ Phone: _____ Email: _____
 Name (4): _____ Phone: _____ Email: _____
 Name (5): _____ Phone: _____ Email: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

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- | | | | |
|---|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Call committee | <input type="checkbox"/> Holiday Banquet | <input type="checkbox"/> Neighborhood Watch | <input type="checkbox"/> Tennis |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cleanup/Beautification | <input type="checkbox"/> Landlord/Tenant Issues | <input type="checkbox"/> Newsletter Distribution | <input type="checkbox"/> Tool Lending |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Community Garden | <input type="checkbox"/> Memberships | <input type="checkbox"/> School Liason | <input type="checkbox"/> Tree Planting |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Easter Egg Hunt | <input type="checkbox"/> Neighborhood Market | <input type="checkbox"/> School Activities | <input type="checkbox"/> Youth Garden |
| <input type="checkbox"/> History | <input type="checkbox"/> Neighborhood Walks | <input type="checkbox"/> Soccer | |

Return completed form along with check or money order to:
 Gifford Park Neighborhood Association, PO Box 31462, Omaha, NE 68131.